

ADRIAN ROGERS

LEGACY

C O L L E C T I O N



G A L A T I A N S

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

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The Gospel Truth

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: September 6, 1992

Main Scripture Text: Galatians 1:1–12

Sponsored by: Sponsor

“But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man.”

GALATIANS 1:11

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Hellish Substitute for the Gospel
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- III. The Holy Subject of the Gospel
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 - C. It Is Securing Grace
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Introduction

I want you to take your Bibles tonight and turn with me please to the book of Galatians chapter 1, and I want to read with you the first twelve verses. And, really, tonight I am talking to you about the grace that built a church. And I suppose if I gave the message a title, it would be, “The Gospel Truth.”

Galatians chapter 1, verse 1: “Paul, an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead; and all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia: Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. I marvel that you are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I yet

please men, I should not be the servant of Christ. But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man, for I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

There’s only one gospel. The word *gospel* means good news. And every preacher of the gospel is a newsboy, not an editor. It’s his responsibility and it is his joy to put the newspaper on the front porch, not in the trees or on the roof. It is good news. It is the good news the headlines say “Jesus Saves.” And I want to tell you, my dear friend, that the devil hates the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And so, there are three things I want you to see as we look into this passage of Scripture and concerning the gospel of Jesus Christ, the gospel truth.

I. The Hellish Substitute for the Gospel

The very first thing I want you to see is what I’m going to call the hellish substitute for the gospel. Look, if you will, in verse 6. The apostle Paul said, “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel. But there is, but, which is not another, but there be some that trouble you and would pervert the gospel of Christ.”

Now let me tell you about the devil. The devil knows that man is incurably religious. And the devil knows that there is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every man. So the devil is so cunning that rather than deny the gospel, what he does is corrupt the gospel, and the devil is a pervert, according to the apostle Paul. You can put it down. The devil is a pervert. He wants men to be satisfied with a perverted gospel, a substitutionary gospel, not of the substitutionary atonement, but a substitute for the gospel so they will not seek the real gospel.

It’s an amazing thing in America today. When I was in seminary, I took a course in Comparative Religions, and you know what amazed me was not primarily that men don’t believe the gospel, but what amazed me is what men would believe. I mean, there is so many gospels around that are not gospels, so much religion that is false religion. You talk to people, you witness to people, and they say, “Well, I’m looking a religion that suits me.” I always feel like saying, “You’d better look for one that suits God. But who are You, God? I mean, are You the one that’s going to determine what is right and what is wrong?” Why, my dear friend, there can be no compromise whatsoever with the truth of the gospel. Now, you can compromise if you want on things that don’t matter, like two plus two, ha, equals four. You can say two plus two equals five and it would be a better thing than to compromise the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Sometimes, we pastors who preach only one gospel and the gospel of Christ, as I’ve tried to do for twenty years here in this, congregation, we’re accused of being narrow-minded. Well, folks, I hope you are happy that you have a narrow-minded pastor. I

mean, ha, ha, I, oh you, I have a doctor. I want him to be narrow-minded. When I go to him, I don't want him to say, "Well, it, it could be your gall bladder. It might be your liver. We'll just take out your appendix. It really doesn't matter." I, ha, ha, I want my doctor to be narrow-minded. I fly a lot on airplanes, and I like for my pilot to be very narrow-minded. You know, I don't want him to say, "Well, I just think we'll try to land this time with the wheels up just for the fun of it. It really doesn't make much difference." I go to the drugstore. I really do like for my, pharmacist to be very narrow-minded. But, you see, my dear friend, narrow-mindedness is very, very important in the gospel.

Look, if you will, in verses 8 and 9. Here's what the apostle Paul says: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." And the word *let him be accursed* means let him be given over for destruction. And Phillips, who translates it, translates it this way, and I hope you understand the sense in which I'm saying this, but this is what Paul really meant. Phillips translates it this way: "If any man preach any other gospel than that we have preached unto you, let him be damned." Let him be damned! Let him go to hell! That's what he's saying. He's saying, my dear friend, even if I come along, and I say to you, "Now look, I'm the one who taught you the gospel, ha, but I went off to seminary and I've learned something else. And I have come back now to tell you that there is a different gospel," Paul said, "You just mark me down as a man fit for hell." Then he says if an angel were to come, I mean, a bright, shining angel, no ifs, ands, or buts about it. Everybody says, "That is a genuine, ha, industrial-strength angel. I mean, that's a real angel, no doubt about it. He comes in here and we all see that he's an angel." And he walks into Bellevue, and he says, "Folks, you are blessed people. I have been sent from heaven with a message from God. The gospel that you used to believe now is out of date. It's obsolete. We have a new gospel today." Paul said, "If an angel from heaven purports to preach any other gospel to you, let him be accursed, let him be accursed." It doesn't matter who it is.

Now, friend, learn this, learn it well, learn it straight – it is not the messenger that validates the message; it is the message that validates the messenger. You, you see, that's what validates the messenger. It doesn't matter. You say, "Well, he's intelligent. He is witty. He is charming. He has degrees. He has background. He has all." It makes no difference. Paul says, "You measure that man by the gospel, because the devil has substituted a false gospel for the true gospel."

A local church, was looking for a pastor, and someone on the Pastor Church Committee said, "Well, let's ask him some questions before we let him be our pastor." And someone said, "Well, what shall we ask him?" And someone said, "Let's ask him if he preaches the gospel." And a person very wisely said, "No, don't ask him that. Don't ask him that. Any preacher today will say he preaches the gospel. Ask him what the

gospel is and then ask him if he preaches the gospel.” Because, you see, the devil is very clever. The devil has substituted, a false gospel. Look at it here in God’s Word. He says in verse 8, “He, if anyone preach a gospel which is, well, which is not another, but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.”

There are many people who are preaching that is a synthetic gospel, a substitute gospel. And the truth of the matter is that many people, members of churches, really don’t even know what the gospel is. They have no idea what the gospel is. Somebody asked a lady, “What do you believe?” She said, “I believe what my church believes.” He said, “That’s fine. What does your church believe?” “Oh,” she said, “my church believes what I believe.” Well, he said, “What do you and your church believe?” “Oh,” she said, “we believe the same thing.” Now there are a lot of people who are just about as vague as that woman. They do not know what the gospel is. My dear friend, it’s not the Baptist gospel, it’s not the Methodist gospel; it is the Bible gospel. And Paul said, “If any man preaches any other gospel, then let him be accursed.” The devil had rather give you a substitute gospel than to deny the gospel right out. So, number one: There is the hellish, the hellish substitute of the gospel.

II. The Heavenly Source of the Gospel

But now, secondly, I want you to notice not only the hellish substitute of the gospel, but the heavenly source of the gospel. Now look at what Paul says in verse 11: “But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man.” That is, some man didn’t cook this up. “For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

Now what’s he saying here? He’s saying, my dear friend, that there is the hellish opposition to the gospel and there’s the heavenly origin of the gospel. There is the hellish substitute for the gospel and there’s the heavenly source of the gospel. Now what he is saying is that the gospel is not man’s invention. No man could ever think up the gospel of Jesus Christ. Sometimes I just ponder the gospel. But we have people today who, who somehow through human ingenuity, they come up with these hellish substitutes. There’s existentialism, which is a big, double-jointed word which just simply means it’s real if it’s real to me. If they substitute experience for revelation.

Then, not only is there existentialism; there’s, intellectualism. And the intellectualism says, “Well, I’m going to take the Bible and I’m going to parade it past the judgment bar of my mind to see if I agree with it or no.”

And then, not only is there existentialism and intellectualism; there’s emotionalism. And somebody says, “Well, you know, I just don’t feel that’s right. It just doesn’t seem to me that, that Jesus could be the only way, and if a man refuses Jesus, that he’s eternally lost. It just doesn’t seem to me that God would be right or God would be fair to

let such a person, go to hell if they don't receive the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord."

And so, my dear friend, let me tell you. There is the hellish substitute for the gospel. There is the heavenly source of the gospel. The gospel did not originate with man. It came from heaven above.

III. The Holy Subject of the Gospel

Now I want you to notice, thirdly, the holy subject of the gospel. What is the gospel? Well, look at it again. Look at it. Read with me the first six verses. "'Paul, an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead.'" All right, that's the gospel. "And all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia: Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. I marvel that you are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel."

Now what is the holy subject of the gospel? Well, first of all, it's grace. Do you see that, verse 3, "...grace be unto you..." In verse 6, "...into the grace of Christ..." It is the gospel of grace. Now what is grace? Well, somebody has made an acrostic out of it, called it God's Riches at Christ's Expense. And I believe that's what it is, but here in this book, if we'll look at it, we can see, really, what grace is. It's not what makes God loves people who don't have enough merit; it's what makes God love people who have absolutely no merit. When you think of grace, think of Jesus dying in agony and blood upon that cross for sinners like we are.

A. It Is Seeking Grace

First of all, my dear friend, this grace is seeking grace. Look in verse 6: "I marvel that you are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ..." Don't you love that? He called you.

Look, if you will, in verse 15: "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me (how?) by his grace." It is seeking grace. You see, my dear friend, you may have the idea that it was your idea to be saved, but it wasn't your idea. It was God's idea. You may think that your heart impelled you to seek after God. But the Bible says there's none that seeketh after God, no not one. And what you may have thought was a thought that originated with you was a thought, a desire, a call that was put in your heart by the Holy Spirit of God. God had to take the initiative or you never would have been saved. Romans chapter 3, verse 11 says there's none that seeketh after God, no not one.

Joyce and I are celebrating our 41st wedding anniversary. And the other day she

took one of our old scrapbooks; I mean, an old one, folks, and laid it up there on the kitchen counter. I got it and took it to bed with us the other night, and we sat in bed and looked at that. And, we opened that scrapbook, Brother Bob, and in that scrapbook are some love notes that I wrote to that girl. And did you know those notes are 50 years old – love notes I wrote her when we were grade school sweethearts. Well, she wasn't my sweetheart; I was her sweetheart. No, let's see. How's that go? She was my sweetheart. I wasn't her sweetheart at that time because, see, she sat over here and I sat back over here, and I kept looking at her, and I liked what I saw. The more I looked, the less I paid attention to the teacher. And I wrote a note. It was a love note. And I walked past her desk and I dropped that note on her desk. I know it made an impression 'cause she still has it. Was a piece of poetry. I will not share that with you, but it was a piece of poetry that I wrote, and I put that on her desk. My dear friend, that was the beginning of something wonderful. We were in the sixth grade when I put that note on her desk. She's the only girl I ever dated. But, you see, I love her with all of my heart. But let me tell you something, friend. Do you know why she loves me? I take a lot of credit for this – 'cause I first loved her. Well, it was puppy love, but it was real to the puppy. I put my eyes on her, and I said, "That's, that's the girl that, that, that charms my heart," and I took the initiative. And that's what God did, my dear friend. God took the initiative. God called us.

B. It Is Saving Grace

It is seeking grace. And, my dear friend, it is saving grace. You're not saved by works. Ha, you're saved by grace. Look in chapter 2, verse 16: "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ..." You're not saved by doing good works. Why, my dear friend, the gospel is good news. If God tells me to straighten up and do better, that's not good news for me. Why, if I'm going to be saved by law-keeping and rule-keeping, Jesus, rather than a, than a blessing, He's become a curse. Why, it would be harder to obey Jesus than it would be Moses. It's amazing how many people, though, don't understand that we're, "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." Ha, there, there are people, they get all these weird illustrations about how you're saved by faith and works. I think one of the, the most interesting, they say, "It's like crossing a stream in a rowboat. If you wanted to cross a stream, and you sat in a rowboat, and you just pulled on one oar, you'll go around in a circle this way. But if you pull on another oar, you'll go around in a circle this way. And they say, now one of these oars is faith, and one of these oars is works. And so, either one by themselves is not enough, but faith and works, that just gets you across the stream." Isn't that a wonderful illustration? There's just one thing wrong with it, and I'll tell you what it is. We're not going to heaven in a rowboat, my dear friend, ha, ha. We're going to heaven by the

grace of God.

Romans 11:6: “And if by grace, it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. And if by works, it is no more of grace; otherwise grace is no more grace.” What’s he saying? He’s saying you can’t mix grace and works. The minute you try to add any kind of, of works into it, why, my dear friend, then it be, it, it’s not longer grace. “And if by grace, it is no more of works, for by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians chapter 2, verses 8-9). Galatians 2, verse 16: “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith, the faith of Jesus Christ...”

Oh, there are works involved, but they don’t save you. You’re not saved by faith and works; you’re saved by faith that works. And, and faith without works is dead. But it is not the works that save you; it’s the works that show that you’re saved. You’re created in Christ Jesus unto good works. I may have told you about a little fellow who came to a church, made a profession of faith, and they had a committee that talked to him. And they asked him, said, “How did you get saved?” And he said, “Well, Jesus did His part and I did mine.” Well, right away their antenna went up. They said, “Oh-oh, he doesn’t understand it.” They said, “Tell us about that.” He said, “Well,” he said, “I did the sinning and He did the saving.” That’s exactly right. Man, well, we did our part and His did His. “For by grace are ye saved....”

C. **It Is Securing Grace**

Now what is, what is the message, oh, my dear friend, of the gospel? What is the holy subject of the gospel? It is grace. And that grace, my friend, is seeking grace. It is saving grace. It is securing grace.

Now how do you keep your salvation? You keep it the same way you got it. If you got it by works, then you have to keep it by works. If you’re saved by grace, you’re kept by grace. Don’t get the idea that you begin in the spirit and then you end up, by the works of the law. Look in chapter 3 and verse 3: “Are ye so foolish? Having began in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?” Some people get the idea, they say, “Yes, sure, sure, He saves you. He forgives you. All the past is gone. Yes, yes, that’s all gone. That’s all gone. You’ve got a brand new start. Now it’s up to you.” I want to tell you something. I was saved by grace, and I’m kept by grace, and I try to live a Christian life by the power of the Holy Spirit. But I wouldn’t trust the best fifteen minutes I ever lived to get me to heaven. Not the best fifteen, much less some other fifteen minutes that I can think of. You see, I began in the Spirit, and I’m made perfect in the Spirit. It is securing grace.

Now suppose you’re out there in the middle of the Atlantic and you’ve fallen off a cruise ship, and you don’t know how to swim? And, somebody comes along in a power boat. And you yell, “Help, help.” And that person in the powerboat comes and he looks

at you and he says, “Ha, ha, you’re in sad shape, aren’t you?” as he drives around and around. And he says, “I’ll tell you what I’m going to do. “ He said, “I’m, I’m going to let you read this book. It’s twenty lessons on swimming. And I hope you can make it.” Well, folks, Jesus didn’t come primarily as a teacher; He came as a Savior.

Well, suppose, he says, “Oh, you can’t read a book while you’re drowning. I’ll tell you what I’m going to do. I’ll show you how to swim.” And he jumps out of the boat. And he does the, the backstroke, and he does the breast stroke, and do they still call it the Australian crawl? And he does everything. He does all of these things, and says, “See there.” And you’re saying, “Help!” You’re going under. You see, Jesus didn’t come as a teacher. He didn’t come as an example, primarily.

Suppose the man in the boat says, “Come, you need help,” and he reaches out, lifts you out of the water, and puts you in the boat. And you say, “This is a lot better. This is a lot better because we’re, we’re way off shore.” And so, when you’re headed for shore and you’re still about twenty miles off, he looks at you and he says, “You know, you haven’t been behaving just right since you’ve been on this boat,” and he throws you overboard. He’s still not a Savior. What he is is a probationary officer, right? My dear friend, I want to tell you that Jesus did not come as a teacher, primarily. Jesus did not come primarily as an example. Jesus Christ did not come as a probationary officer. He is a Savior, a Savior.

D. It Is Sufficient Grace

You see, it is seeking grace. My dear friend, it is saving grace. It is securing grace. And we could say so much more about it. It is sufficient grace, sufficient grace.

The apostle Paul said in 2nd Corinthians chapter 9 and verse 8: “God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.”

I like the way Paul begins this epistle in verse 2: “Grace be to you, and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ.” And you’ll never run out of that grace. For you to worry about running out of God’s amazing grace would be like a minnow in the Atlantic Ocean worrying about running out of water.

E. It Is Surviving Grace

And, friend, this grace that is sufficient grace is surviving grace. The apostle Paul taught us in Ephesians 2, verse 7 that in the ages to come he’ll show the exceeding riches of his grace. That’s the thing that I think inspired Newton to write that song, “When we’ve been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun; we’ve no less days to sing God’s praise than when we first begun.”

Conclusion

But now, wait a minute. What is the holy subject of the gospel? I said it is grace. But we're not quite finished.

Look at it again in chapter 1, verse 6: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ..." What is the subject of the gospel? It is grace, but it is the grace of Christ. You see, there can be no grace apart from Christ. And the apostle Paul in these verses speaks of the death, the burial, the resurrection of Jesus Christ. That's what makes it grace. It is the grace of Christ. And, Jim, thank you for singing that song, "Living He loved me, dying He saved me, buried He carried my sins far away. Rising, He justified freely forever. One day He's coming, oh, glorious day." It is the grace of Christ.

The real gospel, the saving gospel, is the gospel that centers in Christ. Not one that mentions Him. Not one that alludes to Him. But it is one that has a vital relationship with Jesus Christ. Being saved is a personal confrontation with Jesus. It's not a creed, not a code, not a cause, not a church, but Christ.

Do you know why we have so many churches that are filled by baptized pagans? I'll tell you why. They have met creeds, but not Christ. They can give you a creed. I've told you before, you're not saved by the plan of salvation; you're saved by the man of salvation. His name is Jesus. And you may know the plan of salvation and not know Jesus. You're not saved by code. There are many people who say, "Well, live right, do better." You ought to live right. But as we've already said, my dear friend, and the apostle Paul says, "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." If you can be saved by doing good, then why on earth did Jesus die? It's not a creed. It's not a code. It's not a cause. When I invite you, I'm not inviting you to a cause like to feed to hungry, to change the world, or even to spread Christianity. There are a lot of people who want to get wrapped up in causes. Lot of people with altruistic feelings. A lot of people who want to be a part of some movement. But that's not the gospel. It's not a creed, not a code, not a cause. It's not a church. You can be a Baptist and be lost. You can be another denomination and be saved. But, my dear friend, it is the gospel of Christ, knowing Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord. One of these days (are you listening?) you're going to die. And do you know how God is going to judge you? Romans 2, verse 16: "In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel." My dear friend, if you're on the right side, if you've been saved, judgment for you was settled at Calvary. If you haven't been saved, you're going to die and be eternally lost. You say, "Pastor Rogers, that's narrow. That's bigoted." The apostle Paul said, "If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed."

This is the gospel – that Christ died for our sins, that He was buried, that He was

raised again the third day. Friend, that's the gospel truth. And I want to tell you tonight, anybody here tonight who's willing to trust Christ, He will save you. And not only will He save you, He'll keep you saved. And my dear Lord has been faithful to me these many years, and I thank Him for it, and I bless Him for it.

God's Amazing Grace

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: August 5, 1984

Main Scripture Text: Galatians 1:6–12

Outline

Introduction

- I. Satan Fought It
- II. God Thought It
- III. Grace Bought It
 - A. It Is Seeking Grace
 - B. It Is Saving Grace
 - C. It is Securing Grace
 - D. It Is Surviving Grace
- IV. Christ Wrought It

Conclusion

Introduction

Galatians chapter 1—we begin in verse 6. Paul says, *“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ”*

(Galatians 1:6–12). Now I want to stop our reading right there, though we’ll meander a little bit around and pick up some more verses; but, I want to talk to you about one of the greatest subjects I know anything about, and that is “God’s Amazing Grace,” or, “The Gospel of Grace.”

I’d rather be a gospel preacher than anything else this world has to offer. Now I told you a few months ago, when I preached on the subject of “God’s Grace in the Workplace,” that you are just as important as I am, and you’re just as much a servant of God as I am, if you are in the workplace where God has put you. When we come to the judgment seat to receive our reward, I believe you’ll receive the same kind of reward as I will receive, if I am faithful in my place and you’re faithful in your place. But having said

all of that, I am infinitely glad that God called me to be a gospel preacher, to be a preacher of the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

I remember hearing about an old preacher who said, when he first started preaching—he said, “There’s nothing better than the gospel.” Then, he said, he preached along a while, and he got to thinking, “Well, there’s nothing even as good as the gospel.” Then, he studied the Bible more; and, the more he learned, he finally came to a place, and matured. And he said, “There’s nothing to be compared to the gospel.” Then, he said, when he got to be an old man, many of his friends had gone to the other side, and he saw a light—he saw light in the pure light of eternity—he said, “There’s nothing but the gospel.” And I’m about convinced that same thing is true. There—really, when you take everything else away—there’s really nothing but the gospel. There’s only the gospel that matters.

I want you to notice four things about “God’s Amazing Grace.” I want you to notice four things about this gospel of grace.

I. Satan Fought It

The very first thing I want you to notice is that Satan fought it. In Paul’s day, the battle had begun. Look, if you will again, in verses 6 and following: *“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed”* (Galatians 1:6–8).

Now let me tell you about the devil who fought this gospel. The devil had much rather pervert the gospel than deny the gospel. Now I want you to learn that. You see, if he can pervert the gospel, and, you take a synthetic gospel, which is not a true gospel, then you’ll not seek the real gospel, and you will die in your sin. And this is what the devil has done: He has perverted the gospel.

Now it would be better for you to say that 2 and 2 is 5 than to pervert the gospel of Jesus. There can be no substitution for a gospel truth, but the devil is a perverter, a twister of the gospel; and, he gives something that sounds so much like the gospel, because the best lie sounds the most like the truth, and every good lie has some truth in it. But here was a dangerous truth, where the devil was mixing grace and works, and he was perverting the gospel of Christ.

Now I want you to notice how emphatic Paul got about this. Look in verse 8. It almost sounds unchristian; it almost sounds like Paul is not very kind. But he says, in verse 8: *“But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you*

than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8). Now folks, just look at that for a moment—do you know what it literally means; what it literally says? Phillips translates it this way: "Let him be damned." And you say, "Oh, would Paul say that?" That's what he said; that's what he said: "If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be given over to God for destruction" (Galatians 1:9).

I'll tell you what, the natural man recoils at that. The natural man would say, "Oh Paul, how unkind! Oh Paul, how bigoted you are! Paul, how prejudiced you are. You think that your way is the only way." Well, dear friend, let me tell you something: If one way is right, then all other ways are wrong. There are not two gospels, not three gospels—the truth of the gospel is of paramount importance.

Now notice that Paul says; he says, "There's a gospel which is not another." Look in verses 6 and 7: "*I marvel that you are so soon removed from him that called you to the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another*" (Galatians 1:6–7). That is, it sounds like the gospel, but it's not the gospel. It is another gospel, but it is not the gospel. It is a synthetic salvation; it is a synthetic gospel.

II. God Thought It

Now I want you to see, also, that not only did Satan fight it—Satan fought it—but God thought it. Let me show you how this gospel came into existence. Look, if you will, in verse 11—Paul said, "*But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ*" (Galatians 1:11–12).

Now what is Paul saying here? Paul is saying that this gospel is not man's invention. It is not something that man thought; it is something that God thought. Now we live in a world today that is practicing a philosophy called *existentialism*. It's a big word, hard to say, and many people do not know the meaning. I want to just kind-of cut through it; and, basically, what existentialism is, is a big double-jointed theological or philosophical phrase—it really means that we don't have to take God's given, stated, empirical truth, but that we can live more or less by our feelings; that one man feels this way about it, and another man feels that way about it; and, a man looks at the gospel, looks at the Church, and he says, "Well, if that seems right to me, I will accept it. But if it doesn't seem right to me, I just reject it."

I mean, we see this philosophy in many ways. We even see well-meaning signs that say, "Go to the church of your choice." Well, who are you—God? Why don't you go to the church of God's choice? I mean, why don't you see what God has to say about it? And somebody says, "Well, what is right for you may not be right for me." What is right is right—whether it's right for you or me. I mean, it's just right; it's not something that

comes out of the heart and the mind of man.

Now the mind of man takes truth, sometimes, and parades it across the judgment bar of his mind, and he says, “Well, I agree with that, but I don’t think I agree with that”; and so, he just kind of gets a smorgasbord, a cafeteria approach, to the Word of God. Now if it doesn’t seem reasonable to him that Jesus Christ is the only way to God, then he rejects it. But what Paul is saying about this gospel is that Satan fought it—he would pervert it—but he reminds you that God thought it. It didn’t come from man; it came by revelation of God. And I want you to see how strong Paul is about this thing. I want you to look in verse 9—and he says, *“As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed”* (Galatians 1:9). And then, he says, in verse 8: *“But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed”* (Galatians 1:8).

Now what is Paul saying? Suppose an angel were to come into this auditorium tonight—I mean, a number one, genuine, dyed-in-the-wool angel from Heaven—I mean, Gabriel—were just to suddenly come in that door and walk up here. Of course, we’d all quiver and shake—I mean, if he were just self-authenticated; I mean, there’s no doubt he’s an angel—we know he’s an angel—and he comes in here; he’s paid us a visit. And suppose he said, “People of Bellevue, God, the God of Glory, has sent me to this church tonight, and you’re the first people to learn it: there’s a new revelation; there is a new message from Heaven; there is another gospel.” Paul says, “Let him be damned—let him be accursed—if an angel comes with another gospel.”

Now notice what else he said—he said, *“Though we, or an angel from heaven...”* Look at it again, in this verse: *“Though we, or an angel from heaven.”* Suppose Paul, later on, had written back to these Galatians, and he says, “You remember that stuff I told you about the gospel—remember how I preached the gospel? Hey, I’ve got a new revelation from God. Remember, I’m an apostle. I’ve got a new revelation from God. What I told you is no longer valid. We’re moving to plan B. Plan A—that served it’s time; now, we’ve got plan B. We’ve got another gospel.” Paul said, “If I do it, I ought to be consigned to destruction, that I ought to be accursed from God.”

Listen, friend. I want you to learn something, and learn it well: It is not the messenger that validates the message; it is the message that validates the messenger. Did you learn that? I mean, how can you tell whether the preacher’s a man of God? “Well,” you say, “he’s got a degree; he’s got a fine mind; he’s got a background; he has credentials; he has education; he has ability.” It doesn’t make any difference. If he doesn’t preach the gospel, the curse of God is on him. The gospel came from God. Man doesn’t think it up; it is God’s gospel.

III. Grace Bought It

I want to tell you, the devil fought it by perverting it, but God thought it. Paul says, “The gospel that I have come not from man, but by revelation of Jesus Christ.” Now the third thing I want you to see about the gospel—verses 6 and following: the devil fought it; number two, verses 11 and following: God thought it. I mean, it originated in the heart and mind of God—the third thing I want you to see is that grace bought it; grace bought it. Look again in verse 6: *“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel”* (Galatians 1:6). The grace of Christ—it is grace that bought our salvation; we are saved by grace.

A. It Is Seeking Grace

Now what kind of grace is it that saves us? Well, first of all, it is seeking grace—God just seeks us out. You see, notice in verse 6: *“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ”* (Galatians 1:6). You see the word *called*? Just underscore “He called you into the grace of Christ.” Because, it’s grace—God takes the initiative. God is the One who calls you.

Look, if you will, in verse 15: *“But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace”* (Galatians 1:15). Do you see that? How did Paul get in the ministry? By the grace of God. When did God call him? Before he was born; when he was in his mother’s womb. What did Paul have to do with that? Nothing. It was grace—grace—that sought him.

I want to tell you this about the grace of God. You better learn: Salvation is all of God; it is seeking grace. Do you know why you love Him? Because He first loved you—that’s why you love Him. “Oh,” you say, “Well, I sought Him.” Well, you’re smarter than God, because the Bible says, *“There is none that seeketh after God...no, not one”—not one* (Romans 3:11–12). Well, you say, “I was hungry for Him.” Do you know why you were hungry for Him? Do you know why you were thirsty for Him? Oh, indeed you thirsted after Him, but do you know why? God made you thirsty.

Why do you get thirsty in the physical realm? Why is it? Well, you were walking down the road one day, and you said, “Oh, you know, if I don’t get some liquid in my body, I’ll dehydrate.” You just thought up the idea? Oh no, that’s not the way you got thirsty. When God created you, God built into your physiology—God put you together in a certain way—that, when you reached a certain condition, you would feel something called *thirst*, and you would seek water; and, you seek water because that’s the way God created you. The idea of drinking water didn’t begin in your head. It began with God, who designed you to begin with, right? And it was God that made you, where you would thirst after water; and, it was God that made you, where you would thirst after Him. You see, *“We love him, because he first loved us”* (1 John 4:19). And in God’s

grace, God took the initiative.

I kiddingly tell Joyce that she loves me because I first loved her. I remember sitting there in the fourth grade—oh no, it's the sixth grade; I won't exaggerate—looking over at her, and thought to myself, "Boy, I like what I see," and I wrote her a love note, walked past her desk, and dropped it. She picked it up, and read it; and buddy, that was it—that was a great note. Now let me tell you something—let me tell you something: She loves me because I first loved her. I took the initiative; and, dear friend, God has taken the initiative. "This grace," Paul says, "is the grace that calls us." God took the initiative even before we were born, even before He swung this planet into space.

B. It Is Saving Grace

But not only is it seeking grace; I want to tell you something else: It is saving grace. Now Paul—this same Paul—says, in Ephesians 2, verses 8 and 9: "For by grace are you saved" (Ephesians 2:8–9). You see, it is grace that saves us. The gospel is good news. Now it's no good news if God tells me to straighten out and do better. I can't do better without Him. But He has saved me. Do you know how you spell *salvation*? You don't spell it *do*, and you don't spell it *don't*. Some people think you're saved by giving up this or that, and they spell salvation *don't*. Other people think you're saved by doing this or that, and they spell salvation *do*. But the Bible spells it *done*. When Jesus died on the cross, He bowed his head, and He said, "*It is finished*" (John 19:30).

C. It Is Securing Grace

And because, dear friend, it is seeking grace, and because it is saving grace, I want to tell you, it is securing grace. You see, He keeps me. Now the reason I can't lose my salvation is I'm saved by grace. If I were saved by works, then I could lose my salvation; because, if my works diminished, then my salvation goes. But you see, I keep it the way I got it. Now if I'm saved by grace, I'm kept by grace. If I'm saved by works, then I'm kept by works. These people have the idea, "Well, you're saved by grace and then kept by works." That's exactly what Paul was fighting here, in the Book of Galatians. The problem, in the Book of Galatians—they thought, "Well, Jesus died for our sins in the past—maybe that's all right; and, from now on, it's up to us to keep it up." No, dear friend, it is seeking grace; it is saving grace; it is securing grace.

Suppose you're out there, in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, and you don't know how to swim; and, you're coming up for the third time and about to go down forever. And somebody comes out there in a motorboat, and he begins to circle around you; and, he says to you, "It looks like you're drowning." And you say, "Glub, glub." And he says, "Well, here, I want to help you." And he tosses you out a book on 140 lessons on swimming. I mean, the Australian crawl, and the backstroke, and the butterfly—it's all in the book, you know. Well, what good is that? He wouldn't be a savior; what he'd be is

an educator.

Well, suppose he comes to you, and says, “Well, you idiot, what are you doing out here in the middle of the ocean, anyway? You’re going to drown, and good enough for you.” He wouldn’t be a savior; he would be a lecturer. Suppose he jumps out of the boat, and he says, “Let me show you how to do it”; and, he swims circles around you, floats on his back a little while.” He wouldn’t be a savior; he’d be an example. Suppose he reaches into the boat, and pulls you in the boat with him, and dries you off, and starts heading toward the shore with you. And then, suppose you do something a little wrong, and he doesn’t like it, and he throws you back out of the boat. He wouldn’t be a savior; he would be a probation officer.

Now what I want to tell you, dear friend, is that the grace of God is this: that He saves us, weak as we are. He doesn’t just give us lessons; He doesn’t just give us examples; He doesn’t just put us on probation. He saves us. He saves us by His grace. And the grace, dear friend, that sought us, and the grace that bought us, is the grace that keeps us.

D. It Is Surviving Grace

Thank God for this grace—it is surviving grace. And the Bible says, in Ephesians chapter 2 and verse 7: “*That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus*” (Ephesians 2:7).

Oh, dear friend, do you know what we’re going to sing in Heaven? We’re going to be singing about grace.

When we’ve been here ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We’ve no less days to sing God’s praise,
Than when we’ve first begun. (Newton, John)

And what is He going to show in the ages to come? His grace.

IV. Christ Wrought It

Now the fourth thing I want you to notice about this grace—look here: First of all, Satan fought it; secondly, God thought it; thirdly, grace brought it; but, fourthly, Christ wrought it. Look, if you will, in verse 7—he speaks of the gospel, “*which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ*” (Galatians 1:7). Now it is the gospel of Christ; it is the good news of Christ. The gospel is about His death, about His burial, about His resurrection. Read 1 Corinthians chapter 15, the first several verses. You see, the real gospel centers in Christ. I’m not talking about a gospel that mentions Him or alludes to Him, but it has Him for its object.

Now in order to be saved, in order for the grace of God to be real to you, you’ve got

to have a confrontation with Jesus Christ. Salvation is not a creed about Christ. It's not a code; it's not a cause; it's not a church. It is Christ. Do you know why there are so many unsaved people in the churches today? Do you know why so many people have religion, and they have a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof? (2 Timothy 3:5). I'll tell you why: People have met churches, but they haven't met Christ. People have learned creeds, but they've not met Christ. They know the plan of salvation, but they don't know the Man of salvation. People have been taught code, but they don't know Christ. They've been told to live right and do better; people have been enlisted in causes, but they don't know Christ. They feed the hungry; they help change the world. But friend, the gospel is the gospel of Christ. There is no other gospel. It is Jesus, and Jesus only. And anything else has the curse of God upon it, even though an angel from Heaven called Moroni, or anybody else, comes down with any other gospel.

Conclusion

Now dear friend, one of these days, you're going to die and stand before God, and God may ask you a question like this: "Why should I let you in My Heaven?" And if you give any other reason than that you repented of your sins and trusted the gospel of Christ, God will not let you into His Heaven. Had there been any other way, God would have taken it. God would never have let his darling Son die in agony and blood upon the cross, if there had been some other way.

What is the gospel? *"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation"* (Romans 1:16). What is the gospel of grace? The devil fought it. God thought it. Grace brought it. Christ wrought it. That's the gospel truth. Let's bow our heads in prayer.

The Gospel of Grace

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: August 1, 1999

Main Scripture Text: Galatians 1:6–12

Outline

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Introduction

Take your Bibles; find Galatians chapter 1. And when you've found it, look up here.

Now we fly, many of us, many places. I heard of an airline pilot who came on the intercom and said to his passengers—he said, “Folks, I’ve got bad news and good news. The bad news is this: We are hopelessly lost. The good news: We’re making great time.” Now I think that is very, very much like this generation in which we live. We think that we’re making progress, but we don’t know where we’re going.

Now folks, in the things that really count—listen to me—in the things that really count, we’re not making progress through civilization, through science, through learning, through technology—we’re not.

Man has three great enemies: sin, sorrow, and death. Those are the three great enemies. Now you think about it. You may think that we have some other enemy. We do not. Sin, sorrow, and death. Now I want to ask you a question: In the light of all of our so-called progress, what has civilization done about sin? About the only thing we’ve done about sin is to re-label it, put new labels on the same old bottles of poison. No longer is a man a *thief*; now, he’s an *embezzler*. No longer is a woman a *harlot*; now, she’s a *lady of the night*. No longer is a person a *drunkard*; he’s now an *alcoholic*. No longer is a person *sinful*; he’s *morally challenged*. And we’ve just really not made any

progress whatsoever in the matter of sin. As a matter of fact, we are sinking, sinking, sinking into a swirling sewer of filth and debauchery.

I want to ask you another question: Not only in the matter of sin, but in the matter of sorrow, have we made any progress? Not at all! I think about the horrific things that happened last week in Atlanta. I think of the heartache, the tears—a nation baptized in salty tears—and we're boasting about our economy; we're boasting about these things. But suicide has reached epidemic proportions; mental institutions are filled and overcrowded. We don't know what to do with these people who have broken minds, and broken hopes, and broken hearts.

We've not made any progress in the matter of sin, not in sorrow—and certainly, what have we done about death? Not a thing! We may have postponed it a little bit, but from the time that Adam and Eve looked down upon the broken body of their son, Abel, who was murdered by his own brother, all of us have been hurt by death. We've tried to camouflage death. No longer do we call it a *coffin*; we call it a *casket*. No longer is a man an undertaker; he is a *mortician*. No longer is it a *graveyard*; it is a *memorial park*. But we haven't changed the facts, have we?

Sin, sorrow, and death. Where's the answer here? Well, friend, there is no answer apart from the gospel of Jesus Christ. Put that down big; put it down plain; put it down straight. Now there are those who would want to offer some other panacea, some other answer, but there is no answer; and, even the gospel, now, has been... The devil has tried to pervert the gospel.

Look, if you will, here, in Galatians chapter 1. And beginning in verse 6, Paul says, "*I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel...*"—from that verse I get the title of my message, "The Gospel of Grace." Let me read it again—Paul said—"*I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another,*"—that is, it just seems like another—"*but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.*" Underscore that word *pervert*. But then, Paul says, in verse 8, "*But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.*" "Let him be anathema. Let him..."—actually, it literally means, "Let him be damned." "*As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ*" (Galatians 1:6–12).

Now the devil has tried to pervert the gospel of Jesus Christ, as we have seen in that

verse. And how does he pervert the gospel, the saving gospel? He perverts the saving gospel by what we call the *social gospel*. Many churches are not telling people how to be saved. They're telling people to do good, to feed the homeless, to clothe the naked, to heal the sick; and, folks, that is wonderful, and that is good—and, if you're saved, you ought to do those things—but that is not the gospel. If you do that, and don't preach the gospel, all you are doing is making the world a better place to go to Hell from. After all, we're going to be here for all eternity. Now thank God for social work, but there is no social gospel. There is only a saving gospel, which is the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

And then, of course, we have another perversion, which is New Age occultism, that has the idea that we are reincarnated, and we just keep going around. We keep getting another chance until we get it right. All of that is ridiculous, and we find people trudging to churches today who've never met gospel truth. And our churches are padded with moral worldlings and do-gooders who've never really been saved. And we are materially rich in America, and we are morally poor, because we do not know the gospel.

So what is the gospel of grace? What is the saving gospel of Jesus Christ? I want to give you five facts here, today, taken from these six verses, and I want you to see them.

I. The Satanic Opposition to the Gospel: Satan Fought It

First of all, I want you to understand that there is satanic opposition to the gospel. Satan fought it. Satan fought the gospel in Paul's day, and he is fighting the gospel in our day. Look again, in verse 6: "*I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you,*"—now, underscore this—"*and would pervert the gospel of Christ*" (Galatians 1:6–7).

Did you know that Satan is a pervert? I say that seriously. Satan has no raw material. All he can do is take what God has created, and twist it, and pervert it. Satan is a pervert. God made everything, and sin is a perversion of that which is good. Now Satan, rather than denying the gospel, had rather pervert the gospel, because if you will accept a synthetic gospel, then you'll never see your need for the real gospel. So he's not out-and-out to deny the gospel; he's out to twist the gospel, and he's done a good job. Look in the religious world today.

Folks, you can come to our city or any great city in America today, and, in the realm of religion, just say, make up any list of things that you want to believe, and any way you want to act, and somewhere you'll find a church in this society where you'll fit right in. That is true. I mean, to us, the gospel is like some sort of cafeteria line. We say, "Well, I'd like this. I don't want this. I want some of this. I want none of that. Give me some of this, and here's the way I want to live." And we think that we have sort of a *do-it-yourself*

religion. You talk to people. Here's what they'll say: "Well, I'm looking for a religion that suits me." Now wait a minute. Who are you—God? "I'm looking for a religion that suits me." I want to say it respectfully, but you'd better find one that suits God. I mean, you'd better find what God has said. Who are you—looking for one that "suits you"? There are those who pervert the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now folks, when it comes to gospel truth, there can be no compromise with the truth. It would be far better for a banker over here, in the bank, to say two plus two equals five or three than for me to stand up here, in this pulpit, today, and play loosely with the truth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Now every now and then, when you hear a preacher like yours truly, they'll say, "He's narrow-minded." Well, folks, I want to tell you, in the first place, you can be so broad-minded your brain will get thin in the middle. Did you know that? And you can be so open-minded your brain just may fall right out. Now I want my banker to be narrow-minded; I want my doctor to be narrow-minded; I certainly want my airplane pilot to be narrow-minded.

Why, in the things that really count, the things that count the most, the things that count for all eternity, why should we not stand up for that which is truth? I'm talking to you about truth, friend. You know, verses 8 and 9 almost seem unchristian. Look at it. Paul says, "*But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.*" And again, I want to tell you, Phillips translates that, "let him be damned." "*As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed*" (Galatians 1:8–9). Now our natural sensibilities—we'd just recoil at that and say, "Oh, that's so unkind; that is so bigoted; that is so prejudiced; that is so intolerant. Oh no, why, there's room for everything in religion." Folks, if one way is right, and only one way, then all the other ways are wrong. That is the gospel that Satan tries to pervert.

Now Paul says, "It's really not another gospel," in verse 7 (Galatians 1:7). He says, "It's not another. It just sounds like another, but it is really not another." I say again, many folks—many of them in our Baptist churches—have really no idea what they really believe.

One man asked a woman—he said, "What do you believe?" She said, "I believe what my church believes." "So what does your church believe?" "Well, my church believes what I believe." "Well, what do you and your church believe?" "Oh, we believe alike."

People have no idea what the gospel of Jesus Christ is, and they could not give you the gospel truth if you asked them to. Now don't think that I'm talking about a Baptist gospel. There's no Baptist gospel. It's Bible gospel. Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists, Episcopalians, Roman Catholics—whoever they are—the only way anybody is going to

go to Heaven is through the saving gospel of Jesus Christ. Now the first thing I want you to see is there is satanic opposition to the gospel. Satan fought it. He did in that day, and he will in this day.

II. The Settled Origin of the Gospel: God Thought It

Here's the second truth I want you to see: Friend, there is the settled origin of the gospel. God thought it. Now look, in verses 11 and 12. Paul is talking about this gospel. Look at it. He says, *"But I certify you, brethren,"*—I love that word *certify*—*"that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ"* (Galatians 1:11–12). What is the origin of the gospel? God thought it. It came from Almighty God. The gospel is not man's invention. It comes by divine revelation. Therefore, when it comes to the gospel, you put your intellect and your emotions to the side, and pick up your Bible. Put your intellect to the side.

So many times, we take the Word of God and parade it past the bar of human reasoning and judgment. You say, "Well, it doesn't seem right to me that there's only one way to be saved, and all others ways are wrong; that just is not logical for me." And so we try to bring human ingenuity, human wit, and wisdom, against the gospel. Now and then, if that doesn't work, well, we'll just bring our emotions. You say, "Well, that doesn't feel right to me. I mean, I just have a queasy feeling about that." Folks, again, I want to say respectfully, it doesn't matter what you think or what you feel; it's what God says that counts. You have to understand that.

How many pilots... Think of young JFK, young John F. Kennedy, Jr. He lost his life flying that airplane there, in the Northeast. I listen to the pilot's talk, and the pilot said, "If a man doesn't know how to read those instruments, he can have the idea that he is absolutely flying level, and he's going down." He can't tell it. If he says, "Well, I think I'm all right, and I feel I'm all right," friend, that does not change the altitude, the direction, of that airplane. And so many people are doing the same thing, making a tragic mistake in the realm of religion. They are flying by the seat of their trousers rather than by the instrument panel, which is God's Word.

Now folks, we have to understand that there is the divine origin of the Bible, the settled origin of the Bible. We're not looking for a new and a modern gospel for a new and a modern age. *If it's new, it's not true.* If it is new, it is not true. That's what Paul is saying. Look at it here, in this passage of Scripture, in verse 8: *"But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again"* (Galatians 1:8–9). Paul keeps repeating this. He wants them to understand it. "If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that we have received, let him be accursed"

(Galatians 1:8). What Paul is saying here is this: that if any new revelation ever comes down the trail, it's not of God—if anybody says there's a new gospel.

If an angel appears and says, "Look, I've got a new message from God," Paul says, "Don't believe it." Now folks, if an angel were to stand up here on this platform, today—I mean, a great, glorious, mighty angel, just glowing in whatever an angel would look like—and he would say, "Ladies and Gentlemen, I have been dispatched from Heaven. You folks at Bellevue are the first to know we've got an amendment to the gospel; we've got some additions to the gospel; we've got some modifications to the gospel," Paul says, "Let him be anathema—I don't care if he's an angel."

And then, look at it again. He says, in verse 8: "Though we, or an angel, preach from Heaven" (Galatians 1:8). Suppose Paul were to stand up later on, and come to the Galatians, and say, "Remember what I said over there when I wrote you that letter? Well look, I've gotten a new revelation. I have gotten some new insight. I want you to listen to me. I've changed my mind. There's another gospel." Paul said, "Don't you listen to me; don't listen to an angel."

Friend, it is settled once and for all. Do you have that? You know, everybody has the idea that somehow this idea of religion is just sort of migrating—it's just changing—and that we live in a new day, a new age; and, therefore, we need a new gospel. What Paul is saying—listen—he is saying it is not the messenger that validates the message; it is the message that validates the messenger.

So if a man stands up—and I don't care how many degrees he has; I don't care how eloquent he may be; I don't care what seminary he attended; I don't care how persuasive he may be—if he is not preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, he's a false prophet, and the wrath of God is upon him. Now I'm talking about the settled origin of the gospel. Paul says, "I didn't receive it from man; neither was I taught it. It came by revelation" (Galatians 1:12). So there's the satanic opposition to the gospel. Satan fought it. There is the settled origin of the Bible. God thought it—God thought it. It didn't come from man. It's from God mind. God thought it.

III. The Sacrificial Obtainment of the Gospel: Jesus Bought It

Now here's the third thing I want you to see—and that is the sacrificial obtainment of the gospel. Jesus bought it—Jesus bought it. I mean, how did we get this gospel? Where did it come from? Well, Jesus bought it. He obtained it with His rich, red, royal blood. Notice, in verse 7: This gospel "*is not another*;"—this false gospel—"*but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert*"—now, watch it—"*the gospel of Christ*" (Galatians 1:7).

Now how did Christ buy it? Well, go back to verses 3 and 4: "*Grace be to you...*"—remember I called it the *gospel of grace*?—"*Grace be to you and peace from God the*

Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (Galatians 1:3–5). Now the gospel that I'm preaching to you is the gospel that was purchased—obtained—with the precious blood of Jesus Christ. It is the gospel of the cross. It is the gospel of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It's a gospel that centers in Christ—not a gospel that simply mentions Christ or alludes to Christ. It is the gospel of Christ.

Do you know why so many churches are filled with people who've never been saved? They have never had a personal confrontation, an encounter—a faith encounter—with Jesus Christ. They've met a creed, but not Christ; they've met a cause, but not Christ; they've met a code, but not Christ; they've met a church, but not Christ.

Do you know Jesus Christ? I want to tell you today that Jesus Christ is real to me. I put my faith in Jesus Christ. It is, according to verse 7: *"the gospel of Christ"* (Galatians 1:7). And not just the gospel that brings Christ in—it centers in Him. It just doesn't mention Him, or give lip service to Him. Back when Paul wrote this, the pagans had many gods. As a matter of fact, if you go to Rome, you can visit a thing called the *Pantheon—Pantheon*. That means "many gods." A beautiful building—still standing, 2000 years old—where they had niches in the walls for all of the gods; and, you could worship this god, or this god. That made everybody happy.

Rome was not really a destroyer of religions; it would just bring all the religions together and just sort of syncretize all of the religions of the world. But friend, you can't do that with Jesus Christ. It's not Jesus *and*—it's Jesus *or*, and it's Jesus *only*. Remember this: *"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved"* (Acts 4:12). It is our sweet, dear, saving Savior who said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me"* (John 14:6). I want to tell you this, folks: *If* Jesus Christ *is not the* only way, *He is* none *of the ways*, because He is a liar, a fake, and an impostor. He was the One who said He was the only way. Now what kind of a liar, fake, fraud, impostor can be a Savior? No! *You can't just tip the hat to Jesus Christ. You have to bow the knee to Jesus Christ.*

Many a Christian in Paul's day could have saved his life if he had made Jesus just one of the ways to Heaven. Just offer a little pinch of salt to Caesar and say, "Yes, Jesus is Lord, but *Caesar Kurios*—Christ is Lord; Caesar is Lord. Now just let's all get along somehow." No, friend. There is the sacrificial obtainment of the gospel. It is purchased with the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus bought it. Look again, in verses 3 and 4—the Bible says, *"Grace be unto you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins, that he might*

deliver us from this present evil world” (Galatians 1:3–4).

Friend, don't you know this—that if there had been some other way for you to be saved apart from the death of Jesus Christ on the cross, God would have taken it? Be reasonable—be reasonable. Are you going to tell me that God allowed His darling, precious Son to die the most ignominious, excruciating death that a man has ever known, in agony and blood upon that cross, and yet there was some other way to be saved? If that is true, I have no respect for that god—a god who would allow his son to do that when there was some other way. I wouldn't want to meet that god in a dark alley. Friend, I'm telling you, if Jesus Christ is not the only way, God made a blunder at Calvary.

No wonder the Bible says, *“There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12)*. Paul says, *“I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation” (Romans 1:16)*. Friend, God Himself is powerless to save apart from the gospel of Jesus Christ, because God is a Holy God, and sin must be atoned, sin must be paid for. Now Satan fought it. God thought it; it didn't originate with man. Jesus bought it, and He bought it with His own precious blood.

IV. The Saving Operation of the Gospel: Grace Wrought It

Now here's the fourth thing I want you to see: I want you to see the saving operation of the gospel. Grace wrought it—grace wrought it. It is called the *gospel of grace*. Notice, in verse 6, he calls it the *gospel of grace* (Galatians 1:6). Grace is what causes God to love folks like we are: vile, worthless, unworthy, sinners by nature, sinners by birth, sinners by choice, and sinners by practice. Thank God for grace. Hallelujah for grace! Why are we saying the *grace of God*?

A. Seeking Grace

It is seeking grace. Look in verse 15. Paul talked about the grace that sought him. He says, *“But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace” (Galatians 1:15)*. “He called me by His grace.” When Paul got saved, he wasn't seeking Jesus, but Jesus was seeking him. You know, you say, “Well, today I'm just seeking the Lord.” Well, friend, the only reason you may be seeking the Lord is because He's first sought you. Don't get the idea that you just thought it up all by yourself.

The Bible says, in Romans chapter 3: “There is none that seeketh after God, no, not one—not one” (Romans 3:10–11). Well, you say, “But why then do I have this hunger? Why do I have this thirst for God?” Because He gave it to you.

Let's think about a natural thirst. We all get thirsty for liquid. God made us that way.

Why do we get thirsty? Because, God created us where we would have a thirst. Had God not created us to have a thirst, we would never get thirsty. I mean, we wouldn't just be walking down the street, saying, "You know, I'd better get some liquid. I'm going to dehydrate." No—God made us that way. That thirst that is in us is a gift of God, and that thirst for God that is in you is a gift of God.

B. Separating Grace

And it is seeking grace, and it is separating grace, according to this verse here that we're looking at, in verse 15: "It pleased God to do this" (Galatians 1:15). And so the grace that saved you, friend—and I want to tell you—is the God who loves you, and God is seeking for you. When God came in the Garden of Eden after Adam and Eve sinned, He said, "Adam, where are you?" (Genesis 3:9). That wasn't the voice of a detective. That was the voice of a loving God. God is seeking you today.

C. Saving Grace

You may be here today without Jesus Christ. I want to tell you, my friend, God is seeking for you. Thank God for His seeking grace, and that seeking grace, friend, is saving grace. Paul says here, in verse 16, that God "revealed His Son in me" (Galatians 1:16). Here was old Paul—lost, on the road to Hell, a hardened Pharisee—and he's saved by the grace of God. Ephesians 2:8 says, *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."*

What is grace? Grace is the free gift of God. You're not saved by joining a church; you're not saved by getting baptized; you're not saved by being a Gideon; you're not saved by singing in the choir; you're not saved by preaching a sermon; you're not saved by coming to church. You're saved by the grace of God—by the grace of God. It is saving grace. And that means it's not of works of any kind. Works don't save, and works don't help save. Romans 11:6—the Bible says, *"And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work."* You can't mix grace and works. If it's by grace, forget your good works. Baptism, whether a spoonful or a tank-full, can't take away your sin. Your prayers, your pilgrimages, anything you do—that cannot take away your sin.

D. Securing Grace

This seeking grace is saving grace; and, friend, it is securing grace. Do you know why you have eternal security? Because, you are saved by grace. Now if you were saved by works, your works fail, and you'd lose your salvation, wouldn't you? Grace can never fail. Down through all of the ages, you're going to just be saved because of the grace of God, and Paul was telling these Galatians this, over in Galatians 3:3. He said, "You foolish Galatians. *'Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the*

flesh?” Don’t you understand that the Spirit that has saved you is the Spirit that is going to perfect you and carry you all the way through? It is securing grace.

Now some people have the idea that they can get saved and lose their salvation after a while. People are so confused about this matter of salvation. Suppose you are out there in the deep briny blue, on a cruise ship, and you fall overboard, and the ship just goes off without you. Let’s say you’re about 10 miles offshore. Most of us can’t swim that far. You’re out there in the ocean, and maybe you don’t even know how to swim at all; and, up comes a man in a high-powered speedboat. And you’re just trying to keep your head above water. And suppose that man comes along, and he says, “Look, you’re drowning. Let me show you what you do.” And so he jumps in the water and begins to do the Australian crawl, and the backstroke, and the breaststroke, and all of that; and, he says, “You see, this is what you do.” Well, friend, that man’s not a savior—he’s an example. And you’re going *blub, blub, blub*—going under.

Or, suppose the man stays in the boat and begins to circle around you, and tells you what to do, and gives you instructions, takes out a book, and reads it—on swimming and safety—and, again, you drown. No, you don’t need an example; you don’t need an instructor. What you need is a savior.

Suppose he throws you a line, and pulls you in, and towels you down, and puts you in the boat. You say, “Oh, I have a savior,” and you start heading toward the shore; and then, he looks at you, and he says, “You know, you’re not sitting in this boat just right,” and he throws you overboard. He’s not a savior; he’s a probation officer.

Friend, Jesus is a Savior—Jesus is a Savior. Oh, thank God for His example; thank God for His teaching, and all of that. But He is a Savior. Salvation by grace is such an amazing thing. When people begin to understand it, they want to sing songs like “Amazing grace! How sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.”

E. Sufficient Grace

It is seeking grace; it is saving grace; it is securing grace. And friend, it is sufficient grace—all you’ll ever need. You’re not going to run out of the grace of God. Second Corinthians 9:8—the Bible says, “*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 9:8). You’ve got all you need. I can tell you this—I can testify to this: I’ve been on the trail a long time, and God’s grace has never been insufficient—never. You think you’re going to run out of grace? Is a minnow in the Atlantic Ocean going to run out of water? No. Thank God for His sufficient grace.

F. Surviving Grace

And it is surviving grace. Look, if you will, in verse 5: “*To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen*” (Galatians 1:5). You see, the Bible says, in the ages to come, we’re going

to be trophies of God's grace. And when you get up there in Glory, you're going to see Him, and He's going to point to you, and He's going to say, "There it is. David is there because of My grace. Jim is there; Bob is there; Adrian is there—we're all there because of the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

When we've been there ten thousand years
Bright shining as the sun
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we've first begun. (author unknown)

It is surviving grace.

V. The Singular Obsession with the Gospel: Paul Taught It

Here's the fifth and final thing I want to say about this gospel of grace: Friend, I want you to see the singular obsession with the gospel. Paul taught it. Now this is very important. Look, if you will, in verses 9 and 10 of this passage—he says, "*As we said before,*"—he said it once—"so say I now again,"—he's saying it again—"if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." And now notice what Paul says: "*For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ*" (Galatians 1:9–10).

Paul was obsessed with the gospel. It was a divine obsession. Now we all have a desire to please people. We all want to please. Did you know I really have a desire to please you? I really do. Do you know I like it when you say *amen*? Do you know I like it when you meet me afterwards and say, "You were a blessing to me"? If a preacher says he doesn't, I believe he's not telling the truth. I want to please you. I want to please my parents. I like to please my friends. I like to please people. But friend, I want to tell you something: I want to be like the Apostle Paul, who would say, "It doesn't matter whom I please, if I displease God." Now we all have people that we want to please; but, you see, if you try to please everybody, you're going to please the devil most of all. Paul loved these Galatians. Paul talked to them compassionately, but Paul is saying, "Look, I'm obsessed with the gospel. I'm not trying to please you."

Now Paul might have tried to please the civil authorities in Rome. Paul was a Roman citizen, and Galatia was an outpost there. And Paul could have fitted in and not gotten into so much trouble, but, you know, Paul knew that it was Jesus—not Caesar—that met him on the Road to Damascus. Friend, government—government—can't make us good; only Jesus can make us good. And you know, we ought to thank God for our governmental officials. Joyce and I joined hands today and prayed for the president, and prayed for the vice president, and prayed for governmental officials, as we do every Sunday morning. But friend, I want to tell you something: *The mayor may pave the road, but only Jesus can pave the way to Heaven.* We've got to please the Lord Jesus.

Now we, as Christians, ought to be involved in politics. We're not disenfranchised because we are Christians, but we can't let the gospel of Jesus Christ be identified with the Republican Party, the Democrat Party, the Independents, Libertarians, anybody else. We need to be able to tell them all to repent, get right with God. Now Moses didn't try to please Pharaoh; Elijah didn't try to please Ahab. It's an amazing thing.

You know, sometimes, in some churches, about this time of the year, the politicians—they come around. They come to church—and I'm glad they do, in a sense—and I always want to treat them with respect. But you know, in some churches, an usher will come up to the platform and say, "Pastor, So-and-so is in the church today; So-and-so is in the congregation today." Well, my advice is, "Well, tell him to sit down and get a Bible." We're here to preach. You know, when, in some churches, the politician comes in, they bring him right up to the platform and let him talk. You know, when I go down to City Hall, they don't say, "You know, Adrian Rogers is here. Let's stop business and let him preach." They don't do that. Paul says, "I'm not trying to please Rome."

And Paul wasn't trying to please the false teachers. There are false teachers around. And do you know the way to get along with everybody is just try to never mention true doctrine? There are some people, I'll guarantee you, there are some people right here today, saying, "That old narrow-minded, hellfire and brimstone preacher." Paul said—listen: "If any man preach any other gospel unto you, let him be damned; let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8). You say, "Unloving." Friend, that was not the way for Paul to get elected Clergyman of the Year. Paul said, "Look, I am not trying to win a popularity contest." If you want to be unpopular in today's day that puts a great virtue on tolerance, just preach the old-time religion and say, "There's one way—and only one way—to Heaven, and it's the gospel of Jesus Christ."

Paul didn't try to please his own family. Paul goes on to say, in this chapter, about how he's a Jew and how he was raised according to strict laws. You know what they thought about Paul? They thought Paul was a turncoat. They thought Paul had gone south on them, that Paul now had left them. And they were not pleased with him.

And some of you, if you give your heart to Jesus Christ, your family is not going to be pleased with you. Some of you kids—you go to school; you don't tell dirty stories; you don't read those magazines; you don't smoke that whatever it is; you don't pop that whatever it is; you don't sleep around. They are going to look at you like you're strange. You're not strange, friend. You're different—you're different. What was the obsession that Paul had? It was a singular obsession with the gospel. He was a gospel preacher, and he says, "I don't care whom it displeases—I'm going to preach the gospel." And you are looking at a man—God help me to mean this with my dying breath—I'm going to be preaching the old-time gospel of Jesus Christ, the saving gospel of Jesus Christ. It is

the gospel of grace. Satan fought it; God thought it; Jesus bought it; grace wrought it; Paul taught it. And we're to stand on that old-time gospel of Jesus Christ. Thank God for the gospel. Bow your heads in prayer.

Conclusion

While heads are bowed and eyes are closed, friend, I am telling you today that if you will receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, He will instantaneously, dramatically change you. He will save you. That doesn't mean you're going to sprout wings and get a halo, but He will save you and keep you saved—and that is the gospel truth. If you'd like to be saved, I invite you to pray a prayer like this, right now—forget that anybody else is here, and pray this prayer: “Lord Jesus, thank You that, with Your precious blood on the cross, You bought my salvation. And thank You, Lord, that I don't have to behave myself into Heaven, that I can trust You, and that You will save me. And Lord, right now, with all of my heart, like a little child, I put my faith, I put my trust, in You. I trust You, once and for all, now and forever, to save me. And Lord Jesus, begin now to make me the person You want me to be, and help me never to be ashamed of You. In Your dear name I pray. Amen.”

The Gospel Truth

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: April 25, 1982

Main Scripture Text: Galatians 1:6–12

“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel.”

GALATIANS 1:6

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Revelation Test
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Conclusion

Introduction

Take your Bibles, please, and turn to Galatians chapter 1—the book of Galatians. And I told the early congregation, “If you get Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians mixed up, and it’s hard for you to remember which comes first, remember this: General Electric Power Company—Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians. All right, start with Galatians, please, now—Galatians chapter 1. Today, we’re speaking on this subject: “The Gospel Truth”—“The Gospel Truth.”

You know, sometimes a man will be talking about the best fishing hole he’s ever seen. He’ll say, “Man, you just go off over there. I tell you, they’ve got bass in there, more bass than I’ve ever seen, way over five pounds a piece. That’s the gospel truth.” Well, it may be the truth; but it’s not the gospel truth. As a matter of fact, I doubt it’s the truth. But, anyway, he’ll say that. And then, in order to embellish it and to say it’s the truth, he’ll call it gospel truth. And he wouldn’t know the gospel if it came walking down

the main street with a tag around its neck. He doesn't know what the gospel truth is. What is the gospel truth? That's what we're going to be talking about: "The Gospel Truth," and how important it is that we understand what the gospel is.

You know, there was a preacher, an older preacher, one time who gave a testimony like this: He said, "You know, when I first started preaching, I started saying, "There's nothing better than the gospel. Then," he said, "the more I preached, and the more I studied, I changed that. I didn't say there's nothing better than the gospel." He said, "I started saying there's nothing as good as the gospel. And then," he said, "I preached for a while, and the more I learned about the Lord, and the more I learned about His truth, I changed that, and I started saying, 'There's nothing to be compared to the gospel.'" He said, "I preached that for a while. Now," he said, "I'm an old man, and the grey hair is there, and my loved ones are on the other side, and I've seen everything that counts." He said, "Now I say there's nothing but the gospel."

Now, friend, I believe he had it pretty well right. And so we need to understand what the gospel is, and we need to understand what gospel truth is—the gospel truth. So, let's see what the apostle says here in Galatians chapter 1, verse 6. He says, "*I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that which ye have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.*" (Galatians 1:6–12)

Now it is so very important that we understand what the gospel is, because there's so much religious confusion. Saturday night, I was driving in an automobile late at night, and I was listening to the radio. And I found a so-called gospel station. I wish you could have heard. No, I don't. I'm glad you didn't hear some of the things that I heard. One man would get on there and he preached one thing. And then, right after him—see, I was driving a long way—another man would come on, and he'd preach the opposite—both of them claiming to be Christians, both of them on a gospel station. And then, somebody else came along, and he preached something else.

And I tell you the truth, it was a confusing thing if a man did not know the Bible and know what the gospel truth is, because, you see, the devil doesn't want to deny the gospel. He's too smart for that, because he knows that every man has in his heart a hunger for God. So the devil is cleverer than to deny the gospel. What the devil does is

to pervert the gospel. What the devil does is to give you a substitute gospel. What the devil does is to give you a corrupted gospel, so if you have a synthetic gospel, you'll have a synthetic salvation. Isn't the devil very clever?

And so, notice what Paul says here in this word in Galatians chapter 1, verse 7. He speaks of a gospel "*which is not another; but there be some that trouble you,*"—and look at this next phrase—"*and would pervert*"—listen to that word: "*and would pervert*"—"*the gospel of Christ.*" (Galatians 1:7) You want me to tell you who the original pervert is? The devil himself. He has perverted the gospel. He has distorted the gospel. He has changed the truth of the gospel.

Now, Paul says there is but one gospel; there is but one truth. Now, today, you know, you're un-American if you talk that way. Why, they say, "He's the most bigoted man I've ever seen. He says there's only one way, and I suppose he thinks his way is the right way." No, I don't, friend. Not my way; God's way. I'm not talking to you about the Baptist gospel. I'm talking to you about the Bible gospel. And listen, friend. You're not bigoted. You're not prejudiced if you say there's just one way if God says there's just one way.

You know, in America today, it's like a cafeteria line: "If you don't like what you get there, just go on down here"—I'm talking about religious things—"or here, or here." "No, thank you. I'll have some of that; none of this, some of that, some of this, none of that, some of this, some of that," and you just go right on down the line. And you just write down what you want to believe and how you want to live, and I'll find a church somewhere within driving distance where you'll fit right in. It doesn't make any difference. I mean, you just think it up, whatever you want to practice, whatever you want to believe. What confusion there is in the world! And who is behind it? Mr. Devil himself, who has perverted the gospel of Jesus. And many people wouldn't know the gospel truth if they met it head on.

One man asked a woman, "What do you believe?" She said, "Well, I believe what my church teaches. I believe what they believe." And he said, "Well, what does your church believe?" "Oh, they teach what I believe." "Well, what do you and your church believe?" "Oh, we believe alike." I mean, they do not even really know. They really do not even know what they believe, or understand it.

And if you take a stand, doubtless somebody listening to this message today will say, "Well, you know, Dr. Rogers is a little narrow-minded." Well, frankly, folks, I want my pastor to be narrow-minded. If I had a pastor, I'd want him to be narrow-minded. I want my doctor to be narrow-minded. I mean, if I go to my doctor, and he examines me, and he says, "Well, it might be your heart or your liver, so I'll take out your appendix: who cares?" I mean, I don't want a doctor like that. I flew last night on an airplane. I got in there. And, well, you know, I want my pilot to be very narrow-minded. Boy, I love to fly

with a narrow-minded pilot. Boy, they're the best kind. I want that fellow just to go right by those instruments and right by that tower and everything else. I want a narrow-minded pilot. I want a narrow-minded doctor. I want a narrow-minded banker if he's taking care of my money and so forth.

Isn't it amazing, though, that when it comes to religion that deals with your eternal soul, your destiny forever, somebody says, "Oh well, you know, in religion, we ought to be broad-minded." You know, you can get so broad-minded your mind gets thin in the middle; you're so open-minded your brains will fall out. Let me tell you something, friend. We need to go to the Bible and see what the Bible has to say. It would be less dangerous to say two plus two equals five than it would be to change the truth of God's Word when it comes to the gospel.

Now, what is the gospel? How can we tell what the gospel is? Well, let me give you three tests for the gospel truth. Are you ready for them? The first test is with the word *revelation*. The second test deals with the word *operation*. And the third test with the word *personification*. Now I'll explain what I'm talking about here in just a moment.

I. The Revelation Test

But, first of all, the first test for the gospel is, where did your gospel come from? We're going to find out whether your gospel is true or not, the gospel you believe. From where did it come? Now, has it come from divine revelation? If it comes from divine revelation, then it is gospel truth.

Look at what I'm talking about. I'm reading now verses 11 and 12—Galatians 1, verses 11 and 12. Now, Paul says, "*But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man.*" That is, it is not some man's idea. "The gospel that was preached to me is not after man." Now, verse 12: "*For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.*" (Galatians 1:11–12) Now, Paul is saying, "This was not my idea. I didn't think it up. Neither was it somebody else's idea. Some other man did not teach it to me. The gospel that I preach to you came by revelation. God revealed it out of heaven." And that is the test for the gospel: Did it come from divine revelation?

You see, we have some theologians today—they call themselves theologians; and, actually, the word *theology* comes from two words: *theos*, which means "God"; and *logos*, which means "word"—some of these fellows ought not to call themselves theologians, because they don't know the *theos* and don't believe the *logos*, amen? I mean, they don't know God, don't believe the Word; so why should they call themselves a theologian? But we have some theologians today who call themselves existentialists. Now, that's a big word—hard to say, harder to spell—but you may be an existentialist without even knowing that you are one.

Now, what is existentialism? It's really just a way of saying, "Well, you know, there's nothing that we can just emphatically put our finger on and say, "This is truth," and emphatically put our finger on this over here and say, "This is error over here." These people would not say that the Bible is the Word of God. They would say the Bible contains the Word of God. Or they would even go beyond that, and they would say the Bible becomes the Word of God when it speaks to you. And it's sort of a form of subjectivism, that what you do is, you just kind of come to the Bible, and you meditate on it, and you muddle on it, and you ponder on it, and you think about it, and whatever kind of seems right to you is what is right for you. And it's what we call existentialism.

Now probably in America, we would change it, because we don't like words like *existentialism*. We just sort of say, "Well, you know, I'm looking for a church that suits me." Well, you'd better find one that suits God. And I'm not trying to be cocky or smart. But, you see, the existential sort of a view is that you kind of make yourself the sum and the substance, the center and the circumference of what is right or what is wrong.

And so, you read something here in the Bible, but you don't necessarily say, "Well, God said it, I believe it, and that settles it." What you do is say, "Well now, let me see. Now, the Bible says that there is an eternal, everlasting hell. And, man, I just—oh, my, no; it's hard for me to believe a person will just go to hell forever. No, I just don't accept that—I just don't accept that." You make yourself the sum and the substance. Or, "the Bible says that Jesus is the only way to heaven. Oh well, now, wait a minute. What about all those other folks? Yeah, I know that the Bible says that; but now, look, that's not exactly reasonable. That doesn't seem right to me," you say. And what you do is you take the Word of God and parade it past the judgment bar of your mind. And you admit certain things and you exclude certain things. You see, what you have become, whether you can even spell it or not, is an existentialist. And you're not looking for a gospel of divine revelation.

But the Bible says that this gospel is not man's idea. Paul said, "I didn't get it from man. I wasn't taught of man. It is of divine revelation." And then, Paul said an amazing thing. I want you to look here at what he says in verse 8: "*But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.*" (Galatians 1:8)

Now, that word *accursed* means "let the wrath of God be upon him; let him be anathema; let him be accursed." Phillips translates it this way—and you might well translate it this way: "Let him be damned." Now he's not cursing. He's not using foul language. What he means is that the wrath of God, the judgment of God, the anathema of God is upon any man, any person, anywhere who preaches anything but the divinely revealed gospel.

Now, that brings me to say this: that *you do not measure the message by the man;*

you measure the man by the message. You see, the man does not validate the message; the message validates the man. You may have preacher, some preacher in your congregation, your church somewhere; he may be suave; he may be articulate; he may be educated; he may have as many degrees as a thermometer; he may know history; he may know all of it; he may stand up there and say something—but I want to tell you, friend, if he doesn't preach the gospel, he's a false prophet—I don't care what he has. Listen to what Paul says. Look at it again in verse 8: *“But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you...”*

Now, listen. Suppose right now right in that door or through that ceiling were to come an angel—I mean, an angel; no doubt about it, an angel. I don't know what one would look like. But let's just say when we saw him, we knew, “Boy, that's an angel.” It's certainly not Tom Clayton. It's an angel. And he comes up here, and he is an A-number one, twenty-four-karat gold, certified, bona fide angel. And he says, “Now, folks, you at Bellevue Church are the first ones to know it, but God is ushering in a brand new plan. He sent me from heaven just like He sent the angel that talked to the Virgin Mary. You are a chosen congregation. There is a brand new plan. There is a new way. There is another gospel.” Paul said, “Don't believe it! If an angel”—an angel, an angel—“said that, don't believe it.” Paul says, “If I say it, don't believe it.” Look. He says, “If we, or an angel from heaven...” Paul says, “If I come along later and say, ‘Folks, you know what I used to say? I've changed my mind. I've been to seminary. I've changed my mind, got my degree; changed my mind, got a new revelation, learned some more truth; God gave me something else’—if I change my mind, if I backslide, if I come to you later on and say ‘this wasn't it; something is new,’” Paul says, “don't believe me. Even if I say it; if an angel says it—I don't care who says it—there is but one gospel.”

And the Bible says we're to *“earnestly contend for the faith which was once [for all] delivered unto the saints.”* (Jude 1:3) And, friend, if it's new, it's not true—if it's new, it's not true. Knowledge may double, but not truth. Truth can never double. It can never be diminished. Truth is truth. And it is settled in eternity. And what we need in America is not a new and a modern gospel for a new and a modern age. What we need is a generation of preachers who'll stand on their two hind feet and preach the old-time gospel that was once for all delivered to the saints. That's what Paul says. Paul says, “If an angel, or anybody else, comes and preaches...” Dear friend, it doesn't matter how many degrees, how much credentials, what kind of ability, personality, background; it makes no difference. The gospel truth is the gospel that was revealed from heaven.

II. The Operation Test

And so, that's the first test for the gospel truth: the revelation test, okay? Now, the second test of the gospel truth is not only the revelation test, but it is the operation test.

How does your gospel operate? Well, it's got to operate like the Bible says that it will operate. And how does the true gospel operate? By the grace of God. Look in verse 6—Galatians chapter 1 and verse 6. Paul said, *“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel.”* (Galatians 1:6) You see, the other gospel is in opposition to the grace of Christ. Now, there is a true gospel, and then there's another gospel, which is not another. That is, it's not a gospel at all. It just goes under the name *gospel*.

People talk about the social gospel, or this gospel. There is one gospel, friend: the saving gospel of Christ. There's just one gospel, and that is salvation by grace through faith. It is the gospel of grace or it is not the gospel at all. Now it not only is divine in its revelation, but it is divine in its operation. You see, we are saved by the gospel, and it is the gospel of grace.

Now, what do we mean by grace? God's Riches at Christ's Expense—G-R-A-C-E, grace—God's Riches at Christ's Expense. Grace means that God loves us when we don't deserve to be loved. God saves us when we don't have enough strength to save ourselves. *“God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”* (Romans 5:8) There is that gospel of grace—that it's *“not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.”* (Titus 3:5)

Now, let me just tell you something about this grace of God that saves you.

A. Gospel Grace Is Seeking Grace

First of all, it is seeking grace. Look, if you will, in verse 6: *“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ.”* (Galatians 1:6) You see, God called you. Do you know the reason that you sought Him is He first sought you? This grace is seeking grace. You say, “Well, it was my idea to get saved.” No, it wasn't your idea. *“We love him,”* the Bible says, *“because he first loved us.”* (1 John 4:19) The Bible says, *“There is none that seeketh after God...no, not one.”* (Romans 3:11–12) You say, “Well, I sought Him.” But the only reason you sought Him is because He made you hungry to seek Him, because He sent His Spirit into your heart to call you, to woe you, to win you, to bring you to Jesus Christ.

Have you ever been thirsty? What causes you to go get a drink of water? Well, you're thirsty. Well, who gave you that thirst? God created you. When God created you, God created you and God made you so that you would have a thirst. I mean, most of us would probably dehydrate if we just had to think, “Now, you know, it's been a long time since I've had any water, and I've got to keep my body fluids up or I'll dehydrate.” And you don't have a speck of thirst, but you just go drink anyway. No, no, no, no! You drink because you're thirsty. And the thirst is a God-given, God-instilled bent. God built into you thirst.

Now, in the same way, this hunger that you have for God is there because God first sought you and God first called you. It is seeking grace. And you're here today, and this message is God seeking you and God calling you. God loves you so much. God has taken the initiative to call you.

B. Gospel Grace Is Saving Grace

But, secondly, look. Not only is it seeking grace; it is saving grace. It is saving grace. In Ephesians chapter 2, verses 8 and 9, the Bible says, "*For by grace are ye saved...*"—"*for by grace are ye saved*"—"*...and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:*"—now, listen to this next phrase—"*not of works, lest any man should boast.*" (Ephesians 2:8–9) You're not saved by works. If you were saved by works, you could boast about it. If you were saved by keeping the Ten Commandments, you could boast about it. If you were saved by church membership and baptism, you could boast about it. If you were saved by obeying the Golden Rule, you could boast about it. If you were saved by being a good boy, you could boast about it. But you'll not be able to boast about it. All glory to the Lamb who saved us by His grace, amen?

That doesn't mean you're not supposed to work.

*I cannot work my soul to save;
For that my Lord has done.
But I will work like any slave
For love of God's dear Son.*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

But I don't work in order to be saved; I work because I've been saved: "*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.*" (Ephesians 2:8–10) Not saved by good works; created unto good works. I don't do good works in order to be saved, but because I have been saved. I've been saved by the grace of God.

But the devil would like to pervert that grace. You know what the devil will tell you? "Well, sure, you're saved." "But it's grace." "Oh, yes, yes, yes, grace; but now you've got to be baptized to be saved, too. See, that's part of it." The devil just mixes a little works in there. It sounds so good. Or, "you've got to do this to be saved. Sure, you're saved by grace plus." Friend, grace plus is not grace.

Now, learn this: Grace plus is not grace. Let me give you a verse—jot it down—Romans 11:6: "*And if by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace.*" The minute it becomes grace-plus, it's not grace anymore. "*And if by grace, it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace.*" And then he turns it around and says, "*And if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.*"

(Romans 11:6) You know what he means? You can't mix them. Make up your mind: Is it grace or works? You can't have it both ways. Either you're going to be saved by grace, or you're going to be saved by works. *"And if by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work."* Make up your mind, dear friend. You can't have it both ways.

Now, remember I told you that the devil would pervert the gospel? Here's what the devil says. He says, "Sure, you're saved by grace, but it's grace plus works." It sounds so good. And they even have an illustration for it. They say, "Well, you know, it's like this: it's like rowing a boat. This oar over here, we'll call it grace. This oar over here, we'll call it works. Now, everybody knows if you just pull on one oar, you'll go around a circle this way. And if you just pull on this oar, you go around a circle this way. But if you pull both oars, man, that's the way to row a boat." Well, you're right. But there's just one thing wrong with that illustration. We're not going to heaven in a rowboat.

Now, friend, listen. We are going to heaven by the grace of God, or we're not going—we're not going. It is seeking grace. It is saving grace: *"For by grace are ye saved."*

We're not saved by just simply trying to be nice people. Suppose you fell off an ocean liner, and you're out in there in the middle of the ocean, and that liner just goes right on. And you can swim about as far as from here to this wall maybe before you'd go under. And you say, "Well, I'm going to perish." And about that time a man comes up in a motorboat and he spins around you several times. You say, "Well, I'm saved." But the man cuts the engine off, and he takes out a little manual and he says, "Now, listen to me, mister. You're in real trouble. Here are ten lessons on swimming," and he starts to read it to you. Why, you're going under! He certainly wouldn't be a savior. He might be an instructor, but he wouldn't be a savior.

Well, suppose he says, "Well, I see that's not working," and so he strips off his clothes down to his trunks and he dives in and he swims all around you. He does the Australian crawl. He does the backstroke. He does the breaststroke. He floats a while. He says, "See there." You say, "*Blub, blub, blub.*" And he's not a savior. He may be an example, but he's not a savior.

Well, suppose after a while, in compassion, he pulls you out as you're going under for the last time, puts you in his boat, opens up the throttle, and starts toward the shore. And after a while, he says, "I don't like your manners, the way you're behaving in this boat," and throws you out. Well, he wasn't a savior. He was a probationary officer.

I want to tell you, friend, Jesus is a Savior—a Savior, not a lecturer; not an example; not a probationary officer. You are sought by grace, and you are saved by grace, not of works, lest any man should boast. I'm not saying you ought not to do good works. But

works are the fruit; grace is the root. You trust Christ to save you.

C. Gospel Grace Is Sufficient Grace

But not only is it seeking grace, and not only is it saving grace; but I want to tell you, dear friend, this grace is sufficient grace. Let me give you a beautiful verse. You might memorize it this week—2 Corinthians 9, verse 8. Are you ready for it? Listen to it. Just jot it down and turn to it later—2 Corinthians 9, verse 8: *“And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.”* (2 Corinthians 9:8) Isn’t that a great verse? Listen to it: *“And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound unto every good work.”* Sufficient grace—that’s the reason that God said to Paul, *“My grace is sufficient for thee.”* (2 Corinthians 12:9) Friend, you’ll never run out of God’s grace, and you’ll never be disappointed in God’s grace.

I have a preacher friend who went with another friend to see the ocean for the first time. My preacher friend had seen it many times, but his friend had never seen the ocean. I imagine there are some in this congregation, certainly, who’ve never seen the ocean. You’ve seen a big body of water, but you’ve never been to the ocean. I, of course, was born down in West Palm Beach. I have seen the ocean many times. And it’s almost inconceivable to me that a person has not seen the ocean. But there are people who’ve not seen snow or mountains or the ocean or whatever. And so this man was ready to see the ocean for the first time.

They were in California. They were going to see the Pacific Ocean. They finally waited for that golden moment. They drove up the hill there on the bluff—and there it was: that beautiful, blue, vast, swelling, heaving ocean. They both got out. They stood there. The man who’d never seen the ocean before looked and he looked and he looked, but he didn’t seem to be so excited. And my friend said to him, “What’s wrong?” He said, “It’s not as big as I thought it would be.”

Friend, let me tell you something. God’s grace is not limited by your horizon. And don’t you limit the grace of God. There’s more, so much more, than you ever dreamed, than you ever thought, then your finite mind or eyes or heart or will or emotions can take in. This grace that is God’s seeking grace; this grace that is God’s saving grace; this grace is God’s sufficient grace.

D. It Is Surviving Grace

And I want to tell you, it will be God’s surviving grace. Ephesians chapter 2 and verse 7 says, *“that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace”*—*“in the ages to come.”* (Ephesians 2:7) We sing that song, “Amazing grace, how sweet the sound”—and you remember how it ends: “When we’ve been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun, we’ve no less days to sing His praise than

when we first begun.” God’s surviving grace.

Now, friend, any gospel that is not the gospel of grace is not the gospel at all. Did you understand that? Oh, please don’t miss it. Don’t you let some legalist get you with some sort of a works righteousness and tell you, if you’ll be a good boy, then you can go to heaven. Don’t get somebody to make you believe that God is like Santa Claus, making a list, checking it twice, going to find out who’s naughty or nice, and at the end of time God’s going to bring you into judgment and say, “Well, your good works outweighed your bad works: go to heaven”; or, “Your bad works outweighed your good works: go to hell.” That’s not the way it works. Salvation is a gift of God. It comes by the grace of God: *“For by grace are ye saved through faith.”* Do you understand it? You do? Praise the Lord!

III. The Personification Test

All right now, listen. Here’s the third thing. Pay attention. Pay attention. If it is the gospel truth, it is going to be divine in its origin. It’s going to be divine in its operation. It is going to come by divine revelation and it will never change. And it is going to be the gospel of grace. It’s going to be divine in its operation. But also, it’s going to be divine in its personification. Look, if you will again, in verse 7. Paul speaks of that gospel which is not another, but he says, *“There be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.”* (Galatians 1:7)

Jesus is the personification of the gospel. To say the gospel and to say Jesus is almost like saying the same thing, because Christ is the gospel. There can be no gospel message apart from the Lord Jesus Christ. When you receive the gospel, you receive Christ. That’s what Paul said in 1 Corinthians chapter 15: “This then is the gospel that we preached unto you, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, how that He was buried, how that He was raised again from the dead according to the Scriptures.” (1 Corinthians 15:1–4) The gospel is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus—of Jesus! He’s the personification of the gospel. What is salvation? Salvation is not a church, not a creed, not a code, not a cause; it is Christ.

A. Christianity Is Not a Church

Why are there so many unsaved people who are religious? I’ll tell you why many of them are unsaved and yet religious. They have come to a church and joined a church, but they’ve never met Christ. Salvation is not a church. You can be a member of Bellevue Church and go to hell. And you can get excited about a church. You can come, and, my goodness, who wouldn’t get excited to hear Susan Stehl sing “Special Delivery?” Hear this choir. Meet these friends. All that’s fine, wonderful. But that won’t save you. You can have *churchianity* and not be saved.

B. Christianity Is Not a Creed

Christianity is not a church. It's not a creed. You say, "Oh, but I believe right." You can believe right and go straight to hell. I've told you before, *you're not saved by the plan of salvation; you're saved by the man of salvation: His name is Jesus.* I'm not saying you ought to believe wrong, but I'm just simply saying that Christianity is not a creed. You can have your creed right. You, dear friend, can dot every *i* and cross every *t*, but you just misspelled the word, because you think the word is *creed* when the word is *Jesus*. The word is *Jesus*. Come to think of it, there's not an *i* or a *t* in that word. Jesus! Jesus!

C. Christianity Is Not a Code

It's not a creed. It's not a code. You say, "Well, I don't do that. I don't drink. I don't steal. And I don't lie. And I don't lust. And I am nice. And I am kind. Am I'm generous." So what? Good, fine, wonderful. But Christianity is not a code. *I talked to a man about being saved. He said, "Well, you're right, Mr. Rogers. I need to be saved. As a matter of fact, I've already taken care of it. I used to drink, but now I've stopped drinking." Well, so what? He'll go to hell sober.* Not a code.

D. Christianity Is Not a Cause

It's not just simply a way to live. Somebody says, "Well, I'm working hard. Boy, I'm feeding people and housing people. I'm doing good to people." Fine, wonderful. But Christianity is not a cause.

E. Christianity Is Christ

It is not a church. It is not a creed. It is not a code. It is not a cause. It is not a church. It is Christ. It is Christ! It is Christ! It is the gospel of Christ. Salvation is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. *"As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God."* (John 1:12) Dear friend, when you repent of your sin and open your heart, God, by His grace, saves you. And how does He save you by His grace? He sends His own dear Son into your heart and into your life to make you a new creature. You're born again. He is the personification of the gospel.

Conclusion

Have you met Christ? Jesus Christ is more real to me this morning than Tom Clayton sitting over there. That's right. I'm not exaggerating. Christ is real. Is He real to you? Does God's Spirit bear witness with your spirit that you are a child of God? You see, now I don't mean just tacking Christ onto your life.

You know, the old-time pagans, they used to have different gods in their life, whatever they wanted. Now, if they wanted the flowers to bloom and have a nice crop,

they had a fertility god, and they would burn incense to their fertility god. And if they wanted the sun to shine, they had a sun god, and they worshipped that. If they wanted rain, they had a rain god, and they worshipped him. Different gods. You know, today, somebody will have a stock market god, and this kind of a god, and that kind of a god. They would worship their gods. And they had these gods in little niches there in the house.

And when the Romans took over that ancient world, they didn't tell these folks, "You can't have these gods anymore." They were too smart for that. They didn't want to start a holy war. They said, "Bring your gods and come on. But remember that Caesar is lord. Caesar is lord. So, if you want to have all your religions, just have at it." And so they even built a building called the Pantheon for all the gods—a little niche for this god, a little niche for that god. And these Christians came along, and they said, "Christ is Lord." And they said, "Well, yeah, that's fine. If you want your god, if you want Jesus, that's fine. We'll make Him one more. Let's see, we'll call Him... Well, He'll be the Jesus God. And we'll put Him here, and we'll put the sun god here, and the rain god here, and the fertility god here." "No, no, no, no, no! He's not just one of the gods. He is Lord!" "Oh," they say, "you're a trouble maker." "No, just Jesus is Lord." "Oh, you won't fit in." "No, just Jesus is Lord." "Oh, you won't burn incense to Caesar?" "No, Jesus is Lord!" It cost some of them their lives.

Jesus will not be something tacked on to your life. No, no, no! It's not enough for you to admire Jesus. You're not to tip your hat; you're to bow your knee. People come to church on Sunday morning and pay their respects, sing the songs, put a little in the offering plate, greet their friends, and go back and live their lives as pagans. Is Christ the Lord of your life? "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord, thou shalt be saved." (Romans 10:9)

What is the true gospel? Dear friend, the revelation of it is that it came down from heaven. The operation of it is that you're saved by grace. The personification of it is Jesus Christ. It is the gospel of grace—a personal, real, devotional, vital relationship with Jesus Christ that the Bible calls being saved. That's the gospel. And, friend, *"though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool"* (Isaiah 1:18) when you trust in Christ. And that is the gospel truth.

There's Only One Gospel

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: May 3, 1987

Main Scripture Text: Galatians 1:6–12, 18

Outline

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Conclusion

Introduction

I want you to take your Bibles, please, and turn to the Book of Galatians chapter 1. In a moment, we're going to begin reading in verse 6. But I want to tell you, dear friend, that there's something the devil had rather do than deny the gospel. You say, "What on earth could that be, Pastor?" Well, rather than denying the gospel, the devil would like to distort the gospel. The devil would like, somehow, to pervert the gospel, so that people who feel the need of a gospel will take a substitute gospel—which is not really another gospel—and never will see their need for the genuine and the true gospel, and, therefore, be eternally lost. You're going to see that in the message that we're about to bring, entitled, "There is but One Gospel"—"There is but One Gospel."

I want to tell you we don't need a new and a modern gospel for a new and a modern age. Friend, if it's new, it's not true. If the old gospel is not absolute, it's obsolete. But it will never become obsolete. I want you to begin reading with me, please, in verse 6—read what the Apostle Paul said: "*I marvel*"—the word *marvel* here means "I am amazed; I am astounded"—"*that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.*" Now notice—The devil does not deny the gospel so much as he does pervert, or change, the gospel of Christ: "*But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I*

yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ” (Galatians 1:6–12).

Now there’s an astounding thing happening in the world today in the realm of religion. We have all kinds of esoteric cults, sects, and interpretations in variegated things, that are sometimes called the gospel, that have no relation whatsoever to the gospel. And in America, if you want to have religion, and you don’t find what you want right away, just keep looking and you’ll find it. It’s like a great big cafeteria line. You just keep moving and you will find it. And there are a lot of people who have the philosophy that, it really doesn’t make any difference. You witness to some people, and they’ll say something like this: “Well, I’m looking for a religion that suits me.” If somebody says that to me, I think, “Well, who are you? God?” I mean, if you are looking for a religion that suits you, you’d better find one that God has given. You’d better find one that pleases God. And then, you find out what God has said, and line up with God.

Now when you say that there’s only one gospel, that sounds bigoted; it sounds prejudiced; it sounds narrow-minded. But friend, I want to tell you there is but one gospel, and it’s not the Baptist gospel, it’s not the Methodist gospel, it’s not the Presbyterian gospel, and it’s not the Catholic gospel. It’s the Bible gospel. And if you have any other kind of gospel, it is not the true gospel. There is but one gospel.

Now I hope that doesn’t sound narrow-minded to you; but, friend, you know, I believe in narrow-mindedness in a lot of areas. When I go to the bank, I want my banker to be narrow-minded. When he’s counting my money, I want him to believe that two and two is four and not three. I like a banker that’s narrow-minded. When I’m flying on an airplane, I really do like a pilot who is narrow-minded. You know, I just like a pilot who believes he’s going to be narrow-minded, and he’s going to go by that little checklist, and he’s going to obey the rules. That makes me feel good.

When I go to a doctor, I really do like a narrow-minded doctor. I don’t want to go to a doctor who says, “Well now, there’s something wrong with you, but we don’t want to quibble about it, and we certainly don’t want to be narrow-minded about it. It could be your big toe, or it could be your esophagus; so we will amputate your liver.” I don’t want that kind of a doctor to be my doctor.

When I go to the pharmacist and get medicine, I really do want a narrow-minded pharmacist. I mean, if he’s got all those things on his shelf that could do me damage, or harm or help and heal me, I want him to be extremely narrow-minded. But isn’t it strange that, in the most important realm of all, that deals with our relationship to Almighty God and our eternal destiny, there are some people who think that we have no right to be narrow-minded. Folks, if there was ever a time that we ought to be narrow-minded, ever a subject that we ought to be concerned about, it is this subject called the

gospel of Jesus Christ.

Now many folks don't know the gospel; they don't have the foggiest about what the gospel is. They'll talk about the gospel. They'll tell some yarn, or some story, and say, "That's the gospel truth." They wouldn't know the gospel truth if the gospel truth came walking down the road with a sign around its neck that says, "This is the gospel truth." They wouldn't recognize the gospel; they don't know what the gospel is, really. Of course, the gospel, you know, if you are a Bible Christian—the word *gospel* means "good news," and it's primarily the good news concerning Jesus Christ.

One man asked one of these giddy women, "What do you believe?" "Oh," she said, "I believe what my church believes." He says, "Wonderful, what does your church believe?" "Oh," she says, "my church believes what I believe." "Well," he says, "What do you and your church believe?" "Oh," she said, "we all believe the same thing."

Now that's the way a lot of folks are. They don't have any idea what the true gospel is. Now I want to talk to you about the gospel, the true gospel, and I want to show you, this morning, there is only one gospel. Now if you want to find out what the gospel is—and the true gospel—I want to give you three tests this morning.

I. The Source Test—Where Did the Gospel Come From?

The very first test is the source test: Where did that gospel come from? Well, the source test is this: It must come from God or it's not the true gospel. Notice, Galatians chapter 1, verse 11, the Apostle Paul said, "*But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man.*" That is, I didn't receive it from some man: "*For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ*" (Galatians 1:11–12). That is, this is not something that man cooked up. It is something that God has sent down. This gospel that we preach comes by divine revelation.

Now today, we have, as I've already said, a lot of people who want to substitute, "thus saith the mind of man," for "thus saith the Word of God." We have, in theology, a kind of thought that's called *existentialism*. That's a big double-jointed, obtuse word. You may have never heard it before, may never care to hear it again. But what does the existentialist do? What does he believe? Well, he says that the Bible is not necessarily the Word of God, but that it contains the Word of God, and that, as he reads the Bible, he sees those things in the Bible that seem to bear witness with his heart. And God speaks to him out of the Bible, and what God says to him out of the Bible is true; so, he affirms what his heart and his mind feels is true. He has what he calls an *existential* relationship with God, and with truth.

Now friend, let me tell you what it really boils down to is subjectivism, and he just takes the Word of God, and parades it past the judgment bar of his mind. And if that seems good, he accepts it; and, if it seems bad, he rejects it. And if he says, "Well, it

doesn't seem to be rational and fair that Jesus Christ should be the only way to God; so, I just reject that." Or, "It doesn't seem right to me that men should suffer eternally in Hell; so, I just reject that." Or, "It doesn't seem right to me that you're saved by grace, and not by works of any kind; surely, man must do something." You know, this idea of salvation by grace is always an insult to human pride and dignity isn't it? So he just parades those things past the judgment bar of his mind, and he accepts some things, and rejects others.

We have a little saying around here, many years ago: "God said it. I believe it. That settles it." And that's a pretty good saying, until somebody upgraded it even better: "God said it. That settles it, whether you believe it or not." Amen? I mean, it is the Word of God. And what the Apostle Paul said is this: that "the gospel that I preached to you, I didn't receive it from man. I didn't learn it from any man. The source of the gospel is God. It came down to me from, by divine revelation. And it is not to be changed, not at all" (Galatians 1:11–12). You can't change the gospel.

Now I want you to learn this, dear friend: It is not the messenger that validates the message; it is the message that validates the messenger, when it comes to the gospel. Now what do we mean by that is this: Look, if you will, and see what the Apostle Paul said here. It's a very strange thing here; it sounds so narrow. But look, he says in verse 8: "*But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed*" (Galatians 1:8). Now look at that word *accursed*. The word *accursed* literally means, "let him abide under the judgment of God." Let him be *anathema*. J. B. Phillips, in his translation, translates it this way: "let him be damned." If a man preaches any other gospel, the curse of God, the wrath of God, is upon him.

Now again, I want to say, it is not the man that validates the message; it is the message that validates the messenger. Suppose a man comes with a double Ph.D.—he's very learned, he's very charming, he's very intelligent, and very logical. And he says, "I've got a new gospel for you." The Bible says, the curse of Almighty God is upon that man (Galatians 1:8). The curse of God is upon him.

Why, the Apostle Paul, listen to how strongly he says it—look in verse 8: "*But though we, or an angel from heaven*" (Galatians 1:8). The Apostle Paul says, "Well, now, suppose later on I were to come to you, and I were to say to you, 'Look, I've changed my mind. Remember that gospel that I used to preach to you? Well, I've gotten an update on the gospel, and now God has changed the gospel; there's a new gospel, there's a different gospel.'" Paul says, "Even if I, the Apostle Paul, tell you there's a new gospel, let the curse of God be on me."

And then, he says something very strange. He says, "If we, or an angel from Heaven, preach any other gospel unto you." Now just imagine—just imagine an angel

stepping in from Heaven, and standing on this platform this morning; I mean, an angel—no ifs, ands, and buts about it; anybody can see he's an angel; I mean, a bright, shining, glorious angel just materialized right here on this platform. Everybody would say, "Ahhhh, an angel." And suppose that angel were to say, "Pastor Rogers, I have been dispatched from Heaven to tell the people of Bellevue Baptist church that the gospel is now being changed; it is being moderated; it is being amended. There is a new gospel, a different gospel, a new and modern gospel for a new and a modern age." The Apostle Paul says, "Let that angel go to Hell." Let him go to Hell; let him be damned; let him be accursed. "If we or an angel from God preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8).

What I'm trying to say, ladies and gentlemen, is this: that, when it comes to the gospel, you lay your intellectual pride in the dust, and you see what God has said. Paul said, "I didn't learn this from man. It's not of man; it's a revelation from God. And it is settled; it is fixed for all eternity." And the Bible says, we "*should earnestly contend for the faith [that] was once [for all] delivered to the saints*" (Jude 1:3).

II. The Salvation Test—How Do We Know We Are Saved?

Now there's a second step that you would put if you would want to understand what the true gospel is. And not only the source test but, my dear friend, the salvation test. How does the gospel teach that we're saved? You see, the gospel message is always salvation by grace. Look, if you will, please, in verse 6. Paul says, "*I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another*" (Galatians 1:6–7).

Now on the one hand is the grace of Christ; on the other hand is a false gospel, "*another gospel, which is not another.*" Any gospel that is not a grace gospel is not a true gospel. That's what we're saying. Dear friend, the gospel that I'm talking to you about is the gospel of grace. And it is the gospel of salvation by grace, not of works.

Now in the world today most all of the false religion knows absolutely nothing of the gospel of grace. Now what do we talk about when we say *grace*? What is grace, anyway? Grace. We have a little acrostic that we use here, and we say that grace means, "God's Riches At Christ's Expense." Grace means, it is what God has done for us, through the Lord Jesus Christ. It is God's unmerited favor, freely bestowed upon Hell-bound, unmeriting sinners, who deserve and merit only Hell. But God loves us by his grace; as we said earlier, He just simply loves us. He doesn't love us, because we're valuable; we're valuable, because He loves us.

A. It Is Seeking Grace

And what kind of grace is the grace that saves us? Well, we see right here, first of

all, it is seeking grace. Notice, in verse 6: *“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ”* (Galatians 1:6). Underscore that phrase: *“that called you into the grace of Christ.”* Look, if you will, in verse 15: *“But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace”* (Galatians 1:15). Now what does that tell us? It means that salvation is so much in the heart and mind of God that it begins with God calling you to be saved. You see, God calls everyone to salvation. We did not get saved because we sought God. We got saved because God first sought us. The Bible says, *“We love him, because he first loved us”* (1 John 4:19).

Don’t get the idea that God saved you, because you went out and sought Him one day. The Bible says, in Romans chapter 3, verse 11: *“There is none that seeketh after God...no, not one”* (Romans 3:11–12). Not one. “Well,” you say, “I sought Him.” Well, the reason that you sought Him was because He first sought you. He took the initiative. And so really, what you call your seeking Him was really His seeking you, because God put it in your heart. Do you understand that?

Back in the sixth grade, there was a girl—boy, I looked at her, and my heart just melted. Boy, she—I liked her style. So I wrote a little love note. And I walked past her desk, and I dropped that little love note at her desk. Her name was Joyce; she is now my wife. And she picked up that note. She never paid any attention to me. For all I knew, she didn’t even know who I was. But she loved me, because I first loved her. But I picked...—I remind her of that—I took the initiative. And we still have that note. It’s in the archives. It’s church history. That note is right there. Now listen—I took the initiative and she loved me because I first loved her.

You see, you get thirsty, and when you get thirsty, you drink water. Now you know you would not drink water, unless God made you thirsty. I mean, you wouldn’t sit around intellectually, and say, “Well, you know, I’ve got to put some liquid in me, lest I get dehydrated and die.” No, God knows that, if He wants you to have water, first of all, He must build a thirst in you. Now spiritually, God built a thirst for God in you. And that thirst for God has made you thirsty for God. And you love Him, because He first loved you. You respond to Him, because He first called you. That’s grace, friend. That’s amazing grace. It is seeking grace.

B. It Is Saving Grace

And not only is it seeking grace; therefore, it is saving grace. Ephesians 2, verses 8 and 9—you know 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). Don’t try to work your way to Heaven.

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)

But I don't work in order to be saved; I work because I've been saved. "By grace" means that it is all of God and none of man.

There are three kinds of religion in the world: two of them are wrong, and one of them is right. One kind of religion is spelled *do—do*. If you'll do this, and do this, and do this, then maybe you'll be good enough, and God will save you. But the Bible says it's not by works of righteousness that we have done (Titus 3:5). The other kind of religion is spelled *don't—d-o-n-apostrophe-t*. Don't do this, and don't do this, and don't do this, and maybe God will save you. But I want to tell you, Bible religion is spelled *done—done*. Jesus, when he died on the cross, said, "*It is finished*" (John 19:30). And that means, it is paid in full. There is nothing you need do except receive the finished work of Calvary.

C. It Is Sufficient Grace

Friend, it is seeking grace; it is saving grace; it is sufficient grace. Paul—the Apostle Paul—was told by our Lord: "My grace is sufficient for you" (2 Corinthians 12:9). I mean, dear friend, it's the grace of our dear Lord and Savior.

I have an evangelist friend whose name is Jimmy Johnson, and he was telling me, one day, that he had a friend, and he and that friend were traveling out toward the West Coast. And his friend had been born in the interior of the United States, and had never seen the ocean—neither of the oceans. And Jimmy was going to show his friend, for the first time, the Pacific Ocean. Now that's a pretty big time. I mean, for the first time, they were going to see the ocean. He said they were looking forward to it, and they drove, and they drove. There was a certain spot there, in California, where there was a bluff. You could drive up, and there was that mighty, magnificent ocean. So he and his friend got out, and they stood there, and they looked at the Pacific Ocean for a while. They looked and looked. And finally, Jimmy said to his friend—he said, "Well, what do you think?" He said, "I don't know; somehow, it's just not as big as I thought it would be." Oh, his sight was limited by the horizon. But friend I want to tell you, the grace of God is bigger than you can see. And out of His infinite riches in Jesus, He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again.

I wrote down a verse of Scripture for you today; I want you to put it in your margins as we think of the sufficient grace of God. Some of you, today, you're having some problems and some heartaches. Second Corinthians chapter 9 and verse 8—listen to this; oh, it's so beautiful: "*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 9:8). Boy, that's a great verse! That's the grace of God—the grace of God.

D. It Is Surviving Grace

You see, it is seeking grace; it is saving grace; it is sufficient grace. And oh, friend, it is surviving grace. You know, in the book of Ephesians chapter 2, and verse 7, God says, *“That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Jesus Christ”* (Ephesians 2:7). Up in Heaven, in all of the ages to come,

When we've been here ten thousand years
Bright shining as the sun.
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we've first begun. (John Newton)

Why? Because of his amazing grace that goes on endless, timeless, dateless. Friend, listen. The grace that saves you is seeking grace; it is saving grace; it is sufficient grace; it is surviving grace; it is securing grace; it is amazing grace. It is the gospel of grace. If you're going to be saved, that's the way you're going to be saved. You're going to say,

In my hand no price I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling. (Augustus M. Toplady)

Years ago, I read a story that touched my heart of a woman that lived in Europe many years ago. She had a daughter, she was a poor woman, and the daughter was sick. She was emaciated, anemic, very weak, and very sickly. This woman had to go to work every day, and come back and care for her sickly daughter. They lived on a threadbare budget. But the daughter said to the mother one morning, said, “Mother, I just wish I had some fresh fruit, some fresh fruit, maybe some grapes to eat.”

The mother knew how expensive fresh fruit was where they lived. But as she set off to go to work, she passed a very high wall, and there was a gate. And she looked through the gate, and she saw the most beautiful garden, and grape arbors, and huge, big bunches of grapes. She counted her pennies. She thought, “Maybe I could buy just a few grapes. I know it would be extravagant.” But she pushed the gate open, and she went into this magnificent garden.

And she was just observing those great clusters of purple grapes, and a voice behind her said: “Madame, what are you doing in here? You have no business in here. This is private. This is the king's garden.” “Oh,” she said, “I'm sorry, I didn't know it was the king's garden.” About that time, another voice said, “Who is it?” Said, “Well, it's a lady, she's come into the garden, Sire; but I'm putting her out.” He said, “Wait a minute. Why did you come in here, Madame?” “Well, I'm sorry. I just wondered if you could sell me a few grapes.” And she told the story. The king took the knife, and began to cut

those big clusters of grapes, and said, “Lady, hold out your apron.” She held out her apron, and he filled that apron with those luscious grapes. And then, she said, “Oh no, I can’t, I can’t afford all those. That’s enough. Here, sir, here’s the money.” He said, “Madame, put up your money.” “Oh, but,” she said, “no, I cannot take them as a gift.” And he said, “Madame, if you take them, you must take them as a gift. The king’s grapes are not for sale.”

Friend, I want you to tell you that, if you receive salvation, you’ll receive it as a gift, or you won’t receive it. These gospel grapes are not for sale. You’ll never get God indebted to you. *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God”* (Ephesians 2:8).

III. The Subject Test—Is the Subject Jesus Christ?

And I am telling you, dear friend, that the true gospel, the Bible gospel, the gospel that saves, is identified, first of all, by it’s source: it’s of God; by it’s salvation: it is by grace; and then, I want to say one third thing, and that’s that there is a third test for the gospel. And that is not only the source test, and the salvation test; but, dear friend, it is the subject test. Would you look here with me, for just a moment, here in verse 7?

Now the Apostle Paul speaks of that false gospel which is not another. And then, he says, *“But there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ”* (Galatians 1:7). What he calls the gospel is this: “the gospel of Christ.” The subject of the gospel is Jesus, folks. You must understand this. “Well,” you say, “everybody understands that.” No, they don’t. A lot of people don’t understand that. They don’t understand that the subject of the gospel is Jesus Christ. He is the gospel. His death, His burial, His resurrection, for our sins: that is the gospel. The Apostle Paul says, “This is the gospel which we have preached unto you: how Christ died for our sins, how that He was buried, and how that He was raised again the third day” (1 Corinthians 15:2–4). That, ladies and gentlemen, is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Now so many people miss the gospel, because they think the gospel is a creed. Or, they think the gospel is a code. Or, they think the gospel is a cause. Or, they think the gospel is a church. It may impinge on all of these things, but none of these things is the gospel. The gospel is Christ. It is receiving Christ, believing Christ, knowing Christ, loving Christ, having Christ. It is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Do you know why so many churches are filled with unsaved people today? Because they’ve met a church, but they haven’t met Jesus; because they have believed a creed, but they haven’t met Jesus; because they serve a cause, but they haven’t met Jesus; because they try to live by a code, but they haven’t met Jesus. Dear friend, when I got married, I didn’t get the marriage religion; I got Joyce. And when you get saved, you don’t get the Christian religion; you get Jesus. Do you understand that? The Church is

the bride of Christ. Christ is the subject of the gospel.

Conclusion

And the test of the gospel is the source test: Where did it come from? It came from God. The salvation test: How are you saved? You are saved by grace. The subject test: Why are you saved by grace? Because of Jesus, who loved you and gave Himself for you. Do you know Jesus Christ? Has there been a time when you said,

In my hand no price I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling. (Augustus M. Toplady)

Jesus *is not the* best way *to* Heaven, *friend, He's the* only *way*—only way. “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

These early Christians believed in the religion of *no other name*. Many of them could have saved their lives, if they had been willing to offer just a little pinch of incense to Caesar, to say, “Caesar is Lord.” You know, back in this time, people had many gods. They had little shelves in their houses, little niches. They had a god for fertility; they had a god for farming. They had a rain god, and all of these things, and a war god. And these Christians could have saved their lives, if they had just made a little niche for Jesus, and put Him on a shelf. But they said, “No, there is one Lord; His name is Jesus.”

It is the gospel of Christ. The subject test: Do you know Him? I want to tell you something, friend: If you will open your heart, and say, “Lord Jesus Christ, come into my heart, forgive my sin and save me,” He will save you. I promise you, on the authority of the Word of God. And that’s the gospel truth. Let’s bow our heads in prayer.

Born Free

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: September 27, 1992

Main Scripture Text: Galatians 2:4, 20–21; 3:1; 4:3; 5:1–4

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Description of the Life of Bondage
 - A. The Bondage of Criticism
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 - C. The Bondage of Legalism
- II. The Dynamic of the Life of Liberty
 - A. An Executed Life
 - B. An Exchanged Life
 - C. An Energized Life

Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take God's Word tonight and find the Book of Galatians—if you would please—chapter 2. Tonight, I want to speak to you on the subject of freedom. And the title of the message tonight is "Born Free." Americans have been a freedom-loving people, but the freedoms we have enjoyed in times past are a legacy brought to us and bought for us by prayer, by sacrifice, by blood. Our republic was born in the cradle of prayer, and the fires of spiritual revival, rocked in the cradle of the Word of God. But the liberties and the freedoms that we have enjoyed are fast receding over the horizon.

Case in point: After a book report on the Bible, 12-year-old Rebecca Higgins had Bibles she gave to classmates confiscated by school officials. That is, she could have given a report on any other book, and passed out copies—but the Bible, the Word of God, is contraband in American schools. Meanwhile, in Soviet Russia, former Soviet Russia, where we're going, the students, today, listen to Bible stories during class time. A Supreme Court, the Supreme Court of the United States of America—listen to this—has let stand a ruling that says it is illegal for a Denver teacher to keep a Bible, even a closed one, on his desk. The students may see that Bible there, on the desk. But in Russia, teachers can show a film on the life of Jesus Christ to their students. And now the Supreme Court says that a rabbi—or anyone, for that matter—cannot even mention God in a graduation prayer; yet, in Russia, the once so-called *evil empire*, teachers give lessons on ethics and morality from a biblical perspective.

What has happened in America is this: that born-free Americans and doubly free Americans, who are born again, are seeing their religious and spiritual liberties eroding away. And let me say, my friend, that the Christian life is to be a life of liberty; and, when you were born again, you were born free.

Look at this scripture—Galatians chapter 2 and verse 4: *“And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage”* (Galatians 2:4). And then, look, if you will, in Galatians chapter 4 and verse 3: *“Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world”* (Galatians 4:3). And now look in Galatians chapter 5 and verse 1: *“Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage”* (Galatians 5:1). Now Jesus Christ and the Word of God say, in John chapter 8 and verse 36: *“If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed”* (John 8:36).

Now there are those who think that we are in bondage to Christianity; and, in one sense, we are. We are the Lord’s bondslaves; but, being the Lord’s bondslaves, we are free indeed. There are those who say that they are free to do what they ought, but they themselves have become the bondslaves and the servants of sin. We hear so much about the freedom of the press; and yet, it is filthier today than ever before. We hear, today, about *freedom of choice*, but what they mean is freedom to kill babies. And they’re not free indeed; they are servants of corruption. And I’ve never seen as much filth as there is today, and not since Manhattan Island was sold for \$24 has so much dirt been sold so cheap, as we’re seeing today in America. Now God wants His people to be free.

Let me talk to you about—from a spiritual viewpoint; not a political viewpoint, but from a spiritual viewpoint—what spiritual freedom is, because it is out of spiritual freedom that governmental freedom and social freedom come. So what is spiritual freedom? What is the description of a life of liberty? Go back to Galatians chapter 2, and let’s see, tonight, if you are truly free. Galatians chapter 2, verses 4 and 5—look at it again. The Apostle Paul says, *“And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: to whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you”* (Galatians 2:4–5).

I. The Description of the Life of Bondage

Now let me give three kinds of bondage Christians are apt to get into. And I don’t want you to get into this bondage; and, God helping me, I don’t want to get into this bondage.

A. The Bondage of Criticism

First of all, there is the bondage of criticism—the bondage of criticism. That’s what the Apostle Paul is talking about here: being enslaved by public opinion.

Now the gospel is a gospel of grace. And in Paul’s time, there were those who were teaching and preaching, as they should, that a man is saved by Christ alone, through faith alone, and nothing else. He is not saved by keeping the law. He’s not saved by doing good. He’s not saved by turning over a new leaf. He’s not saved by giving his money. He’s not saved through circumcision. He’s not saved through the Jewish rituals, the Old Testament laws. He’s saved by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the basic fundamental truth of the Bible. Now the Apostle Paul said, “When I was preaching that, and when others were preaching that, there were some people who came down from Jerusalem; they were false brethren. They came to spy out our liberty that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. That is, they were name takers. They were coming down there to see if these people were really following the Old Testament laws, and rituals, and regulations.” And the Apostle Paul said, “We didn’t give an inch to them.” Look, if you will, in verse 5: *“To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour”* (Galatians 2:5).

Now the Apostle Paul had a tender heart, but he had a tough hide. He said, “I’m not going to let this bunch tell me what I ought to do. I’m not going to let these so-called *false brethren* come down here and take away the liberty that we have. I don’t care what they think. I’m not going to back up or let up.” And even if it was Simon Peter. Some people think of Simon Peter as the first pope. You’re going to find out that Paul didn’t think he was the first pope. Look, if you will, in chapter 2 and verse 11: *“But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed”* (Galatians 2:11). Now Paul didn’t bow down, and kiss his ring. Paul said, “When Peter came here, I said, ‘Peter, you have made a mistake.’”

Now what happened was this: that Simon Peter knew that we’re saved by grace through faith; he understood that. But when the Judaizers came, Peter kind of—the Apostle Paul said—dissembled. That is, he played the hypocrite. He had been preaching that you don’t have to keep the Old Testament Jewish ceremonies. And then, when the Jewish leaders came down from Jerusalem, then, Peter just kind of backed up, and what he did was to trim the message a little bit. And the Apostle Paul looked at him, and said, “Peter, you are wrong. You have given in to public opinion.”

Now folks, if you’re ever going to amount to anything for the Lord Jesus Christ, you have to be free from the bondage of criticism. Now we, my dear friend, are ambassadors, but we’re not politicians. And it may be a great relief for you to know that you don’t have to please everybody. Ever since I’ve been in the ministry, I’ve had those people who have wanted to criticize me for taking this stand or that stand, or whatever;

and, very frankly, if I had tried to please everybody, I think that God would have cut my ministry vastly down. And I can remember some crisis in my life, some crisis in my ministry, where I had to make up my mind, where I simply said, “This is the way I’m going. I believe this is right. I believe it is true. I believe in the Bible; and therefore, Christ has made me free. And it doesn’t matter what people think or what they say.”

I went to a school in Florida that had the name *Baptist* on it, and I was taught... First, I took my first religion class. They said, “Don’t major in Religion.” But I was a 19-year-old boy; and, God had called me to preach. And I said, “That’s what I want to major in. That’s going to be my life.” The reason they said not to major in Religion was, they said, “You’ll get that in seminary.” Well, I didn’t think I could get too much. And they said, “Major in Sociology. Major in History. Major in English. Major in some language.” But I said, “No, I’m going to major in Religion.” And I can remember the very first religion class I got into—the very first one. The professor there, at our Baptist college, he said to me, “Now there are three categories of religion in our Southern Baptist life.” He said, “There are the fundamentalists: too much fun, and too much damn, and not enough mental.” Well, I said to myself, “I don’t want to be one of those.” And then, he said, “There are the modernists,” and he talked about the modernists—the modernists. I said, “Well, I don’t want to be one of those.” And then, he talked to me, and he said, “But there’s a third category: these are the neo-orthodox.” Well, that sounded good to me, because the professor said, “That’s what I am: neo-orthodox.” *Neo* meant “new.” Well, that sounds up-to-date. And *orthodox* meant “old,” and that sounded good. I said, “Boy, that’s the best of every world. I’ve never heard the term before.” But he said, “That is neo-orthodoxy.”

Later on, I discovered very much that I was not a neo-orthodox. The neo-orthodox are those people who claim to be orthodox, in a way, but they don’t believe the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 1:3). As someone has well said, “They use our words, but they use their dictionary.” And when they say *resurrection*, they don’t necessarily mean an empty tomb. When they say, “The Bible is true,” they don’t necessarily mean it is factual. You say, “I don’t understand that.” Well, very frankly, folks, these folks are very slippery with their language, and it is really an incredible thing to listen to them talk, and the way they handle the Word of God. For about three or four months, I bought into neo-orthodoxy, because I was a Baptist boy, and that was our Baptist school, and I wanted to learn, and I wanted to be a preacher; and, I bought into that. But you know what, folks? I had a Bible; and so, I began to read the Bible, and I started listening to these folks. And I’d read the Bible, and I’d listen to them.

And they would tell me: “Well, there’s no such thing as a devil. The devil is the personification of evil. There’s not a real devil. He is the personification of evil.” They talked about demons, and they said, “Now demons—there’s no such thing, really, as

demons. This is the way those people thought of what we know today as *mental illness*. That was their time. That was the way they understood things.” And that sounded reasonable to me, and I bought into all of that for about three or four months. But I had that Bible. I said, “Now wait a minute. If God didn’t mean what He said, then why didn’t He say what He meant?” And I’m reading this, and trying to figure it out.

And I was in love with a young lady I wanted to get married to. I was there on a football scholarship/ministerial scholarship at the same time, and they said, “Well, if you continue to play football, you’ve got to sleep at the athletic dorm, and you’ve got to eat at the training table.” Well, I wanted to get married, and I sure didn’t want to sleep at the athletic dorm, and eat at the training table; so, I gave up the football, and just decided I’d take a little country church, and preach. So I did that, and was having a wonderful time. Joyce and I got married, and lived in a little house trailer there, a few miles off the campus, there, of this university.

I got bothered about all of this, and I decided, “Well, I’m going to find out what is right.” So I began to buy some books and to study. And I was studying my regular studies, and I would study these books at the same time. Joyce said, “You’re never going to graduate from college.” I said, “Why not?” She said, “You’re taking two courses at one time.” I said, “Well, I’m going to find out what’s what, and who’s who, and so forth.” I began to read, and I began to study; and, it was there that I formed the convictions that I had in my heart. And I realized that what I was being told was not what I believed the Word of God taught, if you took the plain sense, the common sense, and just let God the Holy Spirit explain the Word of God to your heart.

And so I began to ask some questions in class. And I began to get a reputation, maybe, as a person who was not always cooperative. And then, I remember saying a few things at one of our Florida Baptist conventions about what I thought we ought to do. And then, I got a letter from a very important man in our Florida Baptist Convention. I think I still have that letter. He said, “Dear Adrian, some of us have been watching you. And some of us believe that you’re gifted and talented, and we think that you’re a nice young man, and so forth. And we think that you could have a very wonderful future. But,” he said, “I have lived quite a while now. And,” he said, “I have watched young preachers.” He said, “I have seen some of them who have decided that they would sit in the seat of the scornful, and,” he said, “how untimely has been their end.” And he said, “Adrian, I would that you would drop this course of action that you are on, and fall into line; and, you can be one of our leaders, if you will.”

I wanted to write a letter that would have been sarcastic, and say, “Dear Dr. So-and-so...”—by the way, he was one of the high officials there, in the school—“Dear Dr. So-and-so, I have seen the error of my way, and never again will I stand up for what I believe is right, and for Christ, and the Bible. And if a big denominational job opens up,

please push me through.” But the Lord wouldn’t let me write that letter. I didn’t write it. But I just made up my mind, dear folks, that I wasn’t going to let criticism by people keep me from following what I believe to be the Word of God, the truth of the Word of God, and the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

And I can remember, time after time, in my ministry and in my life, when I have just simply had to say, “This is right, and here I go. If I get fired, I’ll be fired. If I flunk out of school, I’ll flunk out of school. If the dog won’t wag his tail at me, the dog won’t wag his tail at me. But this is what I’m going to do, because I believe it is right.” And my dear friend, I have found, in doing that, that God has given unto me liberty. And I wouldn’t sell my liberty that I have in Jesus for anything, or for any of the false brethren—so-called—the Apostle Paul is talking about here.

B. The Bondage of Fatalism

Now he says, you’ll have freedom from the bondage of criticism; and then, secondly, you’re going to have freedom from the bondage of fatalism. Look in chapter 4, verse 3—look at it: “*Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world*” (Galatians 4:3). Now what does this mean? That’s a second kind of bondage: bondage to the elements of the world.

Now what that literally means is this: that he’s speaking here of what we will call “the elementary forces of the world”: the stars, the planets, nature, the sign—the zodiac—under which we are born. That’s fatalism. You say, “Well, people don’t believe in that today.” Oh, no? The deviltries of astrology are astronomical in the United States of America, and that’s what he’s talking about. Look, if you will, in verses 9 and 10 of this same chapter—chapter 4, verses 9 and 10—he says here: “*But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?*” Now he’s talking, again, about the elemental forces; and now, he talks specifically about astrology, in verse 10: “*Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain*” (Galatians 4:9–11). What he’s talking about here is people just simply saying, “Well, I’m a victim of fate. The thing didn’t fall out right for me. I am dependent upon luck,” or, “I am dependent upon my stars,” or, “I’m dependent upon this thing or that thing.” What a horrible bondage to be under!

Now when we go to Romania, pray for us. I asked Phil over here, “Phil, are you going with us?” He said, “No, I’m going to be a *stay-er* and a *pray-er*.” I said, “Thank you, Phil”—a *stay-er* and a *pray-er*. You be a *stay-er* and a *pray-er*; but, when I go, don’t you say to me, “Good luck.” Don’t say that to me. I don’t want good luck. I’m not in bondage to the elements. I am not in bondage to the Fates. I am not in bondage to what some people get locked into. They’re just a victim of fate. What a bondage that is!

C. The Bondage of Legalism

Now what Paul said is, “I am not in bondage to criticism. I am not in bondage to fatalism.” And then, look in chapter 5 and verses 1 and following: “I am not in bondage to legalism.” Look at it—chapter 5, verse 1: *“Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.”* Now continue to read: *“Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.”* There were those who came down, and said, “Well, you want to get right with God? You’ve got to keep the Jewish law of circumcision.” And then, look, if you will, in verse 3: *“For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace”* (Galatians 5:1–4).

Now what he says in verse 1—look at it again: *“Be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage”* (Galatians 5:1). One translation gives it this way: “the yoke of self-effort”—“the yoke of self-effort.” That’s what legalism is. It’s the cruelest bondage of all.

Many of our Baptist churches are filled with legalism. They remind me of the ox who toils, and toils, and toils away, pulling the plow till finally he can’t pull it any more. His reward is he’s just simply slaughtered. That’s what legalism is. You work, and work, and work, and then die, and go to Hell.

Martin Luther, who led the Protestant Reformation, said this: “Rightly are the doers of the law called the devil’s martyrs. They take more pains to earn Hell than the martyrs of Christ to obtain Heaven. Theirs is a double misfortune. First, they torture themselves on Earth with self-inflicted penances; and finally, when they die, they gain the reward of eternal damnation.” That’s sad, isn’t it?

You see, to try to be saved or sanctified by keeping the law of God is like trying to free yourself from quicksand by struggling. The more you struggle, the deeper you sink.

Now there are those who you ask them, “Well, are you saved?” and, they say, “Well, I hope so. I’m doing the best I can.” Well, I want to say two things about that. Number one: You’re a liar; you’re not doing the best you can. It’s not true, in the first place. And number two: If it were true in the first place, it wouldn’t be enough.

Look in verse 3—chapter 5, verse 3: *“For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law”* (Galatians 5:3). What does that mean? That means, dear friend, if you set out to be saved by doing good, if you think that doing good will save you, do you know how much good you’ll have to do? You have to do nothing but good all of your life. You are a debtor to the whole law. If you think that you’re going to be saved by your good works, then you must do absolute perfection. Look, if you will, for example, over in Galatians chapter 3, verse 10. It makes it real plain—look at it: *“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the*

book of the law to do them.” You say, “Well, I think I’ll be saved, by keeping the law.” Then, my dear friend, if you break the law in one point, the Bible says you are guilty of all. Look, in verse 11: *“But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith”* (Galatians 3:10–11).

Now suppose I’m driving down the road, and a policeman stops me for running a red light. And I say to the policeman, “Now listen. You have no right to arrest me. I did run a red light, but you have no right to give me a ticket, and I’ll tell you why: because I have stopped at all the other stop streets, and I have been obeying the speed limit, so you cannot arrest me for running this red light.” He says, “Don’t tell me about all the things that you’ve done good. I’m not concerned about that. This is the law that you’ve broken.”

Now my dear friend, the Bible teaches that you cannot... God doesn’t grade on the curve. If you think that you’re going to be saved by keeping the law, then what the Bible demands is absolute perfection. So no amount of obedience can make up for one act of disobedience. If you keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, you are guilty in all.

Now can a Christian fall from grace? Look in chapter 5, verse 4, if you will, again. Look at it. He says here, *“Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace”* (Galatians 5:4). Now he’s talking to some of the Galatian Christians who were saved. He doesn’t mean, here, that they can lose their salvation. But they have fallen from a higher level to the lower level of living. And he falls away from all of the good things that Christ can do for him. And there are so many Christians today who do fall from grace. I mean, they want to get down. They’re saved by grace; and then, they want to get down into legalism. It’s one of the saddest things in the world. These people are so insecure that they want to get into some sort of legalistic fellowship. They want to have somebody tell them exactly what to do, and exactly what not to do, and just to spell it out for them; and, they will get into a fellowship that is dictatorial. They’ll get into a fellowship that is legalistic, because they’re little babies. And they want to kind of crawl back in the crib where they won’t have any responsibility of their own.

I have people come to me for counseling, and they say, “Now Pastor, tell me exactly what to do, and I’ll do it.” I refuse to tell them. I say, “Look, friend, I am here to point you to Jesus Christ. I am here to point you to the Word of God. You find out what God tells you to do. You find out what the Bible tells you to do. You find out what the Bible tells you to do.” You see, listen. If you get under legalism, Jesus Christ is not a blessing to you; Jesus Christ is a curse to you, because Jesus Christ just gives you more to live up to that you can’t live up to. I mean, you cannot do it in your own strength.

Now there are three words that you need to learn tonight: one is *legalism*; one is *license*; and one is *liberty*. Let me explain the difference in the three of these. What is

legalism? In legalism, the law is your master. The law is just a cruel taskmaster; it says, “Do this. Do this. Do this. Don’t do this. Don’t do this. Don’t do that.” And you get under the thumb of legalism, and, my dear friend, you are in bondage. Now license: You see the law as your enemy. You say, “Well, I’ll do whatever I want. I don’t care about God’s law. I don’t care about the Ten Commandments. I don’t care about God’s standard. I’m a law unto myself.” Legalism and license are heads and tails of the same error. It’s a misunderstanding of the Word of God, and the law of God. Now there is legalism; there is license; and there is liberty. Liberty makes the law your servant, but Christ fulfills the law in your heart, and in your life.

II. The Dynamic of the Life of Liberty

Now I’ve said that you, as a Christian, cannot get under, should not get under, the bondage of criticism, or fatalism, or legalism. Now how do you not do that? Well, let me show you, not only the description of the life of bondage; but, let me show you, my dear friend, the dynamic of the life of liberty.

Turn back to Galatians chapter 2, and begin in verse 20, and look at it. Galatians chapter 2 and verse 20—the Apostle Paul, here, tells us how to be free. Look—he says, in verse 20: *“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain”* (Galatians 2:20–21). That is, if you could be saved by being good, Calvary is a blunder; Christ is dead in vain. Look at it again—Galatians 2:20: *“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.”* All right. And then, chapter 3, verse 1: *“O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?”* (Galatians 3:1).

Now where is the liberating force? What is it that sets you free, and makes you free indeed, spiritually, so that you can help this nation be a free nation? It is the cross of Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul mentions the Crucifixion here, in Galatians 2, verses 20 and 21, and Galatians 3 and verse 1. It is the cross that makes you free.

Now how does the cross make you free? How does the cross of Jesus Christ set you free? Well, first of all, we talked about the bondage of criticism. Well, friend, listen. If I know that Jesus Christ died for me, if I know that God loves me that much that Jesus Christ hung in agony and blood for me, that I’m that precious to God, that I’m the object of God’s love, that the blood of Jesus Christ was poured out on Calvary for me, then I can stand up against any criticism. It doesn’t bother me, primarily, because of what you think of me. The cross sets me free from criticism. The cross sets me free from fatalism. Why? Because the cross was in the heart and mind of God before He swung this world

into space. I don't live in bondage to the elements. I am a part of God's wonderful plan. I have been chosen. I have been redeemed. I have been justified. I am predestined to be like the Lord Jesus Christ. That's not fatalism.

My dear friend, my heart, my life, is in the hand of God. The cross sets me free from that, and the cross sets me free from the bondage of legalism, because Jesus on the cross fulfilled the demands of the law that were against me; and so, the law is fulfilled by the Lord Jesus Christ for me, and the law is fulfilled by the Lord Jesus Christ in me, when I trust the Lord Jesus Christ. So you see how the cross frees me from the bondage of criticism, and fatalism, and legalism.

A. An Executed Life

Now let's just see how it works. Look, in verse 20. First of all, there is the executed life: *"I am crucified with Christ"* (Galatians 2:20). You see, Jesus died as my substitute. His death had my name on it: *"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all"* (Isaiah 53:6). Look up here, and take a look at me. You're looking at a crucified man. I have been crucified. You say, "When were you crucified?" When Jesus died. His death was for me. I am crucified with Christ; and therefore, my dear friend, I am free from the penalty of sin.

B. An Exchanged Life

It is an executed life. And then, it is an exchanged life. Look, in verse 20: *"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me"* (Galatians 2:20). Now you see, He gave Himself *for* me, that He might give Himself *to* me. When Jesus Christ died for me, Jesus Christ didn't just take away my sins; He took away my self. I am crucified. He who died for me now lives in me. He gave himself *for* me, that He might give himself *to* me.

So now, look. This is so wonderful! He died for me. So if He died for me, when He died, I died. So who can harm a dead man? Now He lives in me, and when I live, He lives. And who can harm the God-Man? Who can harm a dead man? I died with Him. Who can harm the God-Man? The life I now live is His life living in me. Do you understand that? Does that make sense? Say *amen*. Do something. Don't just sit there. Listen—listen, friend. That's so exciting! I don't know whether it's exciting to you or not; but, you see, we are free! We are free! We have been set free! You see, I am crucified with Christ. He died for me. He gave Himself for me. *"Nevertheless...not I; but Christ liveth in me"* (Galatians 2:20). He gave Himself to me.

C. An Energized Life

So it is—number one—an executed life. Number two: It is an exchanged life. And number three—therefore, it is an energized life.

Now look again, in verse 20: *“And the life which I now live...I live by the faith of the Son of God”* (Galatians 2:20). You say, “Oh, you have faith in the Son of God.” Yes, but that’s not what this says. This says, “I live by the faith of the Son of God—His faith, His faith. I live by His faith. I live by the faith of the Son of God” (Galatians 2:20). I am still living by the faith of the crucified risen Son of God, and it is now Christ that lives in me. And every demand upon me is a demand upon the Christ who lives in me, and His faith, not my faith.

I have a dear precious friend whose name is Peter Lord. Peter Lord’s wife is named Johnnie. She’s one of the most godly Christian women I’ve ever known. But Johnnie had a crisis in her life, when all of us were younger preachers. And I knew Johnnie at that time. Joyce and I, and Peter and Johnnie, had been friends through the years, but Johnnie came to a place where she almost had a nervous breakdown. The pressures, the demands upon her life—her little children, her husband studying in seminary, and so forth. And I can remember Johnnie saying, “I tried, and tried, and tried to do right, to live right, to serve God, to be pleasing to God; and, the more I tried, the more I sank”—like that person I was talking about struggling in quicksand. And she said, “It was terrible. I almost despaired of life, wanting to do right, wanting to be right, wanting to show love. And I would pray, “God, help me to love this person. God, help me to trust. God, help me not to worry. God, help me to believe.” And she said, “I was failing, and failing, and asking God to help me—‘Please help me, God’—and I was getting no help.”

“And then,” she said, “I discovered this verse of Scripture: that I was crucified. The old person that I used to be is dead and gone; and now, Jesus Christ now lives in me. And now the life I live I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me, that He might give Himself to me” (Galatians 2:20). And she said, “It dawned on me, one day.” She said, “I needed patience. I didn’t pray, ‘God, give me patience.’” She said, “I said, ‘Lord, You live in me—Thy patience, Lord,’” and she felt patience flowing through her. She said, “That’s wonderful.” Then, there was somebody she needed to love; and, very frankly, they weren’t a very lovely person. And she didn’t say, “Lord, help me to love them.” She said, “I’m going to try it again: ‘Thy love, Lord,’” and she just felt God’s love flowing through her—“Thy love, Lord.”

That’s what it’s all about, friend. You see, the life I now live I live by the faith of the Son of God, and every demand of God that is upon you is not upon you; it is upon the Jesus, who lives in you. And friend, what liberty that is—what freedom that is—to understand that Christ lives in you!

Some years ago, I read about a preacher who was walking down the street, past a

tailor's shop; and, in that tailor's shop, they dyed garments. And the man had a sign out there; he was a dyer of garments. And this is what the sign said: It said, "I live to dye. The more I dye the more I live. The more I live the more I dye, because I just dye to live." Isn't that neat? Friend, that's the Christian life: I die to live.

When I say, "God, You don't expect me to do this. I can't do it. I'm not going to get under the bondage of criticism. See what people think about me?" Or, the bondage of fatalism—and just say, "It's in the stars. It's luck. Things fell out bad to me." I'm not going to get under the bondage of legalism—trying, and trying, and trying to be good—because I can't. You never said I could. But Lord, I just trust You. You're alive in me. You live in me. If you make me free, then I am free indeed. What a life that is, dear friend: the life of liberty! I am crucified with Christ. You need to sit down in the chair, and pull those 220 volts: Galatians 2:20. Just say, "I'm a dead man, but Christ now lives in me. And the life I now live I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

Conclusion

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Heads are bowed; eyes are closed. Oh, my dear friend, don't you want to be free—free in the Lord Jesus Christ? Not free to do what you want—free to do what you ought, for the first time in your life.

Father God, bless, I pray tonight, this message to our hearts. And I pray, dear God, tonight, if there's some struggling person who's been trying to live the Christian life, who has fallen away from grace, O Lord, that tonight they might come to You by faith, and recognize that You are alive in them, ready to be called upon to live Your life through them. And Lord, I pray, tonight, if there's somebody who has never been saved, that tonight they might come to Jesus, and receive the free gift of eternal life. In His dear name I pray. Amen.

Freedom from the Prison of Perfection

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: July 23, 2000

Main Scripture Text: Galatians 3:1–3

“Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?”

GALATIANS 3:3

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Introduction

Find Galatians chapter 3—Galatians chapter 3. I want to talk to you today about being set free—and free from the prison of perfectionism. Now the gospel is an emancipation proclamation. God has called us to freedom and liberty in every area of our lives, but Satan, if he can't keep us from being saved, still wants to keep us in bondage. That's what he was doing to the saints in Galatia.

Listen to what the Apostle Paul says here in Galatians chapter 3, verse 1: *“O foolish*

Galatians, who hath bewitched you...—well, to be *bewitched* means “to be seduced by Satan”—“*who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?*” That is, “Galatians, I want to ask you a question: How did you get saved? Did you get saved by keeping the Ten Commandments, or by trusting in Jesus Christ?” And then, here’s the key verse—verse 3: “*Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?*” (Galatians 3:1–3). Just underscore that phrase, “*perfect by the flesh,*” because that’s what I’m talking about—is the curse of perfectionism, trying to get saved by the grace of God, and then endeavoring by the works of our flesh. When he says “the flesh,” he’s not talking about, now, the hands, and the eyes, and the ears; but he’s talking about our own nature, our Adamic nature—trying, struggling to be good, so that we can be received by Almighty God.

Now I realize today that my task is a difficult one, because perfectionism sounds so good. But let me tell you, there are some words that sound good that are not good. Think with me for a moment. *Humanity*—the word *humanity*—that’s a good word. *Humanism* is a bad word. *Feminine*—that’s a good word. Don’t you love feminine girls—sweet, and frilly, and soft, and sweet—*feminine*? That’s a good word. *Feminism* is not so good a word. *Legal*—that’s a good word. We want things to be legal. We want them to be right. *Legalism*—that’s one of the greatest curses in all our faith—*legalism*. *Perfect*—that’s a wonderful word. Jesus said, “*Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect*” (Matthew 5:48). *Perfectionism*—like legalism, and feminism, and humanism—is a bad word.

Now confession is good for the soul, and I want to tell you the sermon. The guy in this building who needs it the most, this morning, is the guy preaching it. All right? When that finger’s pointing out at you, three are pointing at me, right here, right now, because this is a trap that is so easy to get into—the trap of perfectionism. I’ve been reading, doing some study, and much of what I am saying to you, this morning, I have learned from other people.

What is perfectionism? I give it to you in a sentence: It is judging yourself by your achievements—judging yourself by your achievements. David Burns, a psychologist, described the perfectionists as “those whose standards are high—beyond reach or reason; people who strain compulsively, unremittingly, toward impossible goals, and who measure their own worth entirely in terms of productivity and accomplishment.” You measure your worth in terms of productivity and accomplishment, and you’re always striving for unattainable goals, never reaching them—and, therefore, never, ever being fulfilled. It’s what David Seamands calls *the performance trap*. It’s so easy to get into it, and I think all of us, at one time or another, have been into that, because we so want to

please God. The key words of a perfectionist are “I must,” “I should,” “I ought.” Perfectionists are not led; they are driven. And sometimes it works out not only in the spiritual life, but in the natural life.

One man said he'd married a perfectionist. He said when he would get up in the middle of the night to go to the bathroom, he'd come back—his side of the bed would be made up. He said his wife was such a perfectionist housekeeper that she even put newspapers under the cuckoo clock. And there are some housekeepers like that. They are perfectionists.

Now Paul is saying to these people in Galatia, who have been saved by the grace of God, that they had been bewitched. And I'm convinced that there are many in this building, this morning, who are perfectionists, and who need to be liberated from the prison of perfectionism. And that's what I'm talking to you about today—is being set free from the prison of perfectionism.

I. Life Behind Bars

So for the first point, let's look at life behind bars. What is life behind bars like for a perfectionist—this guy who is in this prison, this gal who is in this prison? Let me tell you some marks of life behind these prison walls and these prison bars.

A. The Perfectionist Is Never Satisfied

Number one: The perfectionist is never satisfied—he can't be. He's never satisfied. Perfectionism is a theft; it is a theft. It promises rewards, but at the same time, it steals joy, and peace, and satisfaction. Why? Because, perfection is unattainable. Have you noticed that? Have you yet? It's unattainable. Therefore, what the perfectionist does—he sets for himself impossible goals. And when he does, and he can't reach them, he's set himself up for disappointment; he's set himself up for frustration.

Now remember this: that grace teaches that God accepts us not on the basis of our performance. We have to tell people that, in order for them to get saved. But once we get saved, we seem to forget that, don't we? We began in the Spirit; and then, somehow, we think we're made perfect in the flesh. Now if we think that God accepts us on the basis of our achievement, then—listen—we'll never know when we've done enough. We'll never know when we have done enough; and, therefore, we will never, ever really feel accepted in God's sight. Now think on that. If we feel that, somehow, God accepts us on the basis of our performance, we'll never know when we've done enough; and, therefore, we will never, ever really feel accepted.

And when we don't feel accepted, one of two things will happen.

1. We Will Become Angry with God Because He Didn't Make Us Perfect

Number one: We'll become angry with God because He didn't make us perfect, and

He didn't make a perfect world.

2. We Will Become Afraid of God

Or, number two: We will become afraid of God. We're thinking of God up there, sitting on a throne grading us. Steve—he gets a C-; Joe—he gets a B+; Jim ought to be ashamed of himself. I mean, that God is up there, just kind of grading us; and so, we're trying to see if we can move up a little bit more, if we can be a little better. And God becomes sort of the high school principal, or a spiritual terrorist, or something.

“Oh,” you say, “but you'll achieve more, if you're a perfectionist.” No, you won't. Did you know that in the material world, they found out that those who are perfectionists earn, on an average...—who comes up with these statistics I don't know, but this is what I've read—a perfectionist earns, on an average, \$15,000 a year less than others, because he finds himself striving over details, doing things that, perhaps, don't even need to be done, or not all, that don't pay back that much when they are done. And what people are looking for is productivity, not perfection. And so the perfectionist—you put it down—he is never satisfied.

B. The Perfectionist Is Critical of Other People

Number two: He is critical of other people. You'll find a perfectionist to be a hypercritical person. He is among the most intolerable of all people, because he's intolerable of failure in other people. Pity the man who's married to a perfectionist. He'll never, ever please her. Pity the children whose parents are perfectionists. Do you know why there are some people who want perfect children? Because, they have to be perfect parents. And the poor children who are raised in that home can never, ever please their parents, never will ever really feel accepted.

Norman Wright, who's a dear and precious Christian—a very wise man—wrote this: “June's home was a showcase. The furnishings, the décor, even the *Architectural Digest* magazines that fanned out on the coffee table were just right. The drapes were hung without the slightest sag. Each picture was placed at the same height, to the exact millimeter. Even her pantry was alphabetized. Nothing was irregular in this house except, perhaps, the woman, whose perfectionism was evident in her surroundings. She constantly drove herself and her offspring to maintain an immaculate house. But her children had difficulty relaxing and enjoying the home. Rarely did they bring friends over a second time. June paid meticulous attention to details. She was precise in everything she did, but it was never enough. She always felt that her home and her children fell short of the mark. Whenever guests showered her with compliments, she beamed, but the satisfaction never lasted. “It could be better,” she thought.

Unfortunately, the amount of time that June spent maintaining a showcase home was far out of proportion to the result. As a perfectionist, her standards were too high—

impossibly high. And it is likely that her parents' standards were just as lofty, programming her to accept nothing less than perfectionism; and, she was passing this malady on to her children, as well."

You know, folks, we might as well learn to accept our imperfections. You know, the Bible says, "*Confess your faults one to another*" (James 5:16). And by the way, they already know them. We might as well admit them.

And I heard about a man, one time, in a church, where the people in that particular church believed in a doctrine called *sinless perfection*—that, in this life, you can attain a plane where you never sin anymore. And in this church, this man was in the front giving a testimony about how he had attained sinless perfection, and all the congregation were in awe until his wife, in the back, stood up, and said, "Remember, John, I'm here." And then, he stopped talking about his perfection. Our loved ones—they already know that we're not perfect anyway, and we might as well admit it.

C. The Perfectionist Ruins Fellowship

No, not only does the perfectionist...he's never satisfied; not only is he a very judgmental person and hard to live with; but he ruins the fellowship. Perfectionists in churches ruin the fellowship.

One man said, "I'm looking for a perfect church." A friend said, "Well, don't join it, because if you were to find it, you'd spoil it."

You see, a church is a fellowship of sinners. I have a preacher friend in Florida who has a sign over the portal of his church that says, "Sinners only welcome here." How would you feel coming into church if you walked under that sign? Well, that describes you. The church is the only organization I know of where you have to profess to be bad before you can join, unless it's Hell's Angels. Thank you. I keep him around in case... It doesn't mean that we are saying sin is good, but we have to understand that we are sinners. You know, when a perfectionist comes to church, the music is never good enough; the sound is never just right; the sermon is never perfect enough for him; the fellowship is never sweet enough for him. No, he's a problem in the fellowship. This is what life is like behind bars, in the prison of perfectionism.

II. The Prisoner Identified

Now let's see, secondly, if we can identify the prisoner. Let's think about the prisoner identified. Let's see who that is. And I'm telling you, folks, Adrian is preaching to Adrian this morning, in many ways—I really am—and I'm having to learn, and cringe a little bit, and repent a little bit, before I can preach the message, this morning, on perfectionism.

A. A Perfectionist Sets for Himself Impossible Goals

A perfectionist, number one, sets for himself impossible goals. He just thinks that he

can reach these things. You may—have you ever set a goal to lose 30 pounds in a month? You’ve never lost 30 pounds in your whole life. The Bible is against setting impossible goals. When God sent Joshua and the children of Israel into the Promised Land, He warned against impossible goals. That is, you just can’t go in and take the land all at one time. Put in your margin, Exodus chapter 23, verses 29 through 30. God, speaking of the Canaanites, God said, *“I will not drive them out from before thee in one year;”—“you can’t take the land in one year”— “lest the land become desolate, and the beast of the field multiply against thee. By little and little I will drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land”* (Exodus 23:29–30).

What is God saying in that passage of Scripture? “Don’t set for yourself an impossible goal.” When a perfectionist sets such high goals, he is always behind, and he can never do enough.

B. A Perfectionist Is an Idealist, Not a Realist

Now I’ll tell you what else he does. We’re just talking about—we’re trying to identify the culprit, right now. Number two: A perfectionist is an idealist; he’s not a realist. Now a Christian should be a realist. Joyce and I read Oswald Chambers every morning, as we did this morning, almost every morning. One thing that Oswald Chambers said, and I’ve never really thought about until he said it—he said, “No man is ever ready to serve God until he becomes, first, disillusioned.” Well, we all think, “Disillusionment? That’s bad.” But no, that’s good.

When Jesus performed miracles, the Bible says, many followed Him. In John chapter 2 you can read, “Many followed Him because of the miracles that He did” (John 2:23). The Bible says Jesus *“did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man”* (John 2:24–25). He knew they were miracle mongers. They followed Him, but He didn’t commit Himself to them. That is, Jesus had no illusions about human nature; He had no illusions. What we need to do is to be disillusioned. If it is an illusion, it’s not true. And if it is an illusion, we need to lose it.

And friend, if you have an illusion about anybody being perfect, or any situation ever being perfect, then you are an idealist. You’re living with an illusion. It is not real. You are a perfectionist in a dream world that will never come to pass. *That’s the reason we have divorces. People fall in love with an ideal; then it becomes an ordeal; then they want a new deal, not understanding that marriage is two imperfect people in an imperfect world.* Now an illusion... A perfectionist can’t deal with reality. Jesus said, “I have many things to tell you. You’re not able to bear them” (John 16:12). Jesus was not an idealist; He was a realist.

C. A Perfectionist Has to Be the Best, Not His Best

I'll tell you something else about a perfectionist: A perfectionist has to be the best, not his best. Now you ought to be your best, but you don't have to be the best. You don't have to be number one. You don't have to get upset, if somebody has obtained more, done more, than you can do. Accept who you are. Paul said, in Romans chapter 12, verses 3 and 4: *"For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith"* (Romans 12:3). The perfectionist—he's never satisfied. He cannot accept himself. He doesn't want to be his best, her best; he wants to be the best.

D. A Perfectionist Values Himself by What He Does, Not by What He Is

You know what a perfectionist does? We're just describing. He values himself by what he does, what he has, what he obtains, rather than what he is. That's where he gets his self-worth—by what he does, rather than what he is.

A classic example is the difference between Mary and Martha. Remember Mary and Martha, who were the friends of Jesus, whose home Jesus often visited, the home of Lazarus? Upon a particular situation, Jesus was in the home. Martha was in the kitchen. Mary was there, at the feet of Jesus, listening to Him, learning from Him. Martha comes out of the kitchen, flour up to her elbows, hands on her hips; she says, "Jesus, would You tell Mary to get up off her knees, and come in the kitchen, and help me?" That's Meatloaf Martha, and there's Marvelous Mary. What's the difference? Here is Mary, looking into the face of Jesus, learning from Jesus; but Martha is getting her sense of self-worth by what she does, what she achieves.

E. A Perfectionist Feels Guilty if He Ever Relaxes

And a perfectionist feels guilty if he ever relaxes. Now I'm telling you, half of this congregation needs the other side of this sermon. You're relaxing too much. I mean, I'm not trying to give you an excuse now. But a perfectionist—he feels guilty if he ever relaxes. You see, he doesn't see God as a good God. He sees God as a demanding God. And remember, he wants to be accepted, and he's trying to earn his acceptance.

F. A Perfectionist is Project-Minded Rather Than Process-Minded

Now a perfectionist is project-minded rather than process-minded. You don't want to go on a trip with a perfectionist driving the car, because you'll never enjoy the trip. His goal is to get there; therefore, few potty stops, few anything else. He never sees the scenery. He doesn't enjoy the trip, because he is goal-oriented. And he is never finished; he is never satisfied. He may even be afraid of getting finished, because the job may not be good enough. And so he's so obsessed with the destination, he cannot

enjoy the trips. He's a kind of guy who'll turn on the yard lights at night and mow the grass. "Got to get it done!"

Well, what did Jesus say about being goal-oriented? He said, in Matthew 6, verse 33: "*Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you*" (Matthew 6:33). But the perfectionist is putting those things first. He is goal-oriented. One of my favorite verses is in Psalm 127 and verse 2. It says, "*It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep*" (Psalm 127:2). You're not sinful if you sleep. Actually, that scripture says, "God gives to His beloved in their sleep," literally. While you're sleeping, God is awake; God is working for you. And God wants you to come apart and rest a while, but the perfectionist cannot do that. He is driven.

G. The Perfectionist Has Irremovable Guilt

And not only does he have impossible goals, but he has irremovable guilt. He dwells on his failure. He can never let go of his failure. He feels he must punish himself for having failed. After all, God hasn't forgiven him, so why should he forgive himself? Thank God, Paul learned better. Philippians 3, verses 13 and following: "*Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*" (Philippians 3:13–14). Paul was able to cut it loose, and let it go. He was a sinner—the chief of sinners.

Here's a key verse, a wonderful verse: 1 Corinthians 15, verses 9 and following. They were criticizing Paul, and they were saying, "Paul, you're not really an apostle." And he says, "*For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.*" And Paul wasn't using hyperbole, when he called himself "the chief of sinners." But now listen to verse 10. He says this: "*But by the grace of God I am what I am*" (1 Corinthians 15:9–10). Paul could let it go. He said, "I forget those things that are behind. Thank God, by the grace of God, I am what I am."

That's what Paul was saying to the Galatians: "Who has bewitched you...having begun in the Spirit, are you now made perfect in the flesh?" (Galatians 3:1–3). If God saved you by His grace, do you think you can earn acceptance now by works? You can't do it. And you see, the praise and the glory that the perfectionist wants is always receding over the horizon.

Did you know that there are two things that a perfectionist can't really accept? One is a compliment, and the other is a criticism—either one. You give him a compliment, and he'll kind of say, "Yep, I could have done better—I could have done better," rather than just saying, "Thank you." And if you criticize him, good night! That means that you don't

accept him, and that's the very thing that he's got to have—is acceptance. And so the poor guy is stuck in the middle. You can't compliment him, and you can't criticize him. Criticism is interpreted as, "You really don't like me."

Did you know that a healthy person can accept criticism—did you know that? A healthy person is not blown away by criticism. Paul said, in 1 Corinthians 4, verse 3: *"But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self"* (1 Corinthians 4:3). He said, "I'm not going to get blown away by the fact that you criticize me. You're not fit to criticize me, because I'm not even fit to criticize me. I don't even know my own heart." What is all of this about? It's just simply accepting who we are.

III. The Great Escape

Now let's move to the third and final thing here, this morning. We've been talking about the prison itself, and we've been talking about some of those who live inside the prison. Now folks, listen to me. It's time for the great escape. It's time to make a break. I mean, it is time to get out, and to be set free, because we've been called to liberty. So are you ready for a prison break? Let's go for it. Let's get out of the prison of perfectionism, and I want to suggest three ways you can do it.

A. Learn and Believe That God Has Accepted You by Grace

Number one: Learn it and believe it—that God has accepted you by grace. God has accepted you by grace. And He does this—Ephesians 1, verse 6—the Bible says, *"to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved"* (Ephesians 1:6). How does God make you accepted? By His grace—not by your attainment, not by your works, not by your striving. And when you understand this, *"to the praise of the glory of his grace."*

Anytime anybody really understands grace, they always want to write a song about it—about grace. Grace is completely antithetical—contrary—to human nature. Human nature wants to live by guilt, and not by grace. Don't get the idea that God is eager to punish you, to catch you in some kind of a sin, to put you down, and grind you under, for some mistake. Do you think God's up there in Heaven with a notebook, recording how many quiet times you had, how many verses you memorized, how many people you witnessed to, how long you fasted, how many hours you studied the Bible? Do you think God's keeping a notebook on that, and saying, "Well, he didn't do too good today. You didn't make it today. I'm not pleased with you today"?

You see, you'll never know when you're accepted, if you do that. God is not the God of push and shove, there to cause us to do more and more, and run faster and faster in order to please Him. Grace *is* God's acceptance *of us*. Faith *is our acceptance of God's*

acceptance of us, when we accept the fact that God accepts us. You will find people in churches who have great difficulty with the assurance of their salvation. Do you know why? They have never understood the acceptance by grace. They say, “Yes, but I wonder, am I good enough?” They pull themselves apart—go inside, pull out their guts—excuse me, their intestines—and examine them, and then shove them back in. Morbid introspection—looking at themselves, rather than looking at Jesus; measuring their worth by their achievement, by what they do, what they say, what they give. These are all well and good.

Do you think I’m trying to tell you that performance is not good? Do you think I’m trying to get you to lower the standard? The standard for a man of God, a woman of God, is excellence. That’s a standard we have in this church—is excellence; but we don’t reach it. But we don’t want to say, “Well, it doesn’t make any difference whether I sin, or whether I don’t sin.” No, if you think I’m saying that, you’re wrong. I’m just trying to tell you that, if you’re trying to earn your acceptance before God by your performance, you will also be disappointed; you’ll always be behind; and you will never, ever have the freedom from this prison that the devil has put you in.

Some of the hardest workers in churches are perfectionists. Thank God for the song we sing:

*Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,*

...

O Lamb of God, I come to Thee. (Charlotte Elliott)

You understand that God has accepted you by grace.

B. Accept Yourself

Number two: Then, accept yourself. That doesn’t mean to make peace with sin, or sloppiness, or laziness, or arrogance. But reprogram your self-concept. Say, with the Apostle Paul, “I am what I am by the grace of God.”

You women, don’t you listen to the feminist propaganda. “Oh, you’re just a housewife. You’ve got to get out and do something, so you can be somebody.” Lady, you are somebody. And don’t you get these magazines, these glamour magazines, or let Madison Avenue tell you that you have to have a perfectly sculptured body, that you have to be this or that, in order to be accepted. Accept yourself by the grace of God. And don’t let them tell you you’re nothing, if you’re not absolutely beautiful.

You young men, where are you going to get your acceptance? Are you going to get your self-worth on the football field or the baseball field, or are you going to get it by drugs, by sexual conquest? No. Accept that God loves you by His grace.

Mr. Businessman, how are you going to become somebody? Your job? Bigger

house? Finer car? Is that the way you're going to get your acceptance? You pretty girls, just because your father never gave you the affection, and the approval, and the affirmation that you need, where are you going to get that acceptance? By becoming the dirty plaything of a dirtier man? No. You are what you are by the grace of God. In God's eyes, you are special. God has accepted you. You accept yourself. Don't be hooked to your past. You see, you must accept yourself. Let Jesus look into your eyes today. Let Him say to you, "I love you. I accept you. You're valuable. I don't love you because you're valuable; you're valuable because I love you." God has accepted you. Now you accept yourself.

C. Learn to Accept Other People

Now here's the third and final thing—we're just talking about breaking free: Learn to accept other people. Don't demand perfection out of anybody, because they can't give it. Stop demanding your wife to be perfect. Stop demanding your husband to be perfect. Stop demanding that your children be perfect. Let God be God, and you resign as the CEO of the universe. You see, they don't have to earn their acceptance with God, so why should they have to earn it with you? And when you accept other people, not only do you free them, but you're going to free yourself to be all you can be. And I'll promise you this: that, when you get out of the performance trap, you'll not do less; you'll probably do more. You'll achieve more. You'll enjoy it a whole lot more. You'll be better pastors, better parents, better mates, and better servants of God. You see, Paul says to these Galatians—chapter 3, verse 3: "Are you so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, you're made perfect in the flesh?" (Galatians 3:3).

Conclusion

Now if you're not a Christian today... Do you know the reason that many people are not Christians? Many people today are not Christians—listen, listen; look up here; don't even fold your Bible. I'm losing your attention, I can tell. Right here—many people are not Christians—not because they don't want to go to Heaven, not because they don't believe the Bible is the Word of God, not because they hate Christ, the church... Do you know why many people are not Christians? They just think, "You know, I could never live it. I could never live that kind of a life. I know me. I'm not going to go down there and pretend to be a Christian, and then be a hypocrite. I could never, ever attain it. I could never, ever live up to it." Friend, that's what it is all about. It is the grace of God. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. He saves you by His grace. He keeps you by His grace. And you serve Him through grace. That's the liberty that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Would you bow your heads in prayer? If you're not saved today, I want to lead you in

a prayer, and you can receive Jesus Christ, today, as your personal Lord and Savior. Would you pray this prayer: “Dear God...”—pray it out of your heart—“Dear God, I know that You love me, and I know that You want to save me. Jesus, You died to save me. You promised to save me, if I would trust You. I do trust You. I believe You’re the Son of God. And now by faith, I receive You into my heart as my Lord and my Savior. I take myself off the throne. I put You on the throne, by an act of faith. Lord, I believe You walked out of that grave, and I believe You have the power to save me and to keep me. And right now, today, once and for all, I put my faith in You. Save me, Lord Jesus.” Pray it and mean it: “Save me, Lord Jesus.”

Did you ask Him? You did? Okay, I want you to pray this: “Now Lord Jesus, help me to never be ashamed of You. Give me the courage to make it public. And Lord Jesus, because You have saved me, I will live for You the rest of my life—not in order to be saved, but because I have been saved; not to earn acceptance, but because I have been accepted. I will lovingly and joyfully serve You, Lord Jesus. Give me the courage now to make it public. In Your name I pray. Amen.” †

Liberated Living

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: January 30, 1994

Main Scripture Text: Galatians 5:1

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.”

GALATIANS 5:1

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- II. The Dynamics of a Life of Liberty
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Conclusion

Introduction

Would you turn to Galatians chapter 5? We're in a series of messages entitled "God's Amazing Grace," and we have been in the book of Titus. We move now to the book of Galatians—Galatians chapter 5. I want to speak to you today on this subject: "Liberated Living."

Now, Jesus came to set the captives free. He breaks the power of canceled sin. He sets the prisoner free. Satan, on the other hand, wants to enslave and to make you a slave and a servant of sin. Satan is not looking for casualties; he's looking for converts that he can enslave. The interesting thing is that we have a world that speaks so much

about freedom and knows so little about it. We speak, for instance, about reproductive freedom. That's a good phrase isn't it—"reproductive freedom"? Do you know what they mean by that? The right to live like alley cats and kill babies. And they call that "reproductive freedom." Oh, they talk about "freedom of the press." What they mean by that is the so-called right to print dirt. Not since Manhattan Island was sold for twenty-four dollars has so much dirt been sold so cheaply in America. They call that freedom. They say, "Now, don't give me that God stuff. I want to be free. We've gotten rid of God."

✠ That reminds me of a man on a 747 and a transatlantic flight who comes out of the cockpit and says, "Good news! I've thrown the pilot out! We're free! We're free!"✠

People want to cast off restraint, but it is Jesus who has come to set us free. Look at this passage of Scripture—Galatians 5, verse 1: "*Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.*" (Galatians 5:1) Some translations give that "the yoke of self-effort."

Well, let's talk about this freedom that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. I want us to talk about the dimensions of a life of liberty and the dynamics of a life of liberty. Can we remember that?

I. The Dimensions of a Life of Liberty

First of all, what are the dimensions of this life? I mean, what are we liberated from? I want to mention three things that Paul talks about here in the book of Galatians. Now, let's just go back to the beginning of this book of Galatians.

A. Free from the Bondage of Legalism

And look, if you will, in chapter 1, and find out that we are free, first of all, from the bondage of legalism. Do you have it? Look, in verse 6. Paul says, "*I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ*"—now, underscore that phrase, "the grace of Christ"—"*unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.*" (Galatians 1:6–7) Now, in verse 6, there were some who were deserting the gospel, and in verse 7, there were those who were perverting the gospel. Do you see it?

Now, why were they deserting the gospel, in verse 6? Because of those who were perverting the gospel, in verse 7. There were those who would trouble you and would pervert the gospel of Christ. And by the way, Satan is a pervert. He has no original material. All Satan can do is take that which is good, and pure, and holy, and righteous, and pervert it.

Why had the devil rather pervert the gospel than deny the gospel? Well, if he can pervert the gospel and get you to believing a corrupted gospel rather than a true gospel,

you'll be satisfied with the substitute and become a synthetic Christian. What God wants is for you to believe the true gospel. And so, Satan has come with a substitute gospel (verse 7). That is, it's a substitute; it's an imitation: "*which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.*" (Galatians 1:7)

Now, look in verse 8: "*But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.*" (Galatians 1:8) Phillips translates it this way: "May he be damned!" "Let him be condemned to hell"; "let the curse of Almighty God be upon Him." Now, that sounds a little narrow-minded, doesn't it? That sounds a little bigoted, doesn't it? That sounds a little restrictive, doesn't it? But friend, we're not talking about matters of preference. We're talking about matters of eternal destiny. It would be far better for you to say, "Two and two is five" than it would be to jettison or pervert the gospel of Jesus Christ. Anybody who does that is worthy of God's greatest judgment. We're not talking here about denominational preference. We're not talking here about the color of the carpet. We're not talking here about who's going to win a certain football game. We are talking here about matters of eternal verity.

Now, I want you to see what he says here. He said, "I'm not trying to please people." Verse 9: "*As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.*" (Galatians 1:9) Now, learn this: it is not the messenger that validates the message. Do you understand what I said? It is not the messenger that validates the message. How do you know what I say is true today? You say, "Well, Adrian, I think you're a nice guy. You've been to school. I just trust you." Well, listen, friend, I don't validate the message.

Suppose from those doors, a bona fide, true-blue, genuine, holy angel were to come down those stairs and come stand here, shining as bright as the noonday sun—I mean, friend, an industrial-strength angel. No *ifs*, *ands*, and *buts* about it: everybody can tell he's an angel. And he comes, and he says, "People of Bellevue, you are most blessed. I have been dispatched from heaven to tell you that I have a new revelation. There is a new gospel." Paul said, "*Let him be accursed.*" (Galatians 1:8) That's what he said.

Or, Paul said, "Perhaps, if I were to stand before you and say, 'Hey folks, remember that old gospel that I used to preach to you? Well, that was good for its day; but now, we've got a new and a modern gospel for a new and a modern age.'" Paul said, "If I were to tell you I've changed my mind, if I were to tell you I've got new revelation, the wrath of God, the anathema of God, and the judgment of God would be upon me." Look in verse 10: "*For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.*" (Galatians 1:10) Paul said, "I'm an ambassador, not a politician. I did not come to tickle your ears. I did not come to please you. There is but one gospel—not two, not three."

Jesus Christ, friend, is the only way to heaven. Call it narrow, if you will. I want my banker to be narrow-minded. I certainly want my pilot to be narrow-minded. And I really want my doctor and my pharmacist to be narrow-minded. But somehow, in the matters that matter the most—our eternal destiny—people say, “Well, it just doesn’t matter what you believe. All roads lead to heaven.” No, they do not. There is one gospel. It is the gospel of the grace of God. Do you agree with that? I hope you do because that’s what we’re talking about.

1. What Authenticates the Gospel?

Now, what authenticates the gospel? How can we tell whether or not it is the true gospel? Well, Paul gives us three tests right here.

a. Its Source

First of all, the source of the gospel. Where did it come from? Look in verse 11: “But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.” (Galatians 1:11–12) This gospel is not the invention of man. It is not something that Paul thought up. It was something that God gave. It is not in man’s invention but in God’s revelation. Paul said, “This is direct and divine revelation.” So, friend, the very first thing: any true gospel has to come from God Himself.

Now, very frequently, we’ll pass a supermarket or shopping center, and on the marquee they will say something like, “Go to the church of your choice this Sunday.” Well, that’s sounds good, and I understand the intention. But, you know, really, we don’t go to the church of our choice; we go to the place where they preach God’s Word. I mean, who are we? Do we decide what is right? Do we decide what is wrong? Or, is there a God who has spoken? Paul said, “This gospel, I didn’t get it from man. It wasn’t something I learned while my buddies and I were drinking coffee. God gave this gospel.” The gospel is authenticated by its source.

b. Its Salvation

Secondly, by its salvation. How are we saved? Look in verse 6: “*I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel.*” (Galatians 1:6) Any gospel that is not the gospel of grace is not the true gospel. How are we saved? “*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves.*” (Ephesians 2:8) You can’t beg it. You can’t buy it. You can’t borrow it. You can’t steal it. And you can’t earn it. It is grace of God, and it was bought by Christ on the cross. And friend, when He finished, it was accomplished. And you cannot deplete it; you can’t add to it. It is the supernatural work of God.

c. Its Subject

The third test: not only the source test and the salvation test, but also the subject test.

Notice verse 6. It is the grace of Christ. (Galatians 1:6) He is the subject of the gospel. It is about Him: the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. First Corinthians 15: “This is the gospel which we preached unto you: how that Christ died for our sins, how that He was buried, how that He was raised again the third day.” (1 Corinthians 15:1–4) That is the gospel—nothing else. But the gospel is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ for our sins. He is the subject. Not a gospel that speaks about Him or alludes to Him, but a gospel that centers in Jesus Christ.

2. What Is the Gospel?

What is Christianity? What is the gospel? It’s the gospel of Christ, the grace of Christ.

a. Not a Creed

What is salvation? Not a creed. Not saying, “I believe certain things.” You say, “Well, I believe the plan of salvation.” You can believe the plan of salvation and go straight to hell because *you’re not saved by the plan of salvation; you’re saved by the man of salvation*. It’s not a creed.

b. Not a Code

It’s not a code. You say, “Well, I believe in living right. I believe that if you live right, you’ll go to heaven.” Paul says in this book, *“If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.”* (Galatians 2:21) If you can be saved by living right, then Calvary was a blunder. That’s what he says in this book. I’ll show you in a few moments.

c. Not a Cause

It’s not a creed. It’s not a code. It’s not a cause. You say, “Well, I just believe in loving people. I just believe that if I love everybody, God will say, ‘Come on in to heaven.’” But it’s not a cause.

d. Not a Church

You say, “Well, I’m a member of a good fundamental Bible-believing church.” It’s not a church. It’s not a creed, not a cause, not a church. It’s Christ.

Do you know why we have so much religious mayhem in the world today? Because people have met creeds, not Christ. They’ve entered into codes of living, but not Christ. They’ve joined churches without meeting Christ. *Salvation is not believing something; it is receiving someone.*

The true gospel: the source—it is of God; the salvation—it is by grace; the subject—it is the grace of Christ. And the Bible makes that very clear. Jesus is just not a good way to heaven. He’s the only way to heaven. The Bible says in Acts 4:12: *“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”* (Acts 4:12) Does that offend you that Jesus is the only way? Well, I’m sorry. But friend, that is the truth of Almighty God. Any other gospel is a false gospel. The wrath of God, the judgment of God, is upon it.

Now, how does that liberate us? Well, if you don't understand that you're saved by the grace of God, you'll always be in bondage to legalism. You'll never be able to say, "Praise God, I know I'm saved." But if you understand you're saved by the grace of God, then you're free from the bondage of legalism and self-effort; you're not entangled again in the yoke of self-effort.

"Adrian Rogers, are you certain you're going to heaven?" Yes, I am. "Well, you have a lot of confidence in yourself." You're wrong. That's the way I know I'm going to heaven. I have no confidence in myself. You see, if I had any confidence in myself, then I couldn't know because I'd have to ask myself, "Am I good enough?" "Well, I think I am. I don't lie. I don't steal. I don't curse. I don't get drunk. I don't... But I did lose my temper the other day. Well, I sure hope I'm saved." You see, if one particle of it depends upon me, I am in bondage; I can never know. Praise God! Hallelujah! I'm saved. But when I'm saved by the grace of God, it all depends upon Him. I don't have to be a question mark, with my head bent over; I can be an explanation point, standing up straight and saying, "Praise God! I'm saved."

Now friend, we are the sons of God, not the slaves of God. Let me show you something over here. Turn, if you will, to Galatians 4. Look, in verse 7. Galatians 4 and verse 7—I'm talking to you about the liberty that we have: "*Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son.*" (Galatians 4:7) Now, if you're trying to be saved by the law, by being good, you're a servant. If you're saved by grace, you're a son. You see, a servant is accepted on the basis of what he does, but a son is accepted on the basis of who he is. The servant is anxious that he might please his master and be accepted. The son is resting in his father's love and knows that he is accepted. The servant is accepted because of his workmanship. The son is accepted because of his relationship. The servant is accepted in his own eyes because of his productivity, but the son because of his position. Now, the servant knows that if he fails, he may lose his position. But the son knows if he fails, he may be lovingly corrected, but he is still the father's son. He is still in the family.

Let me tell about the grace of God. Grace is God's love shown to us where there is no merit on our behalf. It doesn't depend upon anything we do. God does not say, "I love you because..." Or, "I love you since..." Or, "I love you if..." Or, "I will love you when..." Or, "I will love you after..." All of those are conditions. But God's love for us is unconditional. Say that word with me: *unconditional*. Say it again: *unconditional*. You see, if God's love for you depended upon conditions; if God's love for you depended upon your faithfulness, your goodness, your gentleness, your mercy, or anything else; if it depended upon anything in you, then if that thing in you changed, God's love toward you would change. But if it depends upon God and God does not change, His love toward you will not change. There's nothing you can do to stop God from loving you.

Now, listen to this: God's love is an action toward us, not a reaction to us. It is an action toward us; it comes out of God's nature. It is not based on what we are but on who He is. He is love. Therefore, we don't try to put ourselves in a position where God can love us. We react to the love of God that is there. I've told you many times: *God does not change you so He can love you. He loves you so He can change you.* And there's nothing that will change you and liberate you like the grace of God. And when you finally understand this, how wonderful it is!

B. Free from the Bondage of Criticism

First of all, you're free from self-effort. This is something you put on yourself. So many people are going from day to day to day to day trying to make God love them, trying to be good enough to earn the love of God. And that is a bondage out of hell. And Jesus came to set you free by His grace—free, first of all, from legalism; secondly, He came to set you free from criticism. Now, let me show you something. Look, if you will, in chapter 2, verses 4 and 5: *“And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: to whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.”* (Galatians 2:4–5)

Now, what's this all talking about? Well, there were some high muckety-mucks from denominational headquarters who came down there and found out that these people were living in the grace of God, rejoicing in the grace of God. And they came down there as “grace busters,” with their list of rules, and rituals, and regulations. You know, the Bible tells us in the Gospel of John that the law came by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. (John 1:17)

Now, what was the law? The law was rules, regulations, rituals, requirements, and restrictions. That's what the law was. And that came by Moses. And all the law was to show us what kind of sinners we are, that we could not be saved by keeping the law. And Paul says, *“I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.”* (Galatians 2:21) The law could never have saved us.

If the law could have saved us, then why did Jesus come? The law came to show us that we needed to be saved. Well, the law came, and the Pharisees studied the law and this long list of rules, rituals, regulations, restraints, and requirements. And then, they made their own list. They added to the list. They had a list longer than your arm—613 requirements they had. And they were making a list and checking it twice, trying to find out who's naughty or nice. Everywhere they would go, they had their list.

And they came to check old Paul out, check out those he led to Christ. And Paul called them “false brethren.” The list-makers don't come from outside the church; they come from inside the church. They are false brethren, and they would like to put you

into subjection. They have been off to hear some guru. They've been off to hear some seminar leader. They've been off to some Bible study. They've been off here or there, and they have been told by somebody that "this is the way you're supposed to live; this is what you're supposed to do and what you're not supposed to do." I'm not talking about God's genuine, holy commandments and God's righteous decrees coming from the Bible; I am talking about external matters of preference, and so forth, that people try to put on us, and put us in their little box, and make us subject to criticism.

And Paul was a freedom fighter. Paul said, "I didn't give space, not at all." As a matter of fact, if you'll find out, look in verse 11. He jumped on Simon Peter because Simon Peter let these people jump on him. He said, "Simon Peter, you're a hypocrite. You let these Judaizers and these legalists come down and begin to criticize you. You've been living by grace; and now, you've gone backward." And he put his finger in Simon Peter's face. Paul was a freedom fighter. He says, "*Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free...[Don't be] entangled again [in] the yoke of bondage.*" (Galatians 5:1)

Now, of course, we ought to be concerned with what others think. We don't want to wound a weaker brother's conscience. (1 Corinthians 8:12) Paul has a lot to say about that in Romans 14. And we ought to not unnecessarily wound or grieve somebody. Now, let me tell you something folks: there are a lot of professional weaker brothers. I'm talking about professional weaker brothers. They're not true weaker brothers. I mean, these are the list-makers. And we've got our modern lists today—and I'm not talking about the Word of God; I'm not talking about the righteous commandments of Almighty God, but I'm talking about somebody's little peccadillo, somebody's little measurements. And they're going around on the sin-seeker committee, self-appointed as chairman. And friend, don't you let those people put you under bondage. It is their problem until you allow it to be your problem; then it becomes your problem. They're sick, and you can't make yourself sick to make them well. You "*stand fast...in the liberty wherewith Christ [has] made us free.*" (Galatians 5:1) When you get saved by the grace of God, you are saved. You are free from the bondage of legalism. Hallelujah! "Free from the law—oh happy condition!" And you're saved from the bondage of criticism. You see, under legalism, you're in bondage to yourself; under criticism, you're in bondage to others.

C. Free from the Bondage of Fatalism

Now, there's a third way that Jesus set us free: not only from the bondage of criticism, but from the bondage of fatalism. Would you look at Galatians chapter 4 and look in verse 3? "*Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world.*" (Galatians 4:3). Now, what does he mean by "the elements of the world"? He means the elemental forces of nature, called "the elements of the world": the stars, the

planets, the world of nature, your birth. This is fatalism. He, really, in verses 9 and 10—chapter 4, verses 9 and 10—look at that: *“But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.”* (Galatians 4:9–11)

What’s he talking about? He’s talking about those people who are wrapped up in astrology—the days, the weeks, the times, the years, the zodiac, the stars, the planets, the elements of nature. They just think, “My fate! I am what I am by fate. Let me read, today, my horoscope and see what’s going to happen to me.” You poor, pitiful thing. You poor, pitiful, benighted soul! I wouldn’t read that, even out of curiosity. It’s of the devil. *Astrology—astrologos—astrology*, the word: “of the stars.” *Astro* is a star. Do you know what a disaster is? “The stars weren’t right; I had a disaster.” Friend, I want to tell you something: with a child of God, there is no disaster. *“All things work together for good...to them who are the called according to his purpose.”* (Romans 8:28) God is God. I am not a victim of fate. I can’t say, “This is just the way I am. The stars weren’t right for me.” I am what I am by the grace of God. And that sets you free. You see, under legalism, you’re a slave to yourself. The criticism—you’re a slave to others. Under legalism, you’re a slave to circumstance. But the grace of God will set you free from all that when you understand God’s wonderful grace, how wonderful that it is.

II. The Dynamics of a Life of Liberty

Now, that’s the dimensions of this grace. Let’s talk about the dynamics of it. How does it work? Oh friend, it’s all centered in the cross of Jesus Christ. Let me show you something here. Go back to chapter 2, and look with me in verse 20—chapter 2, verse 20. This is one of the grandest verses in all of the Bible. The Apostle Paul says, *“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God”—*isn’t that a rich phrase: “to frustrate the grace of God”?—*“for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.”* (Galatians 2:20–21) If you could be saved by being a good boy or girl, then Calvary was a blunder. And then, just right down to chapter 3, verse 1: *“O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?”* (Galatians 3:1)

Now, what is the answer? How does God set us free? Well, the cross is our Statue of Liberty. It is the cross that tells us of our freedom. How does the cross? Well, the cross sets me free from legalism because every demand of the law was paid with the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

*Free from the law—oh, happy condition!
Jesus hath bled, and there is remission.*

—PHILIP PAUL BLISS

The cross sets me free from criticism. Hey, you can criticize me, but I know who I am. And He loved me enough to die for me. That sets me free from criticism. It sets me free from fatalism. Did you know that I was in the heart and mind of God before the foundation of this world? I don't have to believe in fatalism. But friend, Jesus was slain before the foundation of the world. (Revelation 13:8)

The cross sets us free. But how does it do it, in practical purposes? Now, look in Galatians chapter 2 and verse 20: *"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."* (Galatians 2:20)

A. An Executed Life

First of all, there is an execution. It is an executed life. I am crucified with Christ. You're looking at a man that's been crucified. I am crucified with Christ. You are crucified with Christ. Now folks, that's just not rhetoric; that is truth. You see, Jesus died for you. But when Jesus died for you, you died with Him. His death had your name on it. When He was nailed up to the cross, He was your substitute, so you died with Him. Now, get this down big and plain: He didn't just take your sins to the cross. That's a mistake we often make. We talk about Him dying for our sins. He didn't take your sins to the cross. If He had taken your sins, that still left you. He took you. He took you to the cross. You died. The problem is not what you do; it is what you are. *"The wages of sin is death."* (Romans 6:23) Your sin demanded death, and Jesus died for you. And you died with Him. Say "amen." You died with Him. All right?

B. An Exchanged Life

"I am crucified with Christ"—but not only is it an executed life; it is an exchanged life—*"nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."* (Galatians 2:20) Now, not only did He die, and I died with Him; but also, He rose, and I arose with Him.

¶ Now, suppose I commit murder. They put me in the electric chair. They pull the switch; I twitch and die. A coroner comes, takes my pulse, gives the vital signs, and writes out a certificate of death. Can the law do anything else to me? No sir. Now, suppose, by a miracle, I come back to life, can they put me in the chair again? Absolutely not! That would be double jeopardy. I've already died. Friend, you died with Christ. The law has no more demand on you. You have paid in full, yet you live because He died and He rose again and you died with Him and you rose with Him. ¶

It's an executed life. It is an exchanged life. He gave Himself for us that He might

give Himself to us. And now, He inhabits our humanity.

C. An Energized Life

Now, it is not only an executed life and an exchanged life; it is an energized life. *“And the life...I now live...I live by the faith of the Son of God.”* (Galatians 2:20) Not “faith in the Son of God.” That is true, but that’s not what he says here: *“the faith of the Son of God.”* (Galatians 2:20) His faith is in me. His life is in me. He inhabits my humanity. The life I now live, *“I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”* (Galatians 2:20) Isn’t that wonderful? Now folks, that is freedom. That is liberty. That is the grace of God that sets you free.

Ian Thomas is a friend of mine, a great Bible teacher. And I love what Ian Thomas had to say about old Moses out in the wilderness. You remember, Moses was the man who came out in the wilderness, and he saw the burning bush. You remember that story? There was a bush, and it was burning; and it just continued to burn. It wasn’t consumed. Moses was an exile on the backside of the desert. He tried to be a missionary and ended up a murderer. And God says, “Moses, take off your shoes. You’re standing on holy ground.” And Moses sees that bush burning, and it’s not consumed. Major Thomas imagines Moses saying something like this: “Would you look at that bush! Oh, what a marvelous bush! It just keeps on burning, burning for God. I tried to burn for God. I made myself a pile of ashes in twenty-four hours; there’s nothing left. But that bush just keeps on burning. Wish I could be a bush like that. I wish my life could burn for God like that, and just keep on burning.” Major Thomas imagines God saying, “Moses, come here, son. I want to tell you something. You think this bush is a wonderful bush? Moses, you see that bush over there? I could do the same thing with that bush. Or, do you see that bush over there? I could do the same thing with that bush. Moses, it’s not the bush. It’s God in the bush. Any old bush will do.”

Isn’t that right? You know, sometimes we see a man, and we say, “Oh, what a wonderful servant of God he is! I wish I could be a servant of God like that. Look what he’s doing for God!” And God says. “It’s not what he’s doing, it’s what I am doing in him. Any old bush will do. This bush will do. That bush will do. You’ll do. Any old bush will do. You’ll do. You’ll do. You’ll do.” And you will, and you will, if you let God in you be God. That’s what he’s saying: *“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.”* (Galatians 2:20)

Conclusion

And friend, that’s liberty. And don’t you ever let anybody put you under bondage. *“Stand fast...in the liberty wherewith Christ has [set] us free.”* (Galatians 5:1) Free from the bondage of legalism. Free from the bondage of criticism. Free from the bondage of

fatalism. Free indeed. Hallelujah!

Father, thank you for Your Word. We love You and praise You. In Jesus' holy name.
Amen.†

Living a Life of Liberty

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: October 5, 1997

Main Scripture Text: Galatians 5:1

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Conclusion

Introduction

Find Galatians chapter 5, and in a moment I want to read to you verse 1. But I want to talk to you, tonight, about freedom: “Living a Life of Liberty.” Now the gospel, really understood, is an emancipation proclamation. The Bible says, “If the Son”—that is, the Lord Jesus, the Son of God—“will make you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:36). Now there are a lot of people, today, who are talking about liberty, who really don’t have it. Some don’t have—they’re not living—a life of liberty. A person is not truly free who’s dragging his chains with him. A lot of folks are. They’re not living in victory. We need to understand this: that the devil doesn’t want casualties; the devil wants converts that he can enslave, that will do his bidding. So he has a lot of people whom he has enslaved. And the irony of this is that many of those who are slaves of Satan speak so much of freedom.

We were standing for the unborn today. Those who do not like that speak of *reproductive freedom*. Now what they mean by *reproductive freedom* is “the right to live like alley cats and then murder babies in the womb.” And they call that *freedom*. Or, they speak of *freedom of the press*. And what they mean by *freedom* is “the ability to corrupt the minds of a generation.” Somebody has wisely said, “Not since Manhattan Island was sold for twenty-four dollars has so much dirt been sold so cheaply as we see in America today.” And yet, that’s all done under the guise of freedom.

And notice what the Bible has to say about the true liberty that we have in Jesus. Chapter 5, verse 1: “*Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us*

free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage” (Galatians 5:1). The Lord Jesus has come to surely, truly, wonderfully set us free.

I. The Dimensions of the Life of Liberty

Now what are the dimensions of this life of liberty? From what are we freed?

A. We Are Freed from Legalism

Well, first of all, we’re freed from legalism. That’s what the Book of Galatians is all about. We’re freed from the bondage of legalism. Now look again, in chapter 5, verse 1: *“Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage”* (Galatians 5:1). That may be translated “with the yoke of self-effort”—that is, of legalism.

Now go back, if you will, to chapter 1, and let’s just get a running start. Look, if you will, in verse 6. And this is a little review of what I did Wednesday night. The Apostle Paul says, *“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ”* (Galatians 1:6–7). Now remember, Satan is a pervert, and what he wants to do is to take anything good and pervert it. And he will do that—even to the gospel. Satan had rather pervert the gospel than to deny the gospel, because if he can pervert the gospel, then he gets people hooked on the substitute gospel, and they never really do seek the real gospel.

So first of all, they desert the true gospel—verse 6: *“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:”*—and then, they pervert the gospel after they desert the gospel—*“which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ”* (Galatians 1:6–7).

Now Paul was a freedom fighter. He wanted those people in Galatians to be free. And those who were perverting the gospel were perverting the gospel by saying that you had to do certain works in order to be saved. It was legalism. And Paul sounds almost unchristian when he, as a freedom fighter, comes against these. Come down to verse 8. He says, *“But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.”* Phillips translates that “let him be damned.” *“As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed”* (Galatians 1:8–9).

What the Apostle Paul is saying is there can be no compromise with the gospel. It is the gospel of grace—no compromise for it. There’s no substitute for it. He says, in verse 7, speaking of that gospel, he says there’s another gospel, in verse 6; but, he says,

“*which is not another*” (Galatians 6:7). It just looks like the gospel. It may sound like the gospel, but it is a counterfeit gospel that leads to a synthetic salvation. He’s saying this gospel is once for all delivered. Do not mess with it!

A preacher is to be a newsboy; he’s not to be an editor. He is to deliver the gospel of grace. And you will remember, if you were here in prayer meeting, we said the gospel is divine in origin. Paul said, “I didn’t receive it from men, neither was I taught it by men” (Galatians 1:12). He said, “It’s divine in operation.” It is the gospel of Christ. It’s divine in its objective. It is the gospel of grace. Its operation is grace. And it is divine in its objective. The objective is Christ—not a gospel that talks about Christ, that alludes to Christ; but, Christ is that gospel: “*Christ in you, the hope of glory*” (Colossians 1:27).

I had a dear friend who was named Dr. Leo Eddleman. Dr. Eddleman is now in Heaven. But Dr. Eddleman, who was the former president of New Orleans Seminary, said, “What a wonderful salvation!” He’s talking, now, about the gospel of grace. He said, “You cannot beg it. You cannot buy it. You cannot borrow it. You cannot steal it. You cannot earn it. You cannot learn it. You cannot merit it. You cannot inherit it. It is internal, external, eternal. By the work of Christ on the cross it was completed, and can never be depleted or repeated.” I like that. That’s the gospel of Christ. And so this gospel means that by an act of faith I am justified. My sins are buried in the grave of God’s forgetfulness.

Now there are always those who want to put us back under legalism. And go to chapter 4, and look, if you will, in verse 7—and, look at this now: “*Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ*” (Galatians 4:7). Do you think of yourself as a slave or as a son? The word *servant*, here, literally means “slave.” Now what’s the difference?

Well, friend, Dr. David Seamands has written a book, and the title of the book is an interesting title; it’s called *The Performance Trap*. And a lot of people are in this performance trap. Now notice what he says in 4:7—he said, “We’re not servants; we’re sons” (Galatians 4:7). And Dr. Seamands has pointed out the difference. He said, “A servant is accepted and appreciated on the basis of what he does. A son is accepted and appreciated on the basis who he is. A servant begins the day anxious that he may please his master. A son begins the day resting, knowing that he is accepted and loved. The servant is accepted on the basis of his workmanship. A son is accepted on the basis of his relationship. A servant knows that productivity and performance are the basis of his acceptance. A son knows that his acceptance is on the basis of his position as a person. A servant has peace of mind at the end of the day, only if he has proven worthy by his work. Tomorrow, the anxiety will begin again. The son is secure all day long, knowing that tomorrow will not change his status as a member of the family. The servant knows that, if he fails, his whole position is at stake. The son knows that, if he

fails, he may be lovingly corrected, but he is not afraid of being thrown out of the family. His performance does not change the stability of his position.”

Now look again, in chapter 4, verse 7. He says, *“Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ”* (Galatians 4:7). Now these Galatians had let some people come in, and pervert the gospel, and tell them, “Yes, you’re saved by the grace of God, plus you must do this, and this, and this, and this.” And when they added works into it, they fell from grace—the standard that God had set. And they perverted the gospel of Christ. God does not say, “I love you, because...,” or, “I love you, since...,” or, “I will love you, if...,” or, “I love you, when...,” or, “I love you, after...,” or, “I love you, provided...” God just says, “I love you.” And that’s too much to take in. But He does!

God loves us by His grace. That’s why it’s called *grace*. It is unconditional grace. That doesn’t mean that God is looking for something in us, that if He finds it, then He will love us—something like our actions, or our goodness, or our loveableness. The reverse, therefore, would mean that, if He didn’t find that something in us, He would stop loving us—some failure on our part. But friend, God’s love for you is unconditional. It flows out of His nature. It is an action toward us, not a reaction to us. God *doesn’t* love us because we’re valuable. *We’re valuable because He loves us. God is not changing us so He can love us. He loves us so He can change us.*

Now friend, that’s amazing grace. “That is amazing grace,” we have sung. There are some who would pervert that gospel, and that is legalism—legalism. Now we are to be set free from the bondage of legalism.

B. We Are Freed from the Bondage of Criticism

Secondly, not only are we set free from the bondage of legalism, but we are also set free from the bondage of criticism.

Look, if you will, in chapter 2, verses 4 and 5. And Paul said, *“And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: to whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you”* (Galatians 2:4–5). Now not only did Paul have to contend there with legalism, but with criticism. There were certain false brethren. One translation gives it “sham Christians,” who came in there. They had a bunch of rules, a bunch of laws, and they said to these Galatians, “Now you’ve got to do like we tell you to do.” They were *grace-busters*—that’s what they were.

Now the law, the Old Testament law, was righteous and holy. The Old Testament law had its requirements. It had its rules. It had its regulations. It had its rituals. The Pharisees, however, took those Old Testament laws, and expanded them, and

lengthened them, and made all kinds of rules on their list that they could hold over the heads of other people and intensify the guilt of these people. The Pharisees themselves served God out of grim compulsion and not out of joyous overflow. And then, they tried to export their grimness on other people. They were list makers. And there are a lot of list makers today who'll steal the joy that you have in the Lord Jesus Christ and make you a slave to public opinion. And that's an awful slavery to be.

Now it's not that we are not to be concerned about what other people think. We're not to be unconcerned about our attitudes. And we want to be a good influence as much as we can, but we cannot be slaves to public opinion. Paul refused to be a slave to public opinion. And look, if you will, in verse 5, here—in chapter 2, verse 5: Paul said, *“To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour”* (Galatians 2:5). He had a tender heart, but, friend, he had a tough hide. And I found out that, in serving the Lord, you have to do the same thing.

You'd be surprised, if you could read my mail, how many people have some little peccadillo, some idea, something that they have conjured up, that they want to force on me, or force on you, or force on us. And it's a vicious trap when you become a slave to public opinion—not only legalism, but criticism.

Peter did that. Go on down to verse 11 of this same chapter. And he says, *“When Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them that were of the circumcision”* (Galatians 2:11–12). Now *the circumcision* is just a euphemistic way of saying “the Jewish high muckety-mucks.” What had happened is this: that Peter found out that the gospel was for the Gentiles as well as for the Jew; and so, Peter was down there, having fellowship with the Gentiles, until the brethren came from denominational headquarters. And then, Peter, fearing criticism, withdrew himself. And Paul said, “Peter, you're to be blamed, because you let these people put you under the bondage of criticism, and fear has replaced your heart”

Now we are to get along with people. We are to be ambassadors. But friend, we're not to be politicians. And it may be a relief to you to know that you don't have to get along with everybody. Now listen. Criticism may come from within as well as without. We expect the world to criticize us. But did you know that you'll get more criticism from within the church, sometimes, than you will from without the church? Paul calls them there, in verse 4, *“false brethren”* (Galatians 2:4).

Now again, we need to be compassionate about what people think. We need to listen to valid criticism, but don't let people put you under bondage with criticism. You cannot make yourself sick to make these people well. I'm telling you, these people are professional weaker brothers—professional weaker brothers. And really, when you

analyze it, they're just hardcore legalists, and it is their problem. But if you yield to it, it will soon become your problem.

Now Paul said, *"Stand fast...in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free"* (Galatians 5:1). You're free from the bondage of legalism, trying to earn your status before God. You are free from the bondage of criticism, trying to conform to somebody else's idea of how you ought to live, rather than finding from Jesus Christ Himself how you ought to live. Again, certainly, we ought to be aware of the thoughts of other people. Certainly, we can learn from other people. Certainly, we don't want to unnecessarily offend somebody. But don't let these people put you under bondage.

C. **We Are Freed from the Bondage of Fatalism**

Now there's a third thing that the Lord gives us liberty in: not only the bondage of legalism, and not only the bondage of criticism, but the bondage of fatalism.

Now look, if you will, in chapter 4 and verse 3 of this Book of Galatians. You see, this is a theme that goes all the way through the book. That's the reason why we're skipping around. And he says, *"Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: but when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons"* (Galatians 4:3–5).

Now what does he mean here, when he talks about *"under the bondage of the elements of the world?"* (Galatians 4:3). He's talking, here, about what we would call the *elemental forces of the world*. He's talking, here, about the stars, the planets, nature, birth. Have you ever had anybody ask you, "What sign were you born under?" Good night! There are a lot of people who have put themselves under bondage to these things. It's fatalism. They think that their future is in the stars or in circumstances. You see, in legalism, we get under bondage to ourselves; in criticism, we get under bondage to others. And in fatalism, we get under bondage to circumstances. Now the child of God is not to be under bondage to any of these things.

Now he's talking, here, primarily about such stuff as astrology, and those kinds of things. Look, if you will, in chapter 4, verses 9 and 10, and you'll pick that up: *"But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, now turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain"* (Galatians 4:9–11).

Now when he's talking about days, and months, and seasons, and years, he's talking about astrology. Astrology goes all the way back to the tower of Babel. Well, you say, "Pastor, that only applied in the First Century." You know, we have a generation today—even some foolish Baptists—who read their horoscope every morning. God

have mercy upon you poor, pitiful thing—that you pick up a newspaper—some satanic, ungodly occult practice—to find out how you ought to live, or what you ought to expect in a day. You put yourself under bondage, whether it’s the bondage of legalism, the bondage of criticism, or the bondage of fatalism. You are not a victim of fate! Friend, you are what you are by the grace of God. And Paul says to these Galatians, “You stand free in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free” (Galatians 5:1).

Now how does this work? How, therefore, do we come against this legalism, and this criticism, and this fatalism? How do we live the life of liberty that our God wants us to have? Well, go back to chapter 2, now, and look. And here’s the heart; here’s the key—chapter 2, beginning in verse 20—and, let’s read it. Many of you know this verse by heart. It’s a life verse for many of us. Paul says, *“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain”* (Galatians 2:20–21).

Now what he is talking about here is how the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ—that we sang about so wonderfully this morning—is the liberating force. Now how does the cross liberate us? When we say, “I am crucified with Christ,” how does that set us free? And Paul says, *“Stand fast...in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made [you] free”* (Galatians 5:1). Well, those who are in bondage are only in bondage because they have forgotten the cross. You see, because of the cross, I could never be in bondage to legalism, because every demand of the law has been met by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Every demand that the law has put upon us Christ has fulfilled for us. We sing it:

Free from the law—oh, happy condition!

Jesus hath bled, and there is remission. (Philip Paul Bliss)

What about criticism? How does the cross free me from criticism? Well, I’ll tell you how: No matter what you say about me, He loved me enough to die for me. That frees me from criticism. When I look at that love, I know that I am *“accepted in the beloved”* (Ephesians 1:6), and I don’t have to worry about your criticism of me. How does the cross free us from fatalism? Well, the cross frees us from fatalism, because we were in the heart and mind of God before the foundation of this world. I am not a victim of circumstances; I am the recipient of God’s grace. And the cross sets me free from legalism. The cross sets me free from criticism. The cross sets me free from fatalism.

II. How Does This Work Out in My Personal Experience?

Now how does this work out in my personal experience? How do I get Galatians 2:20 off of the page and into my heart? Let’s look at it again; and then, we’ll be finished. Paul

says, *“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ that liveth in me”* (Galatians 2:20). Now here’s three things I want you to learn about this; and then, we’ll close the book.

A. It Is an Executed Life

The life of liberty is an executed life—an executed life. *“I am crucified with Christ”* (Galatians 2:20). The old person you were has been executed. He has been put to death. When Jesus died, He did not merely take your sin to the cross. That would still leave you. When He died, not only did He take my sin; He took myself. *“I am crucified with Christ.”* His death had my name on it. When Jesus Christ died on that cross, Adrian Rogers died on that cross. You died on that cross. Paul died on that cross. Paul said, *“I am crucified with Christ.”*

Now if I am crucified, if I had been executed for my crimes, then I could never be brought into double jeopardy. The penalty is paid. What can you do to a dead man? You see, I am crucified with Christ. I died with Him. And so it is an executed life. He took my sin and He took my self to the cross. The old Adrian is dead. It is an executed life.

B. An Exchanged Life

Then, it becomes an exchanged life. Now look at it again, in verse 20; look at it carefully: *“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me”* (Galatians 2:20). Now you see, it is not merely a changed life; it is an exchanged life. When He died, He died for me. When He rose, I rose with Him. He lives in me. He gave Himself for me, that He might give Himself to you. And so I’m not with Him in a tomb. He has a life that the grave could not keep, and that life is mine. I live because He lives. Now I don’t know whether you’re understanding this or not, because only the Holy Spirit can help you understand it, but I’m going to give it to you. And you pray, “God, help me to understand this,” okay? I am crucified with Christ. That’s an executed life. Now I live with Christ. That is an exchanged life.

C. An Energized Life

And now it becomes an energized life. Now look at it again. The executed life is the exchanged life, which is the energized life. *“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me:”*—now, watch this; here is the energized life—*“and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God...”*—not “faith in the Son of God”—*“the faith of the Son of God...”*—Him in me—*“the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me”* (Galatians 2:20).

Now He gave Himself for me, that He might give Himself to me, that He might live His life through me. And when I understand that—when I understand that—I am free. I am free from legalism. I am free from criticism. I am free from fatalism. I am free,

indeed! And that's the reason the Apostle Paul goes back to our text that we began. Look at it, in chapter 5, verse 1: "*Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage*" (Galatians 5:1).

Conclusion

Now Ian Thomas—Major Ian Thomas—has written a book I want to recommend to you. I hope it's still in print. It ought to be, because it's a classic. It's called *The Saving Life of Christ*. I picked up that book many years ago in a bookstore—just in a bookstore, just picked it up. It was really an ugly cover. But I looked at it. It said, *The Saving Life of Christ*. I bought it. I read it. It is among the top five books that have touched my life: *The Saving Life of Christ*. And in that book, Ian Thomas is showing that Christ in us—the life that He lives in us—is what gives us that liberty.

And in that book, Ian Thomas tells about Moses. We sang about Moses tonight, and the face of Moses shone. But there was something that happened before that time in Moses' life. Moses was out on the desert, and Moses has started out to be a missionary, and, Moses had become a murderer. He'd messed things up. He'd killed an Egyptian. He fled out into the desert from the face and fury of Pharaoh—a vagabond for 40 years, living on the backside of nowhere, out in the desert. And then, Moses sees a bush burning, and that bush just keeps on burning, and, the bush is not consumed. And a voice comes from the bush, "Moses, take off your shoes. You're standing on holy ground."

Ian Thomas uses a little imagination, but there's a great truth there. He imagines Moses looking at that bush burning, and burning, and burning, and yet, not consumed. And he imagines Moses saying, "I wish I could be like that. I tried to serve God. I burned myself out in 24 hours. I've been a pile of ashes ever since—ever since. And there's that bush—it just keeps on burning and burning." "Do you know," Ian Thomas asks, "we see men like that; we see women like that; their life is glowing with the power and the energy of God; and, we wonder, did they breathe a different air than us? Were they God's favorites? No! They just made a discovery. They just discovered that they didn't have what it took. They said, 'I can't, God'; You never said, 'I could.' But You said, 'God, You can, and You said You always would.' And so they said, 'Lord, it's Your life in me. It's not my ability; it's my availability. From the human standard, I may not be qualified. I may fail. But on the other hand, by the grace of God, like that bush, I can be a miracle.'" And Ian Thomas imagines God saying to Moses, "Now Moses, you're amazed at that bush, because that bush just keeps on burning, and burning, and burning. Moses, let me tell you—It's not just that bush. Moses, you see this bush over here? I could do the same thing with that bush. And Moses, do you see this bush over here? I could do the same thing with that bush. And I could do the same thing with that bush. Moses, listen.

Moses, It's not the bush; it's God in the bush! Any old bush will do!" You like that? Any old bush will do! That's it.

Don't think that some people are greater, stronger, better than you. God takes ordinary people to do extraordinary things with. It is not the bush; it is God in the bush! Any old bush will do! Don't you think that's a good truth? That's what Paul is talking about. Galatians chapter 2, verse 20: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; but yet, not I. It's not me. It's Christ that lives in me" (Galatians 2:20).

When I say that you're free from the bondage of legalism, that doesn't mean that you're to live an unrighteous life and not be concerned about holiness. When I say that you're free from a life of criticism, that doesn't mean that you're not to be aware of what other people think or run roughshod over their feelings. When I say that you're to be free from a life of fatalism, that doesn't mean you're not to look both ways when you cross the street. Circumstances are there. But oh, dear friend, understand that Christ has made us free. That's the gospel. That's the good news. When people understand it, they begin to want to sing songs like "Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me."

Be free in the Lord Jesus! Amen? Father God, seal the message to our hearts and help us to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. In His dear name we pray. Amen.

Victory over the Flesh

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: February 3, 1985

Main Scripture Text: Galatians 5:16–26

Outline

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- I. The Certainty of Our Fight
 - A. A Day-Long Battle
 - B. An Age-Long Battle
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Conclusion

Introduction

Take your Bibles and turn, please, to Galatians chapter 5; and then, be prepared to turn to Exodus chapter 17. But first of all, the Galatians passage—I'm beginning to read Galatians chapter 5 and verse 16: *"This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these"*—he's going to tell us what the works of the flesh are. And the flesh is easily discerned, if it is not described here, when we look at the works of the flesh. Now the works of the flesh—he categorizes them in certain categories. For example, he speaks, first of all, of sexual sin. These are—*"adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness"*—those are primarily sexual sins. He speaks of these kinds of terrible sins; and then, he mentions spiritual sins: *"idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies"*—and then, he goes on and mentions social sins of—*"envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings"*—now, you say, "He didn't get me." And then, he says—*"and such like"* (Galatians 5:16–21). That includes you.

All right, so whether or not you're talking about sexual sins—whether you're talking social sins, or spiritual sins, or such like sins—all of these are what the Bible calls the *sins* or the *works of the flesh*. Now these are works, as compared to the fruit of the

Spirit: “*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law*” (Galatians 5:22–23). Men never have had to make a law against the fruit of the Spirit, only law has to be made against the works of the flesh. Now the works of the flesh—you do that by your self; but the fruit of the Spirit—He does that through you. And therefore, there’s a contrast between works and fruit. We produce the work—that is, it’s an inside job—and we only bear the fruit.

You see, the Holy Spirit produces the fruit. We produce the work. And so Paul is very exact here, in this Scripture, that he uses. Now he goes on to say, “*And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another*” (Galatians 5:24–26). The Christian has three major enemies over which he is to have victory: the world, the flesh, and the devil.

The world is the *cosmos*—that is, a system that is organized against our Lord and His Christ. He’s not talking about the material physical world; he’s talking about a philosophy of thought—a system, an organization, headed up by the devil himself, who is the prince of the power of this age. And the Bible calls that *the world*. And that’s one of our enemies. That world would squeeze us into its mold and try to fashion us and make us to be a worldly Christian. Billy Sunday said, “That’s a contradiction in terms—it’s like talking of a heavenly devil.”

But there are some who are worldly Christians. Now that’s the world. We call the world *the external foe*. And then, there is the devil, and he is the infernal foe. He is real; he’s not a figment of imagination. He’s very real, very powerful, and he goes about “as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8). And we’re told to “*be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour*” (1 Peter 5:8). But then, we call the devil *the infernal foe*. And then, the flesh is what I want to call *the internal foe—the internal foe*. That is, there is a principle within you that the Bible calls *the flesh*.

Now when Paul speaks of the flesh here, he’s not talking about skin and bones, hide and hair, blood and corpuscle. The Bible calls that *the flesh* also, but the word *flesh* is used in several senses. Here, he means, “a left-over, free disposition to sin that we have from our father Adam.” It is in us all. It is the carnal desire of the lower part of your nature. And the Bible calls that *the flesh*. And I told you this morning that, if the world were to evaporate, and the devil disappear, you still have the potentiality to sin. Amen?

There’s enough in you that the Bible calls *the flesh*. If you don’t learn how to give victory over the flesh, you are not going to have victory. Because you see, you are your enemy. Remember what Pogo said, “We have met the enemy, and he is us?” Well, don’t just look around; go stand in front of the mirror, if you want to know whom the

enemy is. Now the Apostle Paul here tells us, in the New Testament, that we are to have victory over the flesh, but there's a wonderful, wonderful illustration of that in the Old Testament.

So I want you just simply to put a bookmark there, in Galatians chapter 5; and, I want you to turn with me, if you will please, to Exodus chapter 17. We're going to find an episode of the children of Israel, and the Bible says that "these things happened to them for examples to us" (1 Corinthians 10:11). So don't think that I'm taking liberty with the Word of God, when I'm finding a wonderful example for us as to how to live the Christian life.

Now I'm going to begin reading here, in Exodus chapter 17 and verse 8: *"Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim. And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand. So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. And the LORD said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book"*—now, by the way, God says, "This is so important; I don't want anybody to forget what happened here. There's a tremendous lesson. Let's make a memorial out of this. Let's put it in a book, so the folks that live in Memphis, Tennessee can learn about this"—*"Write this for a memorial"*—well, He didn't say that part; that's what He meant—*"Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovahnissi: For he said, Because the LORD hath sworn that the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation"* (Exodus 17:8–16).

Now let's put it in perspective. The children of Israel represent the Christian. When they were in the land of bondage, the land of Egypt, they represent the man who's yet to be saved. He is under the bondage of Pharaoh, who represents the devil. He took that land of slavery, and darkness, and idolatry, and is a picture of the unsaved man in captivity of the devil. When they came out of Egypt, they came out under the blood of the Passover lamb through the Red Sea. That's the picture of our salvation—our deliverance. But they went out of Egypt and into the wilderness.

Now if Egypt is a picture of the lost man, the wilderness is a picture of the carnal man. But they were headed right on into Canaan, which is a picture of the Spirit-filled life. Now there was an enemy that came to withstand them. They have come out of

Egypt, but they've not yet entered into Canaan, which is a picture of the believer's rest and the Spirit-filled life. There was an enemy who came to stop them from going into Canaan, and the name of that enemy was Amalek. Now listen to me. If Egypt represents the world, and Pharaoh represents the devil, what or whom does Amalek represent? The flesh—the same flesh that I read to you about over in Galatians chapter 5. As a matter of fact, I feel quite certain that Amalek represents the flesh.

Let me tell you who Amalek was. You take your Bible and study; then, you'll find out that Amalek was the grandson of a man named Esau. And the Bible says that Esau was one that God hated (Romans 9:13). Why don't you just put your bookmark there, in Exodus 18? Now you've got two bookmarks. And turn with me to Malachi, for a moment, and look in Malachi chapter 1.

Now Malachi is easy to find, because it's the last book in the Old Testament. Turn to Malachi chapter 1, and let's begin reading in verse 1: *"The burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi. I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness. Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the LORD of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness"*—now, watch this, and put a star in your Bible by it—*"and, The people against whom the LORD hath indignation for ever"* (Malachi 1:1–4). Who is that? Esau—Esau's descendants, the Edomites.

The Bible says that "God has indignation against them forever": *"Jacob have I loved; Esau have I hated"* (Romans 9:13). Well, who was Esau? Esau was a man who was completely given over to the flesh. The Bible speaks of him as a profane person (Hebrews 12:16). He had no appetite for spiritual things. He was carnal; he was fleshly; and he sold his birthright for a mess of pottage, if you remember the story. The flesh, as represented in Esau, was interested in the present, not the future. He wanted that bowlful of red stew, rather than having the birthright and the spiritual blessings of God. The flesh was interested in the present, not the future. The flesh is interested in the material and not the eternal. Esau was interested in the things of the flesh, not the things of the Spirit. And God said, "Jacob have I loved; Esau have I hated" (Romans 9:13).

Jacob and Esau were brothers—twin brothers—but God loved Jacob, because Jacob had a desire for spiritual things. Esau, God hated, because he was a man of the flesh. Now the Bible says that "God had a perpetual warfare with Esau and his kinfolk" (Malachi 1:4). Now go back, if you will, to Exodus chapter 17, and look again in chapter 17 and verse 16: *"For he said, Because the LORD hath sworn that the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation"* (Exodus 17:16). That is, God says, "I'm

not forgetting this thing.” Here is the grandson of Esau. He represents the flesh. He represents that which God hates. Now it is not without significance that, when these Hebrew people—these Jews—came out of the land of Egypt under the blood, that they met face-to-face the flesh, Amalek, the grandson of Esau, against whom God has eternal, perpetual indignation, and warfare. For, the Bible says the flesh is what? Warfare with God (Romans 8:7).

The flesh is “enmity,” which means “warfare with God.” There is an enemy of God that the Bible calls *the flesh*. There is a perpetual war between the things of the Spirit and the things of the flesh. And that’s the reason the Apostle Paul says, “The flesh lusts against the Spirit and the spirit against the flesh” (Galatians 5:17). Jacob against Esau, Esau against Jacob, Amalek against Israel—there is that war.

Now you see, the stage is set. Now I’m going to give you an illustration of this warfare, and how victory is won over the flesh. There are three things I want you to see.

I. The Certainty of Our Fight

Number one: I want you to see what I’m going to call *the certainty of our fight*. Notice, if you will, in chapter 17, verse 8: “*Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim*” (Exodus 17:8). Now all Christians taste the flesh. There’s not a’ one of us that does not have the same battle today, in another category, that Israel had so long ago. I want you to notice when it was that Amalek appeared. He was right on time. And notice when he appeared. Well, go back, if you will, and let’s look in chapter 17, verses 5 through 6: “*And the LORD said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel*” (Exodus 17:5–6).

Now there was not water in the wilderness, and they were thirsty. And God said to Moses, “Moses, take that rod, that supernatural rod that you have. There’s a rock there, Moses. Strike the rock.” When Moses struck the rock, out of the riven side of that rock there came forth water, and the people drank. Now what does that represent? Well, I don’t have to guess about it. Put a bookmark there, and turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 10 and verse 4, and let’s see what that rock represents. Somebody’s going to accuse me, perhaps, of seeing too much here, but let’s just see what the Scripture says. The Bible says, in 1 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 4: “*And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ*” (1 Corinthians 10:4).

Do you see that? Now that rock is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is smitten, abused, beaten, and crucified for us. But out of His riven side come forth rivers of

revival, rivers of renewal, and rivers of refreshing. That water that came forth out of that rock is a picture of the dear Holy Spirit of God. We told you, this morning, that water represents the Word of God, and indeed it does. But another thing that water symbolizes, and is an emblem of, throughout the Scripture, is the Holy Spirit of God. And the Spirit of God, here, is speaking like a river of refreshment, and a river revival came out of that rock. Now notice, it was after this issuance of water, after this satisfaction, and after they had drunk of that spiritual drink, that then Amalek comes to them. Notice, in verse 6, the Bible says, *“The people may drink”* (Exodus 17:6). Then, in verse 8: *“Then came Amalek”*; *“Then came Amalek.”* (Exodus 17:8).

A. **A Day-Long Battle**

Now listen. You’re going to find out that, when God blesses you, when God fills you with His Spirit, when you meet God and have a spiritual blessing, the flesh is going to rise up to counteract that. “The flesh lusts against the Spirit” (Galatians 5:17). When the water came, then came Amalek. It’s a perfect parallel. The story is there, and it is—listen, friend—a never-ending battle. Look, if you will here, in chapter 17 and verse 12: *“But Moses hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun”* (Exodus 17:12). Do you think that ol’ Amalek just rolled over and played dead? No sir. All day long—it was a daylong battle.

B. **An Age-Long Battle**

But not only was it a daylong battle; it was an age-long battle. Look in verse 16: *“For [God has] said, Because the LORD hath sworn that the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation”* (Exodus 17:16). Now what does that mean? They won the victory over Amalek that day, but that doesn’t mean that there was not a victory to be won later. From generation to generation, God has war with Amalek. What I’m trying to say is this, dear friend: That thing called *the flesh* will arise again and again. Can you say *amen* to that? Brother, if you can’t, I don’t think you are wired like I am.

Now I want to tell you something: You can gain victory, and it’ll be a wonderful victory—and yet again, *“from generation to generation.”* Now dear friend, you will not eradicate the flesh. You’re going to have the flesh with you, until you meet the Lord face-to-face. This flesh principle is going to be in you. There’s going to be a perpetual war, *“from generation to generation,”* as the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. You cannot eradicate it, but you can always have victory over it—always have victory. There is the certainty of our fight. Just as surely as Israel came out under the blood and drank of that rock—just as surely, when you’re saved, and receive God’s blessed Spirit, you’re going to enter into this kind of warfare. That’s the first thing I

want you to see. There is a perpetual fight with a perpetual foe called *the flesh* that would keep you, and withstand you, if he could, from entering into that land of fullness, and fruitfulness, and satisfaction called *Canaan*.

II. The Strategy of Our Foe

Now the second thing I want you to notice—not only the certainty of our fight, but I want you to notice the strategy of our foe, the strategy of our foe. I want you to see how Amalek did what he did. And then, you’re going to understand how the flesh works against you.

A. He Attacks Unexpectedly

Now the very first thing that Amalek did is that he attacked unexpectedly. I mean, there you see it—they’re not expecting anything. They’ve come out of Egypt, and it’s really not even time for war. These are not Canaanites that they’re trying to drive out of the land of Canaan. Here he is, right there, at Rephidim. Now the word *Rephidim* means “rest.” I mean, they are at a place where they say, “Well now, we just had a long cool drink of the Spirit; we’re satisfied; and now, we are at ease.” Then came Amalek, just like that.

You’ll find out something, folks: You’re going to have some of your most ferocious battles with the flesh after some of your highest spiritual victories. It’s a principle that, when you have a victory and you seem to be at rest, then your enemy, the flesh, is going to come upon you. And he’s going to come upon you unexpectedly. He came upon them after the victory through the Red Sea, after they’d been fed with manna, and after they’d drunk from that rock.

Your biggest battles, many times, come after your biggest blessing. You think of Elijah there, that called down fire from Heaven, in 1 Kings chapter 18, and had a wonderful victory on the mountaintop. The next chapter—you find him down in the valley with his head between his knees, wishing to die, under attack from the world, the flesh, and the devil. Why, the devil even attacked Jesus the same way. Jesus, after His baptism, and when He was anointed with the Holy Spirit of God—when the Spirit like a dove descended upon Him—the Bible says, “*Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil*”—and made this appeal to his flesh—“*If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread*” (Matthew 4:1–3).

Now what I’m trying to say, dear friend, is there’s a principle that you could almost call *the devil after the dove*. The dove descended, and then came the devil. Here it is—here is the flesh, now—right after these victories, right after they come through the Red Sea. And don’t you think that we’d better remember that? For Jesus said, “*Watch and pray...the spirit indeed is willing, but*”—watch—“*the flesh is weak*” (Matthew 26:41). He

is going to come. The flesh comes like Amalek: unexpectedly.

B. He Attacks Indirectly

I'm going to tell you something else: The flesh attacks us indirectly, indirectly. Look, if you will, in Deuteronomy chapter 25, and let's look in verse 17. And you're going to find that Amalek was quite a warrior and very sly. In Deuteronomy chapter 25, verse 17, God reminds them, *"Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt; how he met thee by the way"—now, watch this—"and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary; and he feared not God. Therefore it shall be, when the LORD thy God hath given thee rest from all thine enemies round about, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it, that thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; thou shalt not forget it"* (Deuteronomy 25:17–19).

I'll tell you, God doesn't think much of this fellow Amalek—you can tell that, right away. Now what he did, according to the Deuteronomy passage, is he came with a sneak attack. Actually, it wasn't a funnel attack—he came unexpectedly, but he came indirectly. He sneaked up from behind. Now what does that mean? Have you ever been in a situation where somebody just jostled you—maybe you were tired, irritable, a little confused—and you opened your mouth, and said something terrible? Oh, you look so holy—just nod your head a little bit, okay? You just said something, and then, after you said it, or after you did it, you were as surprised as the person. And you said to your self, "You know, I'm really surprised at myself." Or, you said, "Hey, what made me do that?" And you did not even realize that there was in you that propensity. What the devil did was a sneak attack on you; he used the flesh, but he came from behind, and he bushwhacked you when you were weak.

C. He Attacks Viciously

He comes, dear friend, unexpectedly; he comes indirectly; and, he comes viciously. Notice what he did. Look again—in the passage of Scripture, the Bible says, *"[He] smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary"* (Deuteronomy 25:18). What the flesh does is to attack us in our weakest place.

Now when God tests us, God tests us in our strongest place. God tested Abraham's faith, because that was his strongest place. But the devil attacks us in the weakest place. Now these people were wounded; they were weak; they were weary; and the flesh took advantage.

Now I tell you, friend, when you have a great spiritual experience, at the same time, so many times, you're going to find yourself weary. Jesus fasted forty days and was weak—then, the devil tempted. A pastor, who can be praying and fasting, coming out of

a great revival crusade, can come home and have a tremendous argument with his wife, if he's not careful. A church that can have a great spiritual campaign of "Claiming our Canaan," a "Chest of Joash," or something like that, or a "Victory in Jesus" campaign, where they're working, and praying, and fasting, and organizing, and God will bless—but they're all so tired; they've been to so many meetings. Don't you think the enemy knows that? You see, he's very vicious; he comes unexpectedly with a sneak attack; and he comes, dear friend, indirectly—from behind. He comes viciously to take advantage of the fact that, many times, we're tired and disoriented, albeit that we're walking with God.

D. **He Attacks Arrogantly**

Then, I want to say something, dear friend: He comes arrogantly. Notice again, in this passage of Scripture, the last part of verse 18: "*And he feared not God*" (Deuteronomy 25:18). "*He feared not God.*" Now I want to say, dear friend, that the flesh has no fear of God. The Bible says, "The flesh is warfare with God" (James 4:1–4). There is something in me that hates God. You say, "Pastor!" There's something in you that hates God, too—it's called *the flesh*.

Now be honest—do you find it hard to pray sometimes? Huh? Sure. Do you find it hard to read the Bible? I said today, if you're born again, there will be a desire to pray; there will be a desire to love God, a desire to witness, a desire for the things of God—and, indeed, there is. But I'm going to tell you something else: You're going to find something in you that doesn't desire it at all, and it will fight you and keep you from doing the things that you ought to do. And that is that principle of the flesh. God wants you to have victory over it. It's very real. "*Then came Amalek,*" and he attacked these people (Exodus 17:8).

III. **The Victory of Our Faith**

So what we're talking about, dear friend, right here—number one—is the certainty of our fight. You're going to face the flesh. Number two: the strategy of our foe. He attacks us unexpectedly, indirectly, viciously, and arrogantly—he has no respect for the things of God. The third thing I want you to notice: the victory of our faith.

How are we going to overcome the flesh? Go back to Exodus chapter 17, and let's pick up the story there, again. I want you to see that the victory over Amalek was God-given. Look, if you will now, in chapter 17, verse 9: "*And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, and fight with Amalek: to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand. So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.*" Now notice this: "*And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed:*

and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed” (Exodus 17:9–11).

Now what was going on up there, on the mountaintop? Well now, remember Moses has this rod of God in his hand. When Moses is holding up his hand, he’s got the rod of God in his hand. What is that rod of God? Well, it used to be the rod of Moses. Moses had that. It was his shepherd’s rod that he used to fight with, and he used to lean on, and he used to steady himself with. And you remember, there, in Exodus chapter 4—don’t turn to it right now, because you don’t have that many bookmarks—but in Exodus chapter 4, that God said to Moses, “Moses, what is that in your hand?” He said, “A rod.” And God said, “Moses, throw it on the ground.” And he did. And it became a serpent. Do you remember that? Well, you’re older than I thought you were. You remember reading that, anyway.

All right, and then, God said, “Moses, pick it up.” And He said, “Pick it up by the tail.” Now any country boy knows that’s not the way you pick up a venomous serpent. That leaves the business-end loose. But He said, “Moses, pick it up by the tail.” And Moses said, “What’s that, Lord?” Now Moses was speaking from his heart, because his heart was in his throat about that time. And he said, “What’s that, Lord?” He said, “Moses, pick it up.” And it became a rod again in Moses’ hand; and, no longer, now, is it called *the rod of Moses*—it is called the *rod of God*.

And what God was showing Moses was this: “Moses, there is a flesh principle in you; there’s a serpent in your so-called ability—and you need to throw them on the ground.” And every musician needs to do that; ever preacher needs to do that; and every deacon needs to do that. And everybody needs to take their so-called *gift* and *ability*, cast them at God’s feet, and let Him take a serpent out of it and then give it back to you. No longer is it your ability; no longer is it your strength.

Now it’s God’s, and God will use that gift, and God will use that ability, when He takes the serpent out of it and gives it back to you. You may not know—Moses didn’t know there was a serpent in that rod; but God knew there was in there. And He took the serpent out, gave it back to Moses; and, no longer, now, is it the rod of Moses—now, it is the rod of God.

Brother Tommy, I’ve seen singers have great ability, but God never used them. One day, they took that rod, threw it on the ground, picked it back up, God anointed that voice, and used it for God. There’s a difference when a person sings—not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, when they minister in the Spirit, and serve in the Spirit. That which Moses had in his hand was the same rod that led them out of bondage, for it opened the Red Sea. It was the same rod that led them out of barrenness for a drink out of that rock. It was the same rod that would now lead them into battle—that same rod, the rod for bondage, the rod for barrenness, the rod for battle, the rod of God.

Now here is Moses; he is now up on the mountaintop. There’s a battle down in the

valley, but Moses is up there with Aaron and Hur, and Moses is holding up his hand. And the Bible says that, when Moses held up his hand with that rod in his hand, Israel prevailed; and, Moses let his hands go down, and Amalek prevailed. Now do you think that's just an interesting story, or do you believe that God is trying to teach us something? I mean, when God said, "Write this in a book for a memorial," when the Bible says that, "All of these things happened unto them for examples unto us," what was God showing us? (Exodus 17:14; 1 Corinthians 10:11). He was showing us how God's power over the flesh is made available.

There were two that held up Moses' hands up there, on the mountaintop—one on either side of him. One was Aaron. Who was Aaron? Well, Aaron was a priest of God. What is the purpose of a priest? To intercede. Aaron represents intercession. The other who held up the other hand was Hur. The name *Hur* means "whiteness, purity." When he appears, he is associated with the holiness of God.

Let me tell you, dear friend, what it takes—what it takes to gain victory, to gain victory over the flesh: It takes the power of God—that's the rod; that's the rod. But how is the power of God applied? Through prayer and purity, through prayer and purity—this is what displays the power of God. And when prayer, on the one side, and purity, on the other side, crawl up that rod of God, Amalek goes back, and he's defeated. But when prayer and purity let the arms of power sag, then Amalek moves forward.

Now friend, listen. Victory over the flesh is God-given, but it comes through purity and prayer. The battle, that day, had you been there and been careless, you would have said the battle was won in the valley; but, if you read carefully, and saw carefully, you would know that the battle was won on the mountaintop. Amen? You'll go out into the valley tomorrow; and, if you're not careful, Amalek will prevail. Do you know why? Because you haven't been on the mountaintop. You're not in the mountaintop. And purity and prayer are missing in your life. It was won on the mountain; it was only witnessed in the valley. We wonder why the flesh is able to bushwhack us, and sneak attack us, and gain the victory, and why we fail. We wonder why that old enemy, the flesh, seems to prevail, even when we've been saved and come out of Egypt, and, under the blood, drunk of that rock, all of that; and yet, still, Amalek seems to prevail. No purity, no prayer.

Can you imagine Sam Donaldson being there that day and giving a report on the evening news? And he's looking there—he's trying to figure this thing out, and he says, "You know," he says, "we're here covering this battle, and the strange things—a war seems to ebb back and forth. Now one of our men on the field has just sent us a report. There's an old man on a mountain, and, it's a very coincidental thing: When he holds up his hand, the Israelites prevail. Meanwhile..." And he goes to talk about other news. He never would figure it out, never would know what was happening. *"The secret of the*

Lord is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant” (Psalm 25:14).

Now listen. Let’s go all the way back now to the Book of Galatians and turn to Galatians chapter 5. And I’ll be finished in just a moment. Now I think the Galatians passage will have even more meaning for us. Galatians chapter 5—and look again, if you will, at verse 16: *“This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16).* Now how do you overcome the flesh? By walking in the Spirit, by walking in the Spirit: by purity, by prayer, and by being on a mountaintop with the power of God.

There’s where the battle is going to be won. The victory over the flesh is always won on the mountaintop. The victory over the flesh is God-given. Now don’t fight a battle that’s already lost down in the valley, when you can enjoy a victory that’s already won up on the mountaintop. Now if you’re losing to the flesh, I’ll tell you that the problem is not in the valley of your life—it’s on the mountaintop of your life, because you’ve not spent that time with God alone on the mountaintop. That is, that time of intercession, that time of confession, purity, and prayer hold up the power of God and display the power of God. When that power of God is displayed, there’s victory over the flesh. Listen again: *“Walk in the Spirit, and you will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16).*

Conclusion

Now let me make it real personal, and I’m going to be finished. Do you know what the Lord is telling me? The Lord is saying, “Adrian, the people called Bellevue are going to have a tremendous battle—not only with the devil, and not only with the world, but, primarily, with the flesh. And if we’re not careful—listen—as a church now, if we’re not careful, do you know what we’re going to lose? The area of the flesh. When we’re trying to do what we’re about to do, there are going to be so many chances for feelings to be hurt, so many opportunities for misunderstandings. So many people will say, “Well, I wanted the pews to be purple rather than chartreuse, like they’re going to be.” And a person will say, “I want this, and I want that. And I think this, and I think that.” And the flesh will get us to do what the Bible says: “biting and devouring one another.”

Notice in chapter 5 of Galatians, verse 15: “But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another” (Galatians 5:15). Huh? Christian cannibalism is biting and devouring, when there’s so much to do. And there will be so many committees, and so much visitation, and so much work, and so much fasting, and so much prayer, and so much victory. And then, the old devil, through the flesh—indirectly, subtly, and cruelly—will attack the people of God. Now *to be forewarned is to be forearmed.* Amen? Beloved, we must not let it happen. This church must stay on the mountaintop with the rod of God, and purity, and prayer, as we lift holy hands to God in

prayer, as we lift holy hands to God in prayer.

Down in Cape Kennedy, an astronaut was looking at one of those huge mighty missiles. It had an engine so big that, where the flame came out of the mouth of that engine, you could just walk up in, almost. The astronaut was there, knowing that, before long, he was going to ride that missile. It was going to hurl him, literally, into space. And there was a man dressed in a white suit—that man was up inside that missile, and he was making adjustments. He was a highly-trained, highly-skilled engineer, and dressed in white, with gloves, so no spark, no matter of dust, or impurity, or whatever, would get in that engine.

The astronaut just stood and looked over his shoulder awhile, then he asked him—he said, “What are you doing?” He said, “Well, I’m checking this, and doing thus and so.” The astronaut said, kind of kidding, but kind of seriously also—he said, “Well, do a good job; don’t make any mistakes.” He said, “You know, I’m going to take a ride on this thing.” And with that, the engineer stepped back, and stood up, fully realizing the importance of what he had to do. And he looked at that astronaut straight in the face, and he said, “Sir, if it fails, it won’t be because of me.” I’d like for every one of you to say to your pastor, “Pastor, if we fail in what we’re going to do, it won’t be because of me.” I’m going to walk in the Spirit; I’m going to fast; I’m going to pray; and I am not going to let the devil have an advantage in any way to the world, the flesh, or the devil. And we will not fail.” Say *amen*. Let’s pray.

Victory over the Flesh

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: August 12, 1992

Main Scripture Text: Galatians 5:16–26

Outline

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Introduction

We're looking forward to another time, another place, when we see Jesus. That's going to be a great day, and I anticipate one day, perhaps tonight, tomorrow, sometime soon—if I go by death or go by rapture—to meet Jesus Christ. And I think those are wonderful thoughts. I think there is the corresponding thought also that it is just not what has happened in the past, when we were saved, and what will happen in the future, when we meet the Lord Jesus, but there is that victory, and that joy, and that glory, and that meaningful life that you and I are to have right now, day by day and moment by moment. And that's what I want us to think about tonight. Galatians chapter 5—I want to read two verses; and then, I want you to turn to Exodus chapter 17 for an illustration—Galatians chapter 5, verses 16 and 17.

How many Bibles tonight? Let me see your Bibles. Hold them up. Look at that, Sorrell. Isn't that pretty? God bless you. That's wonderful. A man told me—he said, "I went to church, and I couldn't see a Bible. It was a particular church." He said, "Nobody had Bibles with them. I don't know why. It seemed to me like that would be going down to the table without our knives and forks." I'm grateful that you brought your Bibles tonight.

Galatians chapter 5, verses 16 and 17: *"This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh."* My dear friend, that is a promise and a command both at the same time. "Walk in the Spirit"—that is a command. "You'll not fulfill the lust of the flesh"—that is a promise—*"For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit"*—now, the word *lusteth* doesn't have anything to do with sexual desire, necessarily; it just means, "strong desire," or, "is antagonistic toward." It says here, "For the flesh is antagonistic

against the Spirit”—“*and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.*” That is, you can’t do it yourself. “*But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings,*”—and, in case you didn’t see your name on the list—“*and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God*” (Galatians 5:16–21). Now when it says, “they who do such things,” it doesn’t mean, “If you’ve ever done any of these things, you can’t go to Heaven.” What it means is, “If this is your way of life, if this is your habitual practice, you need to be born again.”

“*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.*” Never heard anybody make a law against being joyful, anybody made a law against having peace or being meek. “*And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another*” (Galatians 5:22–26).

Now without making any comment on that scripture, per se, right now, would you turn with me to Exodus chapter 17? And I want to talk to you tonight about victory over the flesh. Now we all have three major enemies. As I tried to say last Sunday night, to be forewarned is to be forearmed. I talked about our enemy the devil, “*for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, and powers...[and] spiritual wickedness in high places*” (Ephesians 6:12). The devil is an enemy; the world is an enemy. We say, “the world”—we mean this cosmos, this system that is against our Lord and His Christ—a value system that is antithetical to the gospel of Jesus Christ and detrimental to your spiritual life, if you allow it to affect you, to squeeze you into its mold. But you have another enemy. That enemy is the flesh—the flesh.

Now when the Bible uses the word *flesh*, it uses the word *flesh* to mean several things. It can mean just your physical body, and that, of course, is not evil. As a matter of fact, your physical body is something that is given you of God; it’s the temple of God. You’re presented to God—a living sacrifice—and there’s nothing inherently evil about your body—skin and bones, hide and hair, flesh, sinew, corpuscles—all of that is holy, when dedicated to God. But there is a principle inside of you that the Bible also calls the *flesh*, which is a predisposition to do evil. And that principle is what we’re talking about, when the Bible says, “The flesh lusts against the Spirit” (Galatians 5:17). It is an inherited tendency; it is the lower part of our nature; it is where carnal desires arise. And the Bible calls that *the flesh*.

So you have three enemies: the world, the flesh, and the devil. The world is the

external foe; the devil is the infernal foe; the flesh is the internal foe. And you have to learn how to fight all three; you have to learn how to get victory over all three.

Now what we're talking about tonight is victory over the flesh. And I'm not talking again about your physical, but I'm talking about that predisposition that is in every one of us. We sang a song Sunday, I believe,

Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
Prone to leave the God I love. (Robert Robinson)

You feel that? It's like the law of gravity that's constantly pulling you away from the Lord Jesus Christ. There is something in you, and something in me, that does not love God. Now don't deny it. It is there. And if it never gets eradicated when you get saved, it is still there. The Bible calls that principle *the flesh*.

Now in the Old Testament, God has given us object lessons. God wants us to learn truth, so He comes at it from many different ways. And the Old Testament is not only a book of prophecy; it is a book of pictures. As a matter of fact, the Bible says, concerning the wilderness wanderings of the Jewish people, that all of these things happened to them for examples to us (1 Corinthians 10:11). That is, what they went through historically, and actually, and physically—all of those things are pictures, illustrations. We call them, sometimes, *types, examples*—*tipos* is the word—*types* for us. And so when the Jews were in Egypt, that represents people living in the world, because Egypt was the land that epitomizes—characterizes, describes—what we would call *the world*—Egypt, with its lusts, its pleasures, with its programs and its value system.

Well, God calls us outside of this world, just as He called the children of Israel out of Egypt. And remember, they came out of Egypt through the Red Sea, with the death of the firstborn, the Passover, which illustrates our being saved and called out of this world. Well, there was someone who ruled Egypt, and that was Pharaoh; and so, if Egypt is a type, a picture, of the world, Pharaoh is a type, a picture, of whom? Satan himself, who tried to keep them in the land of Egypt, to keep them from coming out. And so we have the illustration; we have the type. The Lamb—the Passover Lamb—is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, who delivers us from Egypt and into Canaan, which is the Spirit-filled life.

But what about the flesh? Where's the flesh illustrated? Well, if Egypt represents the world, and Pharaoh represents, illustrates the devil—and indeed he does... There is a character in the Bible whose name is Amalek—Amalek—and we're going to study about Amalek tonight; and, Amalek is a picture of the flesh. Now you may not understand right away, but I think you will, as we look into this passage of Scripture tonight. And we're going to find out just who Amalek was. Well, let me just tell you right away who Amalek was, even before we study the passage of Scripture. He was the grandson of Esau.

Now who was Esau? Well, you remember, Esau was the one who sold his birthright;

he was the twin of Jacob—Jacob and Esau. And Esau was a profane man, a man who was carnally-minded, worldly-minded, fleshly-minded. And he sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. You remember that story in the Bible? I trust you do. If you don't, you'll want to go back and read it. But he sold spiritual things for material things; and, therefore, he became a type, a picture, and a progenitor of those who walked after the flesh.

Now what was the decision that Esau made? Well, Esau was more interested in the present than in the future. He said, "I'm about to famish. What good is a birthright later on? I want some food—some red beans and rice—now." And so he bartered the future for the present. He was more interested in the material than the spiritual. He was more interested in his body than his soul. And so with all of those things going for him, he is a type, a picture, of the flesh.

Now look in the last few verses of this chapter—verse 14: "*And the LORD said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book,*"—this is very important, this chapter. God says, "Moses, this is something I want people to remember"—"*and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.*" Now friend, when God says, "I am going to wipe this guy out. Put it in a book the people will read," this is no secondary matter. "*And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovahnissi: for he said, Because the LORD hath sworn that the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation*" (Exodus 17:14–16). There is a perpetual war from generation to generation until God has eradicated Amalek.

Now God's got something against Amalek, and there are no *ifs*, *ands*, or *buts* about it. Well, we're going to find out why in just a moment, but before we do that, just turn to Malachi—the last book in the Old Testament. Let me just reiterate what we're talking about a little more. Malachi chapter 1, and the first four verses: "*The burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi. I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness. Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished,*"—that is, the land of Esau—"*but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the LORD of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and, The people...*"—oh, here, again, dear friend, this is strong medicine—"*The people against whom the LORD hath indignation for ever*" (Malachi 1:1–4). There'll never be a truce—never be a peace. And Amalek is the grandson of Esau, and God says, "The family feud's still going, still going—never going to be any peace. From generation to generation there's going to be a war." But God said, "Put it in a book. Read it, and remember it: I am at war with Esau and his kinfolds." It's an amazing thing.

Well, what is all of this about? Amalek stands for a principle that God hates, and it is

the flesh. I may say, dear friend, that a lot of what God hates is on parade on Sunday morning in a lot of churches—flesh. A lot of what God hates erupts out of my heart and your heart; and, God hates it, and God detests it. There is a perpetual war with Amalek. Amalek, as you're going to see, represents the flesh that tries to keep us out of Canaan, which is the Spirit-filled life.

Canaan, in the Bible, is not a type, a picture, of Heaven, although we have a lot of songs that mention going to Canaan's fair and happy land, where my possessions lie, and all of that. And they're songs about Heaven. But there was war in Canaan; there won't be any war in Heaven. There was sin in Canaan; there won't be any sin in Heaven. There was failure in Canaan—won't be any failure in Heaven. There were unsaved people in Canaan—won't be any unsaved people in Heaven. Canaan is not a picture of Heaven; it is a picture of the Spirit-filled life, when we enter into that land of victory, when we get out of Egypt through the wilderness, and begin to walk in Canaan's land—that is, spiritual victory in the Lord Jesus Christ. And every one of us ought to be camping in Canaanland. Spiritually, that's what we ought to be doing.

Now we get saved, and we come out of Egypt. The devil, Pharaoh, tries to keep us from doing it. But we're on a journey—a journey to fullness, a journey to victory. But there is someone who tries to stop us and keep us from our possessions now—not in the sweet by-and-by, but in the nasty now-and-now. There is someone who tries to keep you, keep me, from entering into Canaan and living in that land that flows with milk and honey, corn and wine, grapes, and figs, and pomegranates—that is, spiritually—and that one is Amalek, who represents the flesh.

I. The Certainty of Our Fight

Now notice here—notice the certainty of our fight—verse 8. Now the children of Israel are on a journey; and, well, let's just back up in verse 5: *“And the LORD said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, Is the LORD among us, or not?”* That's the way wilderness people think and feel. *“Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim. And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand”* (Exodus 17:5–9). Now they're on the way to Canaan. They've just drunk water from the rock. Looks like they're going to go on in, and then comes Amalek. And there, friend, he always comes—he always comes.

Now they'd just drunk from the rock. What was that rock? What does that mean here—they'd just had a drink from that rock? You notice here, in verse 6: *"Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it"* (Exodus 17:6). Moses had a rod; here's a rock. Moses strikes the rock, and it opens up; and, water just begins to gush out. These people in the wilderness are drinking that water.

Well, you say, "What does that represent?" Turn to 1 Corinthians 10, verse 4—1 Corinthians 10—and look, if you will, in verse 4: *"[They] did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ"* (1 Corinthians 10:4). Well, not literally—it's a spiritual rock. What he's saying here is this: that that's an object lesson.

When Moses took that rod and struck that rock—Jesus Christ, our Rock: *"we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted"* (Isaiah 53:4)—but when Jesus was smitten by my sin and your sin, out of His wounded side there flowed water. And that spiritual rock... This illustration back here, in the Book of Exodus, is only an illustration, a picture, that one day Jesus, the true Rock, would be smitten of God, and out of His wounded side, as it were, would come rivers of revival. The water that flowed out pictures the Holy Spirit of God poured out on the Church. Water, in the Bible, represents the Holy Spirit. And Jesus, through His death, sent forth the Spirit to the Church.

And so you have here a picture, on the one hand, of the flesh—that's Amalek. Then, you have here a picture of the Lord Jesus—that's the Rock. Then, you have here a picture of the Holy Spirit—water out of the Rock to satisfy the needs of these people. "I'm not, Pastor..." You may say that's all far-fetched. No, no, no. Remember, the Bible says, *"All these things happened unto them for examples [to us]"* (1 Corinthians 10:11). And the Bible makes it very clear that Rock was a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. I'm not reading into that. That's God's own interpretation of this passage of Scripture right here.

And so there's the flesh, and there's the spirit. Remember what Paul said over there, in Galatians 5:17? "The flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh." The conflict begins when you and I come out of Egypt, when we have come through the Red Sea, when we drink from that Rock, and there are rivers of revival. In comes Amalek—then comes the flesh to stand against us, to keep us from entering into Canaan. Now it is a never-ending battle. Notice again, in verse 16: *"The LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation"* (Exodus 17:16). And friend, may I tell you, I've already fought with him today? And the flesh is going to rise up again and again. I don't care how long you have been saved, you're going to deal with the flesh.

I woke up this morning... Confession's all right, isn't it? You won't feel too bad for me if I confess something here? I woke up this morning. I greeted the Lord. I said, "Lord, I

praise You. I love You. I worship You.” Then, I said, “Lord, You are the vine; I am the branch. Lord, I draw my life from You.” And then, I said, “Lord, I commit my life to You. I am Yours to command.” And then, I said, “Lord, I expect You to work in me, right when I get out of bed.” That’s what I told the Lord, this morning. Then, I read a little while, went to breakfast with Joyce; and, Joyce and I—we had breakfast; we prayed. We have a habit, every morning, of praying for our children and praying around the world. Today, we prayed for that nation that we pray for, our missionary friends, and so forth—and a wonderful time. She fixed a good breakfast. She made some pancakes with oat bran and applesauce—good, no cholesterol. That’s what we had—really good—with fresh peaches on them—a great breakfast.

Then, after that, we said, “Let’s take a walk.” We try to walk about two miles a morning. And we went out for a walk. And on that walk, Joyce said something to me that I didn’t like. After all this holy stuff and all this healthy stuff, I opened my mouth—I didn’t cuss, but I said something in such a harsh and mean tone. It wasn’t Jesus talking; it was Amalek. He didn’t like what was happening—Amalek, the flesh in me. Your pastor—holy man of God—out it came. And friend, I know nothing like that ever happens to you, so I had to find an example here somewhere in this congregation, because, without my failures, there wouldn’t be any examples like that here.

What I’m trying to tell you, my dear friend, is that I don’t care how long you’ve been saved, and how much you walk in the Spirit, and what you do, the flesh that’s in you has not improved one iota. That which is flesh is flesh. You’ll never improve it; you’ll never reform it; you’ll never replace it. It is a perpetual war. And if you, by experience, know what I’m talking about, say, “amen.” You know it is true. “The flesh lusts against the Spirit, the Spirit against the flesh” (Galatians 5:17). That is something that is in us, day after day after day. The flesh will rise again and again.

When J. Sidlow Baxter, Brother Tommy, was here... I’m just like you. If I get alone with Sid—just shut up and get him to talking, you know—I learn something. And he will regale you with stories; and, he knows a lot, and has seen a lot, and remembers a lot. And he told me a story about Spurgeon’s College. Charles Haddon Spurgeon was perhaps... Well, many say the greatest Baptist preacher who ever lived was Charles Haddon Spurgeon. I heard about a preacher who asked his wife one morning at breakfast, “How many really great preachers do you think they are?” She said, “I don’t know, but probably one less than you think there is.”

Charles Haddon Spurgeon was a great preacher. Nobody would argue with that. And he had a preacher school, and they called Spurgeon the *governor*—*Governor* is what they called him, and they would shorten it a little bit: the governor. And they had preachers who would stand up and preach in preaching class, and he said there was a preacher who preached on the passage of Scripture that I preached on Sunday night,

“Take on the Whole Armor of God.” And they had the professors who were sitting there listening, and Spurgeon, the governor, was sitting there, listening to this boy. And he was the head of the class; he was smart; he was brilliant; he was gifted, erudite; he was facile of speech; he was just the epitome of everything. And he was preaching on this particular passage of Scripture—“Putting on the Whole Armor of God.” You remember, I preached the belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, the helmet of salvation, the shield of faith, and all these things.

And Baxter said, as this young man preached, he said, “He was putting the armor on with such precision—such precision—you could almost hear it chink into place, as he preached—just incredible, just gifted.” And he had done this thing; it was just a masterpiece—a homiletic masterpiece. He was doing good, and he knew it. Finally, he got on the whole armor of God. He had the shield of faith; he had on the helmet; he had on the boots; he had on the breastplate; he had on the belt; he had it all on. And then, with a look of real assurance, he said, “And now where is the enemy?” Spurgeon, in a stage whisper, said, “He’s inside the armor.”

See, that’s the flesh. That’s the flesh that can sometimes preach. That’s the flesh that can sometimes serve on a committee. That’s the flesh that can sometimes sing a solo. Sometimes, inside the armor—not the infernal foe, but the internal foe: the flesh, Amalek. “*Then came Amalek*” (Exodus 17:8). He wants to keep us out of the land that flows with milk and honey.

II. The Strategy of Our Foe

Now you see the certainty of our fight. I want you to see the strategy of our foe. I want you to see what Amalek does and how he attacks.

A. He Attacks Unexpectedly

First of all, he attacks unexpectedly. You wouldn’t expect him at this particular juncture, any more than I expected him this morning. You see, when did he attack? After they’d come through the Red Sea, after they had eaten manna. God fed them with manna from Heaven. Supernaturally, that manna pictured, also, the Lord Jesus Christ. After they had drunk water from the Rock, you’d think they’d be sailing along right now. I’m going to tell you something, friend: Amalek attacks unexpectedly. And many times, your biggest battles will come after your biggest blessings.

You just study it in the Bible. Elijah, when he had that revival on Mount Carmel... Remember when he called down fire from Heaven, and he said, “The God that answered by fire, let Him be God.” and the fire fell, and all of that? (1 Kings 18:24). And then, the first thing you know, that Elijah, who stood against 450 prophets on Carmel—

he's running from one woman, Jezebel. And he gets down under a juniper tree and requests for himself that he might die—I mean, right after a great spiritual battle.

You find the same thing about Moses after he had come through the Red Sea—requesting that he might die. Jonah—after Jonah had been through a revival in Ninevah—requests for himself that he might die. There's a principle that I would almost call "the devil after the dove." When Jesus Christ was anointed with the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit, like a dove, descended upon Him—that's depicted in our baptistry there, that dove coming down—then, in the next chapter, the Bible says He was led of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil—the devil after the dove (Matthew 4:1).

And here are these people—they've just had an incredible spiritual experience; they've just drunk water from that Rock. But the Bible says that the flesh lusts against the Spirit (Galatians 5:17). And if that water represents the Holy Spirit, then Amalek represents the flesh. It was Leonard Ravenhill who said, "When God opens the windows of Heaven to bless us, the devil will open the doors of Hell to blast us." And so it happened at a place called *Rephidim*—Rephidim—which literally means, "a place of rest, a place of support." I mean, here they are; everything looks good. So what should that tell me? It should tell me always to be alert. Jesus warned us, the apostles warned us, to be alert—*"Be sober, be vigilant"* (1 Peter 5:8). Jesus said, *"Watch...and pray, lest ye enter into temptation"* (Mark 14:38).

B. He Attacks Indirectly

But not only does he attack us unexpectedly; but, I'll tell you, he attacks indirectly. Now you're in Exodus. Just turn to Deuteronomy here, for just a moment. Look, if you will, in chapter 25—Deuteronomy chapter 25. That's the fifth book in the Bible, so it's not far. Just turn right, and go to chapter 25. And here again, Moses is recounting this story that we find in Exodus 17.

You see, God won't let Amalek off the hook: *"Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt;"*—God says, "Do you remember this?"—*"how he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary; and he feared not God. Therefore it shall be, when the LORD thy God hath given thee rest from all of thine enemies round about, in the land which the LORD thy God hath giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it, that thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; thou shalt not forget it"* (Deuteronomy 25:17–19). Talk about holding a grudge! Man! Listen. God says, "Don't forget this guy Amalek." God has something about Amalek.

And notice here what he says about Amalek. You see, not only did he attack unexpectedly, but he attacked indirectly. What it was, was a sneak attack from behind.

“He smote the hindmost of thee”—that is, those that were weak, and those that were feeble, and those... He didn’t attack the strong.

Now the devil will not attack you at your strongest point; he’ll attack you at your weakest point. That’s where you’re going to go down in the flesh. The only problem is that your weakest point may be what you think is your strongest point. Oswald Chambers said, “An unguarded strength is a double weakness.” But the devil knows where that weakness is, and the flesh goes to that weakness; and so... Have you ever said... Have you ever done anything and said, “I’m surprised at myself; I’m really surprised”? Have you ever asked yourself, “What made me do that?” Have you ever done that? Of course. “I am surprised at myself.”

I’ll tell you one thing: God wasn’t surprised; Jesus is not surprised. “He knew man and needed not that any should testify what was in man” (John 2:25). There is, in you and in me, something down there—given the right thing in an unguarded moment, it’ll come to the surface. And you’ll say and do things, and say, “Oh, I’m surprised.” Have you ever done that? Sure, I was surprised at myself, this morning. What made me do that? Well, you see, what happens is that Amalek—he just attacks unexpectedly, when you think everything’s going fine. He attacks indirectly. You see, God tests us at our strongest place; the flesh tempts us at our weakest place. Here were these wounded, and weak, and weary, on the one hand; and yet, after a great spiritual experience, on the other hand, a sitting duck.

C. He Attacks Arrogantly

And not only that, but he attacks us arrogantly. Notice again—look at it here, in verse 18. I’m in Deuteronomy 25, verse 18: “*He feared not God*” (Deuteronomy 25:18). The Bible says, “The flesh is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be” (Romans 8:7). The flesh has no desire for God, and God has no pity on the flesh.

III. The Victory of Our Faith

All right now, I’ve talked to you about the certainty of the fight. I’ve talked to you about the strategy of the foe. Now I want to talk to you about the victory of our faith. I want to show you how to get victory over the flesh.

Now turn back again to Exodus chapter 17, where we began—Exodus chapter 17. And look with me now, beginning in verse 9. Here’s God’s plan—now remember, this is God’s picture book; it’s only an illustration. We could find these same truths taught in the New Testament, but somehow reading an illustration helps us to understand, sometimes, in a better way: “*And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand. So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and*

Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword” (Exodus 17:9–13). Now that’s the way the victory was won.

Moses goes up on a mountaintop; and, he takes a rod, and he holds the rod in the air. Now there’s something going up on the mountaintop, and there’s something going on down in the valley.

Now had Dan Rather been there to report on this thing, and had he, you know, been watching the whole situation—maybe not understanding, but he’s in a safe place—but yet, from a vantage point, wanting to appear right there on the scene, he would say, “The battle seems to go back and forth. And one of our men on the field has just reported that he’s noticed something unusual. Perhaps it is significant. There’s an old man on a mountaintop. And when this man holds up his hands, the battle seems to go for Israel; but, when the man lets down his hands, the battle seems to go for Amalek.”

Now what all does this represent? Well, the rod that Moses had in his hand represents the power of God. Remember how God gave Moses that...Moses had to throw that rod on the ground to get the serpent out of it? But then, he took it up. No longer is it called *the rod of Moses*; it’s now called *the rod of God*. It was with that rod that he opened up the Red Sea—with that rod that he went through Jordan. It was that rod that struck that rock, and water came out. That rod represents the authority, the power, of God. And my dear friend, that’s the only thing that overcomes Amalek—the power of God, the power of God represented by that rod. Nothing else—it was the rod that led them out of bondage, out of barrenness; it was the rod that led them into battle.

Now that’s the power of God. That’s the only thing that the flesh will knuckle under to. It’s the power of God—not your good intentions, not your resolutions, not your promises, not your habits—nothing else but the power of God. And so the power of God has to be made available.

How is the power of God made available? Through prayer—through prayer. When Moses was on the mountaintop, just holding up that rod, what he’s saying symbolically is, “Dear God, the battle in the valley is being won up here. What happens in the valley is dependent upon Your power.” Now there were two who helped Moses to hold up his hands—Aaron and Hur. In my study this morning, I looked up the meaning of the name *Aaron*, and it means, “light.” And *Hur* means, “white.” And what it speaks to me of is purity and revelation. Holiness—Hur. Revelation—Aaron. And Hur, in the Bible, is associated with holiness, also. Aaron is a priest associated with intercession. Here, on

one side, is intercession; and, on the other side is purity, holding up the hands of Moses, who holds in his hand the rod of God.

Now you don't have to be a rocket scientist to understand that all of this is highly symbolical. But all of this is telling us in language, if we would see it, that the victory over the flesh is always God-given—God-given. You'll never win this battle by resolution, resolve, habitual practices, whatever. That which is flesh is flesh. The victory over the flesh is God-given. "Walk in the Spirit, and you'll not fulfill the lust of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16).

So how do you overcome the flesh? Well, you don't fight a battle already lost; you stand in the victory already won. Galatians 5:16: "*Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.*" And I'll tell you something that's been a blessing to me, and in my prayer life. You know, I've known for a long time that I don't have to obey the devil. I've known that. Sometimes I do, but I don't have to. I mean, it's easy for me to rebuke Satan—say, "Satan, look, I'm not going to argue with you. I'm not going to shout at you. I don't beg you. I don't plead with you. I don't reason with you. I bring Jesus Christ. I bring the blood against you. I bring the Spirit against you. I resist you, and I rebuke you. And Lord Jesus, in Your name, I stand against Satan." And I've done that. You do that.

But you know, I don't do that enough about the flesh. I try to handle the flesh. I just try to do better. Have you been guilty of the same thing? Just try to do better. And what I have to learn and what you have to learn, dear friend, is that God has a perpetual war with the flesh. And victory over the flesh is not won in the valley. Oh, there was a battle going down there. You're going to have to—you're going to have to—do certain things. But the victory was won on the mountaintop. That's where it's won. And you don't have to obey the flesh any more than you have to obey the devil. Amen?

Conclusion

Father, seal this truth to our hearts tonight. In Jesus' name. Amen.

How to Live a Spirit-Controlled Life

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: October 22, 1989

Main Scripture Text: Galatians 5:19–23

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Conclusion

Introduction

Today, we come to that quality in the life and character of our Lord Jesus Christ that the Bible calls, in the *King James Version*, *temperance*—translated, in some Scriptures, “self-control.” But I don’t want to call it *self-control*; I want to call it *Spirit-control*. And today, I want to talk to you on this subject: “How to Have a Spirit-Controlled Life.”

Many of us have lives that are out of control. I heard of a woman who had damaged her automobile; and then, in order to collect the insurance, she had to write out a report as to what happened. And she said, “I was backing my car out of the garage, and,” she said, “I lost sight of the driveway and then got on the lawn.” She said, “I went across the lawn through the hedge, and knocked over a garbage can, and then knocked over the mailbox.” And then, she said, “And then, I went down over the curve and hit my neighbor’s automobile.” Then, she said, “I lost control.”

I. The Works of the Flesh

Now there are a lot of us who are out of control and don’t even know it. And being out of control is what the Bible describes as “the works of the flesh.” You see, either the flesh or the Spirit is going to be controlling your life. Now Galatians chapter 5 and verse 19: “*Now the works of the flesh are manifest*” (Galatians 5:19). Now when the Bible says, “the flesh,” it doesn’t mean your hide, your hair, your skin and bones, your nerves and sinews, corpuscles, and muscles. That’s not what he’s talking about, when he says, “flesh.” “The flesh” is that old nature that we got from our parents. But you can’t blame them—they got it from their parents. But you can’t blame them—they got it from theirs, and all the way back to Adam. That is that quality—that part of our nature, that predisposition, that craving for something that is wrong—that the Bible calls, “the flesh.”

A. Adultery

Now look at it: “*Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: Adultery...*” (Galatians 5:19). Do you see that word *adultery*? That word *adultery* means, “sexual union with anybody other than your marriage partner.” If you’re living a life of adultery, the flesh is in control; and, my dear friend, you are out of control.

B. Fornication

And then, he mentions *fornication* (Galatians 5:19). *Fornication* means, “any sexual activity before marriage.” The Bible teaches—and I want every young person in the sound of my voice to listen to what God’s holy Word says. The Bible teaches, without stutter, stammer, apology, or equivocation, premarital chastity, and marriage fidelity. Anybody who lives a life of fornication is living a life of the flesh, a life out of control.

C. **Uncleanness**

And then, he mentions *uncleanness* in this verse (Galatians 5:19). *Uncleanness* has the idea of wrong thoughts; it deals with thoughts that are impure. A person who reads pornography, who entertains himself with licentious literature, or movies, or whatever—that's a life of uncleanness; it's the life of the flesh; it's a life out of control.

D. **Lasciviousness**

And then, he mentions *lasciviousness* (Galatians 5:19). Now that's a word we don't use that much, but it literally means, "a lack of restraint," or, what we would call *sensuality*—living by the senses, whether it'd be overeating—do you have that problem?—whether it means an inordinate desire for comfort or laziness, just letting your senses—your five senses—dictate what you do. That's of the flesh.

E. **Idolatry**

Then, he mentions *idolatry* (Galatians 5:20). "Well," you say, "we're modern Americans. We don't worship idols in America." Well, what is an idol? An idol is anything more important to you than God. Anything you love more, or fear more, or serve more than God is an idol. It could be your business, your family. It could be your recreation, your hobbies. And if you're living a life of idolatry—if there's anything you love, fear, or serve more than God—you have a life controlled by the flesh.

F. **Witchcraft**

And then, he mentions, here, *witchcraft* (Galatians 5:20). Now the word *witchcraft* is sometimes translated, "sorcery." It comes from the Greek word *pharmikia*, and it actually has to do with the use of drugs. Are you a drug user? Do you use drugs? I'm talking about what they call *recreational drugs*—instant heaven that leads to everlasting hell; synthetic salvation. *Pharmikia*—actually, the word is *sorcery*; and so, sorcery and drug use are linked together. David Wilkerson: "I have yet to see a man who is into Satan worship who did not first of all open his mind to mystical experiences through the use of drugs." All of these are the works of the flesh.

G. **Hatred**

Then, he mentions *hatred* (Galatians 5:20). Are you nursing a grudge, feeding a fever, carrying around hatred in your heart? If you have a bitterness and a grudge in your heart towards any human being on the face of this earth, my dear friend, your life is out of control and in control of the flesh.

H. **Variance**

And then, he mentions *variance* (Galatians 5:20). Now *variance* is an idea of divisions; it has the idea of a party spirit, of strife. Some people just seem to love to start

arguments. They can't get along with anybody. **They're like a porcupine—they have a lot of good points, but you can't get near them.** *Variance.*

I. Emulations

And then, *emulations* (Galatians 5:20). The word *emulation* is another word that we don't use very often, but it literally means, "jealousy." And that jealousy is rooted in selfishness.

J. Wrath

And then, *wrath* (Galatians 5:20). That is a desire for revenge, a burning desire to get even. And when we get even, that's just what we do—we come down to their level.

K. Strife

And then, he says, "*strife*" (Galatians 5:20). And that word means, "fractious; a spirit that divides." These kinds of people of the flesh are the kinds of people who split churches; they're the kinds of people who split homes; they're the kinds of people who split neighborhoods and communities.

L. Seditious

And then, he mentions *seditious* (Galatians 5:20). The word *sedition* literally means, "to stand apart." These are people who separate themselves into little cliques and enclaves and think that they're better than other people. Sometimes, they got off in cults and other little groups.

M. Heresies

And then, he mentions *heresies*, which are false doctrines (Galatians 5:20).

N. Envyings

Then, he mentions *envyings* (Galatians 5:21). And an envious person is a person who is dissatisfied with what he has. He has a spirit of covetousness. He does not have the spirit of thanksgiving. And it's not primarily just wanting more; it is wanting what somebody else has.

O. Murders

And then, he mentions *murders* (Galatians 5:21). "Well," you say, "I'm certainly no murderer." But again, Jesus said, "If you hate your brother, in God's eyes, you're guilty of murder" (1 John 3:15).

P. Drunkenness

And then, he mentions *drunkenness* in this same passage (Galatians 5:21). *Drunkenness*—you see it there? And what does he mean by drunkenness? That

means, “a mind that has been desensitized.” That means there is an impairment of your judgment by the use of alcohol, or drugs, or anything else. That is what the Bible calls *drunkenness*.

Q. **Revellings**

And then, he mentions *revellings* (Galatians 5:21). These are the people who are always saying, “Let’s party.” I mean, these are people who are trying to somehow kill and stultify their conscience and escape from reality by constant indulgence in entertainment. They cannot think a serious thought. Another word for *revellings* is *carousing*.

R. **And Such Like**

“Well,” you say, “he hasn’t mentioned me yet.” Well, he’s got you in the next one: “*such like*”—“*and such like*” (Galatians 5:21). You fill in the blank—you fill in the blank. This is not a complete list. He lists 17 things; and then, he just says, “*and such like*.” And he says, “These are the signs of a life that is not a Spirit-controlled life, a life out of control.” And what is the result? Wasted time, weakened bodies, warped thinking, and wrecked lives.

II. **The Fruit of the Spirit**

Now having said that, how are we going to have, therefore, a Spirit-controlled life? Let’s continue to read. He mentions these things in verses 19 through 21; but then, notice in verse 22: “*But...*”—do you see the word *but*? That is, “in contradistinction”—“*But the fruit of the Spirit...*” (Galatians 5:22). So on the one hand, you have the works of the flesh. Now here, on the other hand, you have the fruit of the Spirit.

Now watch how he changes gears: “*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law*” (Galatians 5:22–23). And that’s what we’re dealing with—that word *temperance*, which means, “control.” Again, I remind you that, in some Bibles, it’s translated, “self-control.” But as you’re going to see, it could be and should be, “Spirit-control,” in my estimation. The word literally means, “to be in control.” The question is, who is in control?

A. **The Standard for the Spirit-Controlled Life: The Law of God**

Now first of all, as we think about how to live the Spirit-controlled life, I want to talk to you about the standard for the Spirit-controlled life. If my life is to be brought under discipline, if my life is to be in control—in control of what? What is the standard? How am I going to know whether or not my life is in control? Well, the standard is the law of God.

Look, if you will... Go back to verse 13—chapter 5, verse 13: “*For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh,*”—that is, don’t let the flesh have its fling, just because you’ve been called to liberty—“*but by love serve one another.*” Well, how are we going to know what the standard of love is? Well, he goes on to say: “*For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*” (Galatians 5:13–14). And so the standard is the law. And if I want to know whether I’m living a life that meets God’s standard, it’s just simply this: Do I love others as I love myself? The standard of the Spirit-controlled life is the law, and the measurement of that is love.

Now there are three relationships that you could take toward the law of God.

1. License: Some People See the Law as Their Enemy

There’s one—some people see the law as their enemy. The flesh says, “I don’t want to have anything to do with any kind of law.” The flesh says, “Don’t fence me in. I want to do my thing. I’m going to do my thing.” We’ll call that *license*. All right, that’s one way of living—just, “I want to do my thing.” Rivers *and* men *get* crooked *by following the* path *of least* resistance.

2. Legalism: Some People See the Law as Their Master

All right now, there’s another relationship to the law. Some see the law as their enemy; others see the law as their master. And Paul is preaching against this. Others are trying to live under the law, and the law has become their master; and, they’re struggling, and they are failing. And I’ve been there so many times. We know what the law says. The Bible says, “Don’t do this, and don’t do this; and, do this, and do this, and do this.” And we know that the law is good, and we know the law is right; and so, we’re trying to keep the law. We clench our fists; we grit our teeth, and we say, “I’m going to do it.” And the more we struggle, the more we sink. You ever been there? I have. Just like a man in quicksand—he knows he’s sinking. He struggles to get out, and his very struggling brings him down.

Now on the one hand, some see the law as their enemy, and that’s *license*. Others see the law as their master, and that is *legalism*. And so their life is one great big list of *don’ts*: “Don’t do this, and don’t do that.” They have their little list: “Don’t go to these kinds of movies. Don’t drink this. Don’t touch that. Don’t smell that. Don’t sniff that. Don’t snort that. Don’t go with that person. And don’t, don’t, don’t, don’t...” My dear friend, *10,000 don’ts won’t make you one* whit *more like* Jesus.

3. Liberty: Some People See the Law as Their Friend

Remember this—remember this: that the Christian life is not a legal relationship; it is a love relationship. And all the law is fulfilled in one word: “*Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*” (Leviticus 19:18). And some are just living lives of negativism—“don’t do this,

and don't do that"—and they see the law as their master. Galatians chapter 5, verse 1, is a very interesting verse. We're going to stay in the fifth chapter, but look at this one: *"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage"* (Galatians 5:1). Now look at the words "yoke of bondage." Some Bibles translate it this way: "the yoke of self-effort." That's what the "yoke of bondage" is—it is the "yoke of self-effort." That's not the answer, either. The answer is not seeing the law as your enemy—that's license; not seeing the law as your master—that's legalism; but you see the law as your friend, and that is liberty. So there are three choices you have: license, legalism, or liberty.

Now the Bible says you have been called to liberty. Do you see that, in verse 13? *"For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty"* (Galatians 5:13). And chapter 5, verse 1: *"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free"* (Galatians 5:1). My friend, I want you to learn this: that liberty is not doing your thing. No one is truly free, no one is liberated, until he knows control—till he knows control.

These instrumentalists who play this harp and this piano—are they liberated? Indeed, they are liberated. Now if I tried to play the piano, it would just be a cacophony of noise. I can't play the piano. Because, if you sit down and try to play the piano, right away, you're going to learn that the piano is regulated by law. There are certain laws of music. And the person who learns those laws of music is the person who can sit down and tickle the ivories. You know, the Bible says, in Psalm 119: *"Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage"* (Psalm 119:54). You see, on the back of every law is a song. There are laws of music that let the songs out of that piano. And so when the Bible says that we have a life of liberty, it means that by being controlled by the Spirit, suddenly, we're free.

Discipline does not restrict you; it frees you—it frees you. But now, the problem is, how are we going to bring that discipline, how are we going to bring that control, into our lives? Certainly not by license; certainly not by legalism—but by liberty, by the Spirit of God, we're going to be made free. And so the standard—the standard—is the law. Yes, there are laws. Our lives do need to be brought under control, and the Bible makes it very clear that there are certain laws.

B. The Strength for the Spirit-Controlled Life: Be Led by the Spirit

But now, wait a minute. But the standard is not enough. Even the standard of liberty is not enough. We need the strength—the strength. Where do we get the strength to live the Spirit-controlled life? Well, look in verses 16 and 17; we're in chapter 5. Now watch this: *"This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh."* There's where the strength comes from. Now verse 17—look at it: *"For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit,"*—the word *lust*, there, means, "has strong desires." The flesh has

strong desires against the Spirit—“*and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other*” (Galatians 5:16–17).

You see, in men, there’s that part of my nature called *the flesh*. Then, in me, there’s that part of my nature called *the spirit*, that’s been born again. And so I have both of those things struggling in me; and, so do you—right? In you, you have that predisposition, that old flesh, that wants to be in control. And then, there’s the Holy Spirit in the human spirit, saying, “Live for God, and live victorious.” And so there’s a civil war going on—the Spirit against the flesh, and the flesh against the Spirit. The Bible says, “*These are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would*” (Galatians 5:17). In plain English, folks, we don’t have what it takes. We, in ourselves, don’t have what it takes. You cannot, by self-effort, do it. You cannot do the things that you would.

But notice again what he says, in verse 16: “Walk in the Spirit, and you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16). He doesn’t say, “Don’t fulfill the lust of the flesh; and then, you’ll be walking in the Spirit.” That’s backward; that’s legalism. That’s where most of us try—most of us just simply try, “Well, I won’t do all these things; and then, I’ll be a spiritual Christian.” Oh, my friend, that’s legalism; it’s deadly legalism. You do not become more like the Lord Jesus Christ by doing all of these particular things. It says, “Walk in the Spirit, and you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16). If I’ve ever learned one lesson about spiritual lesson—and I’m still learning it—it’s this—and, if you don’t hear anything else I say, I want you to hear this: that holiness *is not the way to Christ; Christ is the way to holiness*. Now understand that: *Holiness is not the way to Christ; Christ is the way to holiness*. He doesn’t say, “Don’t walk in the flesh, and you will be in the Spirit.” He says, “Walk in the Spirit, and you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16).

All right. So now, where do we get this strength? Well, skip on down to verse 18: “*But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law*” (Galatians 5:18). Now you see those words, “*be led of the Spirit*”? The Greek tense of the verb is, “to be willingly led of the Spirit.” There must come a time when you are willingly led of the Holy Spirit. And to be led of the Spirit is to walk in the Spirit. And you must do this by an act of your will. You must be willingly led of the Spirit.

Now again, look at verse 16. I’m just going to go back and forth between verse 16 and verse 18. We’re talking about how to get the strength for the Spirit-filled life. Now listen. The standard is the law of God, manifest in love. Wonderful, but where does the strength come from? “Walk in the Spirit”—“Walk in the Spirit, and you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16). Verse 18: “If you are led of the Spirit”—and that means, “willingly led” (Galatians 5:18). Learn this: The Spirit-controlled life, therefore, is like walking. The Bible is very simple to understand, if you let your common sense lead

you. He says, “Walk in the Spirit.” Walking is something that most all of us are familiar with. And you walk one step at a time. So now, think about that walk, and think with me about three things:

1. The Commencement of the Walk: An Act of Your Will

First of all, think about the commencement of the walk. A journey of a thousand miles begins with one step. If I’m going to walk, I have to decide to walk. I decide to do it. I say, “I’ll turn around. I will walk.” I decide to do it. Okay. Now the commencement of the walk, therefore, is an act of your will. The Spirit-controlled life, the disciplined life, is not lived by willpower, but you enter it by an act of your will. It is not lived by willpower; It is lived by the power of the Holy Spirit. But nonetheless, you must choose. Verse 18: “You must be willingly led of the Spirit” (Galatians 5:18). Now if you don’t choose, I can’t choose for you. Your wife, your mother, your father, your pastor—no one can choose for you. There comes a time, my dear friend, when you must say, “I will be led of the Spirit.”

Now the Bible says, in Ephesians chapter 5, verse 18: “Don’t be drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18). Why did God say, “Don’t be drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit”? Not only in contrast, but in comparison; because being filled with the Spirit is a lot like getting drunk with wine. A man must decide to drink—that’s his decision. But once he decides to drink, then the liquor takes over—right? When he gets drunk, he’s under the control of that liquor. And so you must, by an act of your will, decide that you’re going to be led of the Spirit. But once you are, then the Holy Spirit takes over; and, you’re not drunk with wine, but you are filled with the Spirit of God. And so that is the commencement of the walk. The victorious life is not lived by willpower, but it is entered by an act of your will. Walk in the Spirit. You must decide, “I will walk in the Spirit.” Now that is the commencement of the walk.

2. The Circumference of the Walk: The Holy Spirit

Second thing I want you to see is what I’m going to call the circumference of the walk. Look in verse 16. It says there, “*Walk in the Spirit*” (Galatians 5:16). Now what does that mean? It doesn’t say, “Walk *with* the Spirit.” It doesn’t say to walk *after* the Spirit. It says, “*Walk in the Spirit.*” Now that means that the Spirit is to be the circumference of my walk.

For example, what if I were to say to you, “Walk in this building”—“walk in this building”? That means, “Stay in this building.” This building is the perimeter, the circumference, the environment, the element, in which you walk. If you step outside this building, you’re not walking in this building. You are to walk in this building. Now the Holy Spirit of God is to be the element in which you walk. The Holy Spirit of God is the environment of your life. You close yourself up to the Holy Spirit of God.

Are you willing to do that? I’ll tell you one thing: The flesh will say to you, right now, “Hey, don’t let him pull that on you.” You know what the flesh says? “Don’t fence me in.”

Isn't that what your flesh says? Every time the preacher says this or that from the Word of God, the flesh says, "Oh no! Oh no! Don't fence me in." And why does the flesh say, "Don't fence me in"? Well, the flesh says, outside of the Spirit, there are certain pleasures, and ideas, and fulfillments, and things that you need that will make you happy.

Now a person who has a Spirit-controlled life has come to this settled conclusion there is nothing worth having outside of Jesus. Now if you don't come to that, you will never, ever live a victorious life. There is nothing worth having outside of Jesus. You have to walk in the Spirit. Sure you have to eat, and you have to sleep, and you need recreation, but all of those need to be in the context of the Holy Spirit of God leading and directing your life.

You see, you ought to walk in the Spirit. As a matter of fact, the Bible says, "Let the peace of God referee in your heart" (Colossians 3:15). Now if the Holy Spirit is to be the circumference of my life, and God says, "This is the way I want you to live—you're to walk in the Spirit," now, if I step out of bounds, the Holy Spirit blows the whistle. "Let the Spirit of God referee in your heart"—that's literally what that says; "*Let the peace of God rule in your hearts*" (Colossians 3:15). And the word for *rule* is the word we get our word *umpire* from. And so when I step out of bounds, the Holy Spirit says, "You are out of bounds!" And so I step back in. I repent, and I step back in. That, my dear friend, is a Spirit-controlled life. There must be the commencement of that walk, and that comes by decision. And then, there comes the circumference of that walk: I walk in the Spirit.

3. The Continuance of the Walk: Repentance and Faith

Now here's the third thing, and this is very, very important: There must be the continuance of that walk. I've talked to you about the commencement and the circumference of it. Now let me talk to you about the continuance of it. The Greek word here that says, "Walk in the Spirit," means, "to keep on walking." Now what is walking? Walking is a series of steps. It begins with a decision, but it doesn't end there. The Spirit-controlled life is a crisis, where you say, "I will," but it is a crisis that is followed by a process, a step at a time. A journey of a thousand miles begins with a step, but you keep on walking.

Colossians chapter 2, verse 6, is a key verse, a major verse, to living the Christian life and the Spirit-controlled life. If you're sick and tired of the works of the flesh, if you want to have that liberty and that joy that belongs to the children of God, I want you to listen to this—Colossians chapter 2, verse 6: "*As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him*" (Colossians 2:6). Verse 16 says, "Walk in the Spirit, and you'll not fulfill the lust of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16). Colossians 2, verse 6: "*As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him*" (Colossians 2:6).

Now it's very, very important that you understand this. Please listen: "As you have

received the Lord Jesus, so walk in Him” (Colossians 2:6). Do you hear that? Now if you’re saved, you’ve received Jesus—right? You received Christ—that’s the way you got saved. Question: How did you receive Christ? By repentance and faith—isn’t that right? Repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ—that’s how you received the Lord Jesus. You received Jesus by repentance and faith. “Now therefore, as you received Him, so walk ye in Him” (Colossians 2:6). How do you live the victorious life? You live it the same way you got it. How did you get it? You got it by repentance and faith. How do you live it? You live it by repentance and faith.

Now what is a walk? A walk is one step at a time. It takes two feet to walk. Do you see, dear friend—when you walk, do you know what you are? You are off-balance. And if you don’t take another step, you’ll fall, after a while. You are off-balance. You take one step; and then, the other step is necessary. And then, the other step is necessary. And that is the way you walk—one step at a time. It takes two feet to walk. Now what are the two feet of the Christian faith? Repentance and faith. How did you receive the Lord Jesus? By repentance and faith. How do you walk? By repentance and faith. Those are the two feet that keep us walking. “As you receive the Lord Jesus, so walk ye in Him” (Colossians 2:6). I received Jesus by repentance and faith; and therefore, I walk by repentance and faith.

Now I’m going to tell you something: Repentance and faith are not just something you did in order to get saved; that is the way you live the Spirit-controlled life. It’s by repentance and faith. “As you received the Lord Jesus”—Colossians 2, verse 6—“so walk ye in Him” (Colossians 2:6). “Walk in the Spirit, and you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16). How do you walk? You put down the foot of repentance; and then, you put down the foot of faith.

Now what is repentance? Repentance *is God’s way of revealing myself to me. And faith is God’s way of revealing Jesus to me.* You see, repentance *is where I see the bankruptcy of me.* Faith *is where I see the glory of Him*—right? That’s repentance and faith. By repentance, I see my bankruptcy, and I see His glory.

All right now, here’s what happens: See, when I got saved, I got saved by repentance and faith. Now let me tell you how I got saved. I was a teenage boy; and friend, I did not know theology, and I had a hunger in my heart to know God. And I heard a man preach the gospel that Jesus Christ would save me, and I gave my boyhood heart to the Lord Jesus Christ. And here’s what I did when I got saved: I gave all I knew of me to all I knew of Him—that’s what I did. I gave all I knew of me to all I knew of Him; and frankly, I knew very little about me, or Him, at that time. I did not realize, at that time, how wicked I was. And I did not realize, at that time, how glorious He is. But I did know I was sinful, and I did know He was glorious. I just simply gave all I knew of me to all I knew of Him. But since that time, friend, I have learned a whole lot

more about me, and none of it is good. And I've learned a whole lot more about Him, and it's better than I ever thought it was. Okay?

Now so, therefore, as I received the Lord Jesus by repentance and faith, so I walk in Him; because, you see, I'm learning more about me, so I'm getting more and more to repent of, and I'm learning more about Him, and I'm getting more and more to trust. So as I received Him by repentance and faith, so I walk in Him by repentance and faith. I have two feet: repentance and faith, repentance and faith, repentance and faith.

Sometimes, you may think, "Well, I'm not even saved at all; because, if I was saved, why would I have this great conviction of sin?" You have the great conviction of sin because you are saved; and, you are learning more about you, and you're learning more about the Lord Jesus Christ. And it's not a sign that you're not saved; it's just simply a sign that you are understanding, finally, what it's all about.

And so you see, what I am saying is, there's the commencement of the walk—you must be willingly led of the Spirit. You don't live it by willpower, but you enter it by an act of your will. And there's the circumference of the walk—the Holy Spirit of God is the boundary; you walk in the Spirit. And then, there's the continuation of the walk—you walk one step at a time. "As you receive the Lord Jesus, so walk ye in Him" (Colossians 2:6). Repentance and faith: I turn from self; I turn to Him. I turn from self; I turn to Him. I turn from self; I turn to Him. And dear friend, what happens is that, suddenly, you realize that you're not in control, that God is in control through the Holy Spirit; and, the flesh has been put out of business, and you are growing in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now the victorious life, therefore, is a walk. People say, "Well, I took a stand for Jesus 20 years ago, and I'm still standing." Many of them are stuck—they're not standing. You need to be walking in the Lord Jesus Christ.

C. The Satisfaction of the Spirit-Controlled Life: The Fruit of the Spirit

Now let me finish this message by talking to you not only about the standard, which is the law of God expressed in love; and not only the strength, which is the Holy Spirit of God walking in you, and you in Him, by repentance and faith. But now, think of the satisfaction of it—the satisfaction of it.

Look again, if you will, in verse 22: "*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance*" (Galatians 5:22–23). Now the devil will try to tell you, "You don't want to live that way." But friend, that's the only way to live; that's the only satisfactory life. You see, he calls it *fruit*. Fruit is luscious, beautiful, fragrant; but, most of all, it's satisfying—it's satisfying. Fruit is to be consumed; it meets your basic hunger. You have a hunger for the Lord, and that hunger will never be satisfied apart from the Lord Jesus Christ. What a joy—what a joy—is a life that is controlled by the Spirit, rather than controlled by the flesh.

Conclusion

Now the flesh and the Spirit are warring in you, right now, and it's up to you—it's up to you. If you would just simply say, "Well, I'm not going to live a life of license and see the law as my enemy; I'm not going to live a life of legalism and see the law as my master; but I'm going to live a life of liberty—I'm going to see the Law as my friend. And then, I'm going to see the Holy Spirit as my strength. And then, I'm going to make a decision—I'm going to be willingly led by the Spirit. And then, I'm going to let the Spirit draw the perimeters of my life, and I'm going to decide that I'm going to find everything in Jesus Christ. And then, I am going to walk one step at a time, by repentance and faith, through this life." And my dear friend, God—God—will give you liberty. And oh, you can stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free (Galatians 5:1). Don't ever think of discipline as restricting you. No one is ever more free than the person who's living the life of control by the Holy Spirit of God.

How to Love and How to Be Loved

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: August 6, 1989

Main Scripture Text: Galatians 5:19–23

Outline

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Introduction

Take your Bibles and turn to Galatians chapter 5. In a moment, I want to begin reading, in verse 19. I want to talk to you, today, about love. I want to talk to you about how to love, and how to be loved. We have a generation, today, that talks an awful lot about love. But very frankly, folks, we have a generation that knows, perhaps, less about love than any generation since the time of Christ. It is amazing how the word *love* has been twisted, perverted, misused, and abused, today. People just don't understand what love is. So many people think that love is an inexpressible emotion, sort of an outward inexpressibility of an inward *all-overishness*. They just don't even know what it is. They just...—oceans of emotion—it's just feeling. But I'll tell you, friend, that's not what love is.

Love is not feeling. It may contain feeling. It may result in feeling. But love is not, primarily, a feeling or an emotion. I'll tell you why. The Bible commands us to love, and you cannot command a feeling. Think about it. The Bible commands us to love. Now it may contain emotion. It frequently results in emotion. But the kind of love that I'm talking

about is not an emotion.

I'll tell you something else: it is not an uncontrollable passion. People have the idea, today, that love is something that happens to us, and we're more or less victims, or recipients of it, however we may think. We fall in love, and then, we fall out of love. And it just sort of happens.

And so we have a song written, like that silly song that was written about a decade ago, when a man is singing to his wife, or wife singing to her husband, wanting a divorce: "Please release me, let me go. I don't love you anymore." "Poor me. I just don't love you anymore, and it's not my fault. So to stay together would be a crime." You know, if love is something that just happens to us, we don't have any choice over it.

But wait a minute. The Bible says: "*Husbands, love your wives*" (Ephesians 5:25). That's not a suggestion, or a request; that is a command. Love, my dear friend, involves choice and conduct. You can choose to love. And when you choose to love, it is not, primarily, how you feel; it is what you do.

Now the reason that we are confused about it is that we use one word for *love*. The Greeks were more exact, and they used several words for *love*. For example, the word *eros*, the word we get *erotic* from, meant the kind of a love that a boy has for a girl, or a girl has for a boy. That's all right; that's wonderful, as a matter of fact. But that's not what I'm talking about here.

We're to love everybody, and the love that I'm going to talk to you about in just a moment; but you're not to have erotic love for everybody. That's for just one person, and you'd better get the right one.

Herbie was saying to Susie, "Susie, will you please go out with me?" And Susie says, "No." And he said, "Why? Is there somebody else?" She said, "Herbie, there's got to be." That's there's one man, one woman. That's the erotic love, yes.

And then, there is another word that they used for love: *phileo*, which means "friendship love." Philadelphia is the city of brotherly love. And that's fine; that's wonderful. Friendship love, comradeship—that's fine. But that's not the word that we're studying, today.

The word that we're studying, today, is the Greek word *agape*. It is God-like love. And that's what this world needs. And that's what I want to show you. I want to show you how to have, how to give, and how to receive love.

Now if we were going to display a diamond, we'd probably put it on black velvet—if we want it to show up, exquisitely beautiful. That's what God has done with *agape* love. He's put it on the black velvet of the works of the flesh.

Begin reading here, in Galatians chapter 5 verse 19—and here's the black velvet—listen to it: "*Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance,*

emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like:”—every one of these things, dear friend, he’s just mentioned, are the opposite of love—“*of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God*” (Galatians 5:19–21).

Now look in the list above, dear friend. If you find your name there—if that is your lifestyle, if that is the way you practice—then you’re going to Hell, unless you change, and unless you repent. People who do this kind of thing—people who live this way—shall not, shall not, shall not, shall not inherit the Kingdom of God. That’s what God says. It doesn’t mean that you could not slip and fall. But the word here—the idea—is, if this is your lifestyle—you don’t have the lifestyle of a Christian—you’re not saved. Okay?

All right now, watch. That’s the black velvet. Here is the diamond—look in verses 22 and 23: “*But*”—in distinction, contradistinction—“*the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law*” (Galatians 5:22–23). You never have to make a law saying you can’t love, be kind, or be meek. Oh no. You make laws against the work of the flesh; but you don’t make laws against the fruit of the Spirit.

Now there are nine qualities in the fruit of the Spirit. We’re going to take the first one, today, and then, in succeeding messages, we’re going to look at all nine. Now my dear friend, by looking at these nine, not only are you going to examine the fruit of the Spirit, but you’re going to examine yourself. You’re going to find out whether you are a mature and a spiritual Christian.

Now we live in a generation that says a lot about the gifts of the Spirit. You know what I’m talking about, when I’m talking about the gifts of the Spirit, like prophecy, and tongues, and all of these other things, some of them miracles, others governments, and helps, and giving—all of these spiritual gifts. And everybody’s saying, “This is my gift. What is your gift? How can I know my gift? How can I use my gift?” Fine. Wonderful. God has given you a gift, and you need to discover your gift. You need to develop your gift, and you need to put your gift into practice.

But my friend, may I tell you that no spiritual gift is a sign or a mark of spiritual maturity or spirituality. To Paul’s most carnal church, the church at Corinth, he said, “*You come behind in no gift*” (1 Corinthians 1:7). If I want to know whether a man is a spiritual and mature Christian, I never examine his gift. I inspect the fruit. The mark of spirituality, the mark of maturity, is what kind of fruit do you bear. The fruit of the Spirit is the mark of spirituality, not a spiritual gift—the fruit of the Spirit.

I. The Description of Love

And there are nine qualities that are listed here. We're going to take them one at a time and the very first one that we're going to be looking at this morning is that quality that we call love—that is, *agape* love. There are three things I want you to notice. First of all, I want you to notice, as we're talking about *agape* love, what I'm going to call the description of this love. What is it like? What qualities does this love have? How would we describe this love? If we wanted to tell somebody else what *agape* love is, how would we find a description of it? Well, thank God, there is one already given in the Bible. And it's found in 1 Corinthians chapter 13, where the Apostle Paul gives a description of *agape* love.

Now I want you to turn to it, 1 Corinthians chapter 13. I want you to keep your Bible open in your lap, and I want you to keep score. I have found 10 qualities of *agape* love. And I'm going to look at those 10 qualities of *agape* love, called, in the *King James Version* of the Bible, *charity*. But actually, it is the word *love*—*agape* love—and there are 10 qualities.

All right now, I want you to do a little fruit inspecting. I want you to see if, in your heart, and in your life, these 10 qualities are there. And then, you'll know whether you are a mature and a spiritual Christian. All right, are you ready? What are they?

A. Steadfast Love

All right, the very first is: *Agape* love is steadfast love. Look in verse 4: "Love suffers long" (1 Corinthians 13:4). You see, true love enables us to be patient. If you're an impatient person, if you give up on people, if you say, "Well, I loved them for so long, but they don't deserve my love anymore, and I have quit loving them," then, my dear friend, when you quit loving, at that moment, you became unlike the Lord Jesus. You remember there, in John chapter 13, where the Bible says: "*Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end*" (John 13:1)? True love is longsuffering love. It is patient. It forgives seventy times seven, and then, keeps on forgiving 490, and right on. It forgives, and it forgives, and it forgives. All right—number one—do you have steadfast love?

B. Serving Love

Number two is: True love is serving love. Look in verse 4—the Bible says that this love "*is kind*" (1 Corinthians 13:4). Do you see it? It is kind. And what is kindness? Kindness is serving one another. You say, "Well, the person I have in mind doesn't deserve it." That's right. That's exactly right. True love serves those who don't deserve to be served. Do you know what true love is? If you love me, do you know what you'll do for me? You will not give me what I deserve; you will give me what I need.

Jesus Christ said, in Luke chapter 6, verses 27 and 28: "*But I say unto you which*

hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you” (Luke 6:27–28). What are you to do for them? Dear friend, you’re to do good; you’re to speak well; you’re to pray hard for your enemies; and you’re to show them kindness. It is serving love. If there’s somebody that has done you wrong, find some way that you can be kind to them. Lift the load for that person; mow a lawn for that person; carry some soup to that person; bless them, pray for them, or encourage them. That’s the way God loves you, and that is *agape* love.

C. Sincere Love

Number three—keep the list now, and check yourself off. I’ve said, first of all, it is steadfast love. Number two is serving love. Number three is sincere love. Look in verse 4: “It envies not” (1 Corinthians 13:4). If you’re an envious or jealous person, it’s because you do not love the person that you’re envious about. If you envy me, if I envy you, and if we envy one another, it is because I have something, I own something, and you have something, you own something that I want. Now if “I want it” means that I don’t rejoice that you have it, and, if I don’t rejoice that you have it, it is because I do not sincerely love you. I may say that I love you, but, my dear friend, if I cringe when you’re praised, and if I feel that your gain is my loss, then I don’t sincerely love you.

True love is sincere love. It rejoices when another is blessed. It is not envious. The Bible says, in the Book of Proverbs, that, “*Envy [is as] the rottenness of the bones*” (Proverbs 14:30). If you’re an envious person—I can put it down—you are not a loving person, and you’re not a mature Christian.

D. Self-Effacing Love

I’ll tell you what else true love is. Number four is self-effacing love. True love enables you to be humble. Notice, if we will, here: it “*vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up*” (1 Corinthians 13:4). That means it doesn’t swagger; it’s not proud. You see, if I love you, I don’t rejoice that I have more than you, and I don’t rejoice that I am blessed more than you. I don’t look down upon you. You can’t love anybody, and look down upon them. You see, true love, dear friend, is self-effacing love.

I’m going to tell you, dear friend, that pride *and* love *do not dwell in the* same heart. *You cannot be* big-headed *and* big-hearted *at the same time*. Now if you’re a person filled with egotism and pride, I’ll guarantee you that you’re a person that is not filled with love, and you’re hard to be around, and you’re an argumentative person, because of your pride. Because the Bible says, “*Only by pride cometh contention*” (Proverbs 13:10).

Any contention in your home? Maybe we ought to bring your children up here, and ask them. Only by pride comes contention. Do you know what the problem is in our homes, when we argue and have contention? It’s ego against ego, and self-love against self-love. But I’m telling you, dear friend, that true love is self-effacing love. It enables

you not to be proud.

E. Self-Restraining Love

Next, number five: True love is self-restraining love. Look at 1 Corinthians 13:5: *“Doth not behave itself unseemly.”* Do you know what that means? True love enables you to be courteous. When a person behaves unseemly, that means he is rude. Have you ever been around rude people? They elbow their way in; they don’t want to wait at the end of the line; they don’t know how to say “please”; they don’t know how to say “thank you”; and, they don’t know how to think of the other person.

Do you know what courtesy is? It’s just love in little things. And the person who doesn’t love in the little things, you can put it down: he doesn’t love in the big things. And when you find a person who is rude, you find an unloving person, and you find a person unlike the Lord Jesus Christ, who was meek, gentle, and thought of others, first.

F. Self-Denying Love

True love is self-effacing love, and it is self-restraining love. And in verse 5, it is self-denying love. The Bible says: *“Seeketh not her own”* (1 Corinthians 13:5). It doesn’t say, “Me first.” It doesn’t say, “I know my rights.” Anytime you hear a person say, “I know my rights; I have rights,” he’s not speaking from love. My dear friend, when you got saved, you just lost all your rights.

You see, what right does a dead man have? You are crucified with Christ. You are not your own. You’re bought with a price. You belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. And your rights have now become His rights. And He is the One who has commanded you to love. And you can no longer seek your own. You must seek the welfare of the Lord Jesus Christ—His glory and the welfare of others—if you truly love.

I think it was Bill Gothard who said, “If you teach somebody their rights, you’ll have a revolution. If you teach people their responsibilities, you’ll have a revival.” When we stop thinking about our rights, and start thinking about our responsibilities, and stop seeking our own, and start seeking to love and to bless other people, things are going to change in our world. And true love is, dear friend, self-denying love. That’s number six. How are you doing on the list?

G. Serene Love

Number seven: True love is serene love. Look again, in verse 5—the Bible says: *“Is not easily provoked”* (1 Corinthians 13:5). Do you know anybody like a shotgun with a hair trigger? You just jiggle them and *blam!* They blow everything out of sight, and they say, “Well, I didn’t mean it; and I got over it quickly.” And all those dead people lying around. A vile temper is something you never lose by losing it.

My dear friend, if you want to know why you explode like you do, it’s because, on the

inside, the love of the Lord Jesus is not there. Because, if you want to know what you're full of, just see what spills out when you're jostled. And the one blot on an otherwise wonderful Christian character is often a bad temper. True love is serene love—serene, “*is not easily provoked.*” Are you easily provoked, quick-tempered? Do you know what that's a sign of? Do you know what your hot temper is a sign of? You, my friend, are not full of love. That's all it's a sign of. Love “*is not easily provoked.*” It is serene love.

H. Sacrificial Love

All right, in verse 5, it is sacrificial love. Notice the last part of verse 5: “*Thinketh no evil*” (1 Corinthians 13:5). You say, “Why do you call that sacrificial love?” Because the word *thinketh* there is a bookkeeping term. Actually it means, “does not keep a record of faults.” It is not a collector of grudges. It means, “that is able to forgive and forget.” And my dear friend, that costs.

I preached a few Sundays ago on forgiveness. Do you remember? And I told you that there can be no forgiveness without somebody paying a price. If you owe me \$10, and I forgive it, it costs me \$10 to forgive it, isn't that right?

You see, somebody has to pay a price. But so many of us are bookkeepers. And we just keep a record of those things, as verse 5 says, that we think evil. That is, we have in our ledger little I.O.U.'s. I owe you for this, and you owe me for that, and so forth. My dear friend, we need to learn to forget those things, and to bury those things in the grave of God's forgetfulness. And pay the price. Take the hurt in. True love is sacrificial love. It costs to forgive.

I. Sympathetic Love

And then, I'm going to tell you, number nine: True love is sympathetic love. Look, if you will, at 1 Corinthians 13:6: “*Rejoiceth not in iniquity.*” It's number nine; verse 6. It is sympathetic love. That's the ninth quality. Why do you call it sympathetic love? Because, when somebody is in sin, when somebody falls, when somebody does wrong, you don't rejoice, but you weep.

Do you know what the sin of the gossip is? The gossip rejoices in iniquity. When they hear something bad, they can't wait to tell it. They're like the woman who said, “You know, my motto is never say anything, unless it's good. And boy, is this good!” I mean, and she is so ready to tell it. So they, or he, is so ready to tell. Why do we always think of gossips as women? Some of the worst gossips I know are men—love to gossip, love to gossip—love just to unload something bad. They seem to rejoice in iniquity.

Now this doesn't mean that you just overlook sin. You can't do that. Sin has to be faced. Sin has to be dealt with. But don't rejoice in iniquity. And before you say anything bad about anybody, you make it pass through these three golden gates. Number one: Is it true? Do you know it to be true? Number two: Even if it's true, is it necessary to tell it?

Some things are true that are better not told. And number three: If you must tell it, is it kind? Am I telling it in a kind way? Is it true? Is it necessary? And is it kind? True love does not rejoice in iniquity.

I'm not talking about what some call *sloppy agape*, just simply overlooking things. But I am telling you, my dear friend, that real love is sympathetic. When you hear of somebody's hurt, when you hear of somebody's failure, you'll be like a man was, in my presence the other day, when he heard of the sin of one of his brothers, and he broke, and fell on his knees, and wept, because of the sin that he'd heard of. Sympathy—heartbrokenness over sin.

J. Suffering Love

But let me give you the tenth characteristic of true love. And I hope you're keeping a record, now. I hope you're looking in your own heart, and saying, "Is this true in my heart?" Not only is true love sympathetic love, my dear friend; true love is suffering love. You cannot love without suffering. Look, if you will, in verse 7: True love "*beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things*" (1 Corinthians 13:7). When it says, "*believeth all things,*" it doesn't mean true love is gullible. *The New English Bible* puts it this way: "*There is nothing love cannot face; there is no limit to its faith.*" That's what it means.

But notice: "It bears all things." There is a burden to bear, when you love. I've already told you that. My dear friend, it is sacrificial; and, therefore, it is suffering love. People want to know, why do human beings suffer? Some people have lost their faith in God, because they see the suffering of human beings. And they say, "Why does God allow people to suffer? If He's an all-knowing, all-powerful God, couldn't He stop this suffering?" Yes, He could. God could have made it where there was a world where there was not suffering. Do you know how He could have done it? Just failed to create people, or He could have created people and given them no will. They would have just been machinery. He'd have no more fellowship with us than I could have with that loudspeaker.

You see, dear friend, when God made you, God took a divine risk. God knew that it was going to cost Him, when He made you—just like when you bring children into this world. Any of you who have children, do you think it's going to be all honey and no bees, friend? You've got rooms to rent upstairs unfurnished.

Now let me tell you something, friend: It's going to cost, when you have children. They're going to break your heart. If you love, it's going to cost. God knew it was going to cost, when He made man, and gave man a capacity to sin. He didn't make man sin; but, in order for man to say *yes*, man had to be able to say *no*. In order for man to be loyal, he had to have the ability to be disloyal. In order for a man to choose God, he had

to have the ability not to choose God. And so God made us that way. And thank God He did, because we're here, and we do love Him.

But at the same time, God knew that He Himself was going to suffer. Put it down: When God chose to love, God chose to suffer. You say, "Can God suffer?" Yes. The Bible says, in the Book of Isaiah, speaking of His children, "*In all their affliction he was afflicted*" (Isaiah 63:9). You say, "How can God suffer?" Well, let me ask you a question: Does a father suffer, when a son does wrong? The story of the prodigal son, in Luke 15, teaches us that, when an earthly father has an earthly son that suffers, in the same way, when we go wrong, the Heavenly Father suffers.

Do you know what the Bible says, in Ephesians chapter 4? It says: "*And grieve not the holy spirit of God*" (Ephesians 4:30). Have you ever thought of God being grieved? "Grieve not the Holy Spirit." You see, your lawnmower may vex you, but your children grieve you. Right? You see, you can only be grieved by someone that you love. And you see, God loves us. And so therefore, the Holy Spirit of God is grieved.

Let me ask you a question: Can the body hurt, and the head not feel it? Who is the head of the Church? The Lord Jesus. When His Body suffers, does not Jesus suffer? On the road to Damascus, when Jesus found the Apostle Paul, who was persecuting the Church, what did Jesus say to Paul? He said, "Paul, why are you persecuting me?" Paul could say, "Well, I'm not persecuting you. I'm just persecuting these Christians." And my dear friend, when you persecute the body, you persecute the head, don't you? You see. When the body suffers, the head suffers. And Jesus was persecuted.

Let me ask you a question: If there is a faithless bride, who flirts, or is impure, or inattentive to her groom, does not the groom suffer? Who is the groom? The Lord Jesus. Who is the bride? The Church. Yes, He suffers. When He chose to love, He chose to suffer. My dear friend, when you choose to love, you choose to suffer. You say, "Well, God's God. He doesn't have to suffer." That's right. He doesn't. I mean, if He didn't want to, He wouldn't have to. But He chose to. You say, "Why would He choose to suffer?"

Well, maybe I can illustrate. Let's suppose that you and your wife are going to take the vacation of a lifetime. Let's suppose it's going to be your second honeymoon. Let's suppose that you're going to the island of Maui in Hawaii. Let's suppose that somebody there has given you a condominium on the beach. Let's suppose that you have got enough money to eat out. You have enough money to do those things you want to do, and you've paid for that flight over there. It is the vacation of a lifetime, and you've been looking forward to it. When you get to Maui, you've been there about six hours, and back home one of your children is hit by an automobile. The people at home said, "Shall we call them and let them know? Shall we interrupt their vacation? Shall we ruin their vacation by letting them know?"

How many parents in this room would say, “I had rather just be over there lying on the beach, and not know?” Anybody? Don’t lift your hand. I’d be ashamed, if you did. No. I mean, if you could choose not to know, would you say, “Hey, if anything bad happens, don’t tell us. We don’t want to know. We don’t want it to ruin our vacation.” No. You’d say, “If they hurt, I want to hurt with them. I want to know. Even if I can’t do anything, I want to know. But I also want to know, so I can do whatever it is I can do.” Isn’t that right? Isn’t that true?

There’s something about love, dear friend; there’s something about love that chooses to suffer. “*Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things*” (1 Corinthians 13:7)—that’s the kind of love this world needs. That’s *agape* love—love that, when it chooses to love, chooses to suffer. My friend, that’s the fruit of the Spirit. How did you do on your list? Don’t answer. Just think about it.

II. The Development of This Love

Number two. Let me talk to you, very quickly, not only about the description of this love, but the development of this love. Now Galatians 5, verse 22, says, “*But the fruit of the Spirit is love*” (Galatians 5:22). Verse 19 speaks of the works of the flesh. The works of the flesh are natural. The fruit of the Spirit is supernatural. The works of the flesh are what sin does in us. The fruit of the Spirit is what God does through us. This kind of love is not love that we are to produce. You do not produce this love. You bear this love. Jesus said, “*I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit*” (John 15:5). He didn’t say you’ll produce it. That fruit is the vine’s fruit. It is not your fruit. You abide in the vine. You have the nature of the vine in you.

Now in Romans, there’s an interesting verse. It says this: “*The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost*” (Romans 5:5).

Now suppose there’s somebody, let’s suppose you have a neighbor you can’t love, and you say, “Well, I really ought to love this person, I ought to love whoever she is.” Let’s give her a name—Betty, let’s say, Betty. “I ought to love Betty. I’m going to love Betty. I’ve been treating Betty wrong. Betty really bugs me. I’m going to love Betty. I am going to love Betty. I hate Betty.” You don’t have it. You can’t make yourself love Betty. It’s not in you to love Betty. And the next time you need to try to love Betty, don’t say, “Lord, help me to love Betty.” Just simply say, “Lord, I can’t love Betty, but I know You do. And Lord, You love her through me.” “Thy love, Lord.” Just pray it: “Thy love, Lord—Thy love. Make me a channel of Your love.”

You see, the Bible says, in Romans 5:5, “*The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost.*” It is supernatural love. It comes, my dear friend, from the vine. It flows to the branches. It produces the fruit. You don’t produce it. You only bear

it.

Now down in Florida, where I was raised, in citrus land, we had different kinds of fruit trees. And we have some ornamental shrubs called *rough lemons*, or *sour oranges*. The fruit is no good at all. It's just ornamental. If you were to take a bite of one of those sour oranges, you'd have immediate lockjaw. It's so sour, but beautiful. Do you know what the nurserymen do? They take one of those sour orange trees, and they cut it down. Well, first of all, they bud into it a sweet Valencia bud down near the base. They call that sour rootstock. And then, after that bud gets to going, they cut the top off and a new life comes out. It's into that old sour stock, but the new life is a sweet orange tree.

Now let's suppose you had a sour orange tree, and you want it to bear sweet oranges. What could you do? Well, I'll tell you one thing you could do. Let's suppose you pruned it, and that's all you did to it. You just pruned it. Do you think that's going to make it bear sweet oranges? "Well," you say, "I'll tell you what I'll do: I'll transplant it. I'll take it from this church, and I'll put it in that church. Or, I'll take it from this field and I'll put it in that field." You transplant it. A lot of these folks moving their letter need to get saved. Did you know that? Moving their membership—it's like moving one a corpse from one mausoleum to another. I mean, you know, "I'm going to transplant this tree."

All right, and what good is that going to do? "Well," you say, "I'll dig it and dung it. I'll fertilize it. I'll water it. I'll cultivate it." So what? You say, "I'll tell you what I'll do: I'll rename it. I'll call it a sweet orange tree." So what? You say, "Well, I'll tie some sweet oranges on to it." So what? My dear friend, it is not a matter of pruning, transplanting, cultivating, naming, and decorating it. The nature of that tree has to be changed. But when they graft in that Valencia bud, the very nature of that tree is changed. It becomes a partaker of a nature that is not its by nature.

And the Bible says, when you and I get saved, we are what? We are "*partakers of the divine nature*" (2 Peter 1:4). The nature of God comes into us. And this love that I'm talking about, my dear friend, is not the work of the flesh, that sour root; it is the fruit of the Spirit, it is the nature of almighty God that has been engrafted into you.

III. The Desire for This Fruit

Now I must hurry; let me finish something. I've talked to you about the description of this fruit. I've talked to you, dear friend, about the development of this fruit. Let me talk to you, just for a moment, about the desire for this fruit. Yesterday, a friend came by our house, and brought us some of the most beautiful peaches you've ever seen. They were fragrant, luscious, and beautiful. Had them last night for supper with milk on them—wonderful.

You see, what is fruit for? To be consumed. It's to be eaten. Do you know what our world longs for? The fragrant beautiful fruit of the Spirit. There's a desire for that. That's

the reason I said this is the way to love and to be loved: when you allow the Lord to inhabit your humanity, and display His deity. And it won't be your love. It'll be His love. It won't be your life. It'll be His life. It'll be the beauty, the fragrance of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And they're in all fruit—there is what? Seed. How is Christianity to be spread? You see, my dear friend, the seed is in the fruit. When you begin to live like Galatians 5:22 says, that's when you're going to reproduce. That simple.

Conclusion

Let's bow in prayer. Would you ask God to speak to your heart today? Say, "Lord, am I a loving person?" And you know, you can be saved, and then backslide, and get so carnal that you cease bearing fruit. Healthy trees bear fruit. You're to abide in the Lord Jesus Christ. Would you say, "Lord Jesus, Lord Jesus, I want to be a loving person. Help me to abide in You. Lord, let that fruit be produced in my life."

And those of you who would like to receive the new nature, those of you who know that you're just a sour orange stock, you know that transplanting the tree is not enough, decorating the tree is not enough, renaming the tree is not enough—you know that you need a new nature—can I help you, right now, to receive Jesus? You want to be saved? You can be saved right this moment. Would you pray a prayer like this? Just pray it in your heart, not out loud, just down deep in your heart.

"Dear God"—just pray—"Dear God, I know that You love me." And He does love you, friend. "Lord, I know that You want to save me." And oh, my friend, He does want to save you. "Jesus, You died on that cross to save me. Lord Jesus, You paid for my sins on that cross. Lord, I accept what You did for me. Thank You for paying for my sins. Lord Jesus, I open my heart. I receive You, now, into my life. Come into my life. Forgive my sin. Give me a new nature. Save me, Lord Jesus." Pray it, say it, and mean it. "Save me, Lord Jesus." Ask Him from your heart. "Save me, Lord Jesus."

Did you ask Him? All right, would you just, by faith, tell Him this? "I thank You for saving me, Lord Jesus. I accept it by faith. And Lord Jesus, I will not be ashamed of You. Because You've saved me, I will make it public. I will not be ashamed of You. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for saving me. In Your name, I pray. Amen."

Faithfulness

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: October 1, 1989

Main Scripture Text: Galatians 5:22

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Conclusion

Introduction

Take God's Word and turn to Galatians chapter 5, verse 22, as we continue in our series on the fruit of the Spirit. Galatians 5:22: *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness."* And thus far, we've dealt with all of these qualities of the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. And now we come to the next. It says, in the King James Version, "faith"; but, perhaps, better translated, "faithfulness." Not only what we believe, but how we live, and what we do, as a result of what we believe.

All of my life, I wanted to go to Yellowstone National Park. One day, some years ago, we went. Do you know the one thing that I wanted to see more than anything else at Yellowstone was a certain geyser? You know the name of it—Old Faithful. I'd heard about Old Faithful for so long. I wanted to see Old Faithful, and I did. As a matter of fact, our room, at the old lodge we stayed at, was right by Old Faithful.

And there are many other geysers there, and some of them are much more spectacular. But let me tell you about Old Faithful. Every 65 minutes, there she goes. You can almost set your watch on it. About 170 feet—there's a shaft of boiling water that just comes up out of the earth. And it is the most favorite of all of the geysers out there—Old Faithful.

You see, faithfulness is a quality, I think, that all of us admire. And if we don't, we

ought to. I can tell you this. Not only does God admire it, but God requires it. The Bible says, *“Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful”* (1 Corinthians 4:2). I don’t care how much ability you have, how much personality or intelligence you have, how hard you work—if you can’t be depended upon, friend, you are no good. You are no good.

What do we mean by faithfulness? Well, integrity, honesty, trustfulness, and loyalty. Can you be counted on? If I were to ask the people in this congregation to write five letters to people they can depend on, people that they can really trust, would you receive a letter? Would somebody write you a letter? Are you a faithful person? Can you be depended upon? If you can’t be, may I tell you very frankly—I hope it won’t hurt you too much—but you’re not worth much. You’re not worth much, if you don’t have this character quality that the Bible calls faithfulness.

Many Americans don’t have it. I was disappointed, grieved, and shocked to read a recent Gallup Poll. Mr. Gallup, who studies society, and makes all of these scientific polls, found out that 40% of the American people said that they call in sick, when they’re not sick; they short-change customers, they trim corners, they cheat in examinations, and do those kinds of things. I’m saying, folks, 40%, in a survey. That makes me wonder about people who, perhaps, would not even be honest enough about their dishonesty to say that they do it.

Now you think about it. And then, Mr. Gallup went on to say: “In my estimation, as a scientific researcher, America is in a crisis of the first magnitude. The crisis is not political; it is not military. It is spiritual and moral. There is a spiritual and moral integrity crisis in the United States of America.” Are you a faithful person? When you meet the Lord, will He be able to say to you, *“Well done, thou good and faithful servant”* (Matthew 25:21)?

I was interested in the Book of Proverbs, chapter 25, verse 19, where it says, *“Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a broken tooth”* (Proverbs 25:19). Now that’s poignant, isn’t it?

I want you to think with me about the marks, the motivation, and the methods of faithfulness.

I. The Marks of Faithfulness

But first of all, the marks of faithfulness. Where should we be faithful? How can we be faithful? Let me just draw the focus a little tighter, and mention five areas—not the only ones, but ones that I want to point out this morning—where you ought to be a faithful person.

A. Faithfulness to Our Families

First of all—I'm going to start at the very core of our lives—we need to be faithful to our families. Over and over and over again, the Bible speaks of family faithfulness. Friend, if you're not faithful at home, you're no good, and you can't be faithful anywhere else. The religion that doesn't begin at home... And a man needs to be faithful to his wife. He needs to be morally faithful. He needs to be sexually faithful. There's no greater mark of unfaithfulness than adultery. The Bible says a man that commits adultery gets a blot that will not be removed (Proverbs 6:32–33).

I hope you've chosen a wife, and that you're morally faithful to her. But listen. You don't have to be physically unfaithful to be unfaithful to her. Many men seem to be married to their job, sports, and money, which can draw them away from their wife.

The marines have a motto: *semper fidelis*—"always faithful." That needs to be true, in our hearts, and in our lives. I've talked to a lot of kids who are what we would call, today, *juvenile delinquents*. And there's a gap between the kids and their parents. And if you talk long enough, you'll find out that many of these kids have hostility toward their parents. And the hostility toward their parents is rooted in resentment. And the resentment in the parents is rooted in the fact that somewhere, somehow, sometime, those parents have been unfaithful to those kids. That is, they have made promises and commitments to those kids that they did not keep.

I want to tell you one thing about kids. They have an incredible memory. Did you know that? Before I could preach this sermon, I had to do a lot of checking up. What I'm telling you was painful. I had to ask Joyce, "Am I a faithful man?" I asked my grown son down in Florida, "Have I ever made a promise to you that I've not kept?" I asked one of my grandchildren, "Has Papa ever promised you something he didn't do?" She said, "Yep." Just like that, she didn't even think about it. She said, "But it wasn't your fault; you couldn't help it." Oh, the memory that these kids have!

Let me tell you something. When you say something off-handed, and don't think about it, they think about it. They say, "Can we go do so-and-so?" And you say, "Yes, well, we might." They start packing. They never forget. I think it would do well for many of us to go back and ask our loved ones, "Have I been faithless? Have I promised and failed to perform?" And I mean, little children. Get the record right, ask for forgiveness, and do what we can do to make restitution. I'm telling you, there is a lot of bitterness, and a lot of resentment, in the hearts of many kids. And it may be some of your kids, because you have been a faithless person.

B. Faithfulness with Our Finances

Faith with our money. I'm going to tell you another area that we need to be faithful. And this time I want you to take your Bibles, and turn with me to Luke chapter 16 and

verse 10: *“He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much”* (Luke 16:10). What would you do, if you had a million dollars? I mean, cold cash, taxes paid. “Oh,” you say, “Pastor, I would do this, and I would do that; and I would give this, and I would help.” Would you?

Let me tell you a good test of what you would do, if you had a million dollars, is what you’re doing with that hundred dollars you have. That’s the best test. You see, if you’re not faithful in that which is least, you wouldn’t be faithful, also, in that which is much.

If you steal a hundred dollars, in God’s sight, you may as well have stolen a million dollars. Now notice, in verse 11: *“If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon,”*—*mammon* is the Old Testament word for the god of possessions. If you’ve not been faithful in the unrighteous money—*“who will commit to your trust the true riches?”* (Luke 16:11). The true riches are spiritual riches. If you’ve not been faithful in that which is another man’s, who shall give to you that which is your own?

Now what’s he saying? He’s saying, dear friend, the test of what you would do in the spiritual realm is seen by what you do in the physical and the monetary realm. And if you can’t be trusted with money, God cannot trust you with spiritual power. That’s what this is saying: that many of us do not have spiritual blessing, because we simply haven’t been faithful with our finances. And because we’ve not been faithful with our finances, God doesn’t bless us spiritually.

Do you know most Americans get this 180 degrees backward? Most of us think, “If I would just be a good spiritual person, if I would just pray and believe and trust, then I’d be wealthy.” And you hear that a lot on television. If you will get spiritually right, then God is going to bless you materially. But this passage says just the opposite. This passage says, if you will get materially right, God will bless you spiritually. If you will do right with whatever you have—it doesn’t have to be much—but if you’ll just take what God has placed in your trust, then God said, “I can bless you spiritually.” And the reason that some of us are not getting our prayers answered, the reason that some of us don’t understand the Bible more than we understand it, the reason that some of us have such a poor witness, is that we haven’t been faithful in that which is least. I mean, we haven’t been faithful in the material things.

For example, the Bible says, in 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, that there be no gatherings when I come.”* That’s what the Apostle Paul said. Who are the persons there? Every one of you. What is the period? Upon the first day of week. When is that? That’s the Lord’s day. Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you do what? Lay by him in store. What is the plan? You don’t just come to church on Sunday, and give by emotion. You just don’t say, “Well, I think I’ll do so.” No. You already know what you’re

going to give. You have laid it by in store. You come to church on Sunday morning, because you have given a plan, and you have thought about what you're going to give. You've laid it aside, and you bring it upon the first day of the week. *"Let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him."* What is the proportion? Do you just give willy-nilly? Oh no. You give according to the way that God has prospered you. You give regularly. You give faithfully. You see, if God has given you much, then you can give much. If God has given you little, then your gift may be small. But the point, dear friend, is that we need to be faithful in our finances.

I am convinced that, if this church would get faithful in that which is material, then God is going to bless this church with incredible spiritual power. We're going to see souls saved. The money is not the important thing. The money is only the test. If God can't trust you with money, then He can't trust you in other areas. That's what Jesus is saying.

C. Faithfulness with Our Friends

Now listen. We need to be faithful with our families, and we need to be faithful with our finances. I'll tell you another area where I really think that we need to be faithful: and that is, my dear friend, we need to be faithful with our friends. Proverbs 17:17: *"A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity."*

There was an English publication that had a contest. And this contest was to give the best definition of a friend. Here are some that won honorable mention. Somebody said, "A friend is somebody who multiplies your joys, and divides your griefs." Another one said that, "A friend is someone who understands your silence." But the one that won was this: "A friend is somebody who comes in, when all the world has gone out."

Do you have a friend that you can count on, like that? It doesn't matter what you've done. Somebody wrote these words as a take-off on 1 Corinthians 13: "Friendship is slow to lose patience. It looks for a way of being constructive. It is not possessive. It is neither anxious to impress others, nor does it cherish inflated ideas of its own importance. Friendship has good manners, and does not pursue selfish advantage at the other's expense. It is not touchy. It does not keep account of slights, or gloat over the mistakes of the other. On the contrary, it is glad when truth prevails. It knows no limit to its endurance, no end to its trust, no failing of its hope, and, in this, it can outlast anything. True friendship stands when all else has fallen." Now do you have a friend like that? Are you a friend like that?

D. Faithfulness to the Fellowship

And then, I want to say, we need to be faithful to the fellowship. We need to be faithful to the church. The Bible has so much to say about church attendance. The Bible says, in Romans 12:5, *"And every one members one of another."* When the body

meets, and you're away, part of the body is absent.

Hebrews 10:25 says, "*Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is.*" Have you ever heard anybody say, "You don't have to go to church to be a Christian"? Well, technically, that's true. But I want to say something. I doubt the Christianity of the person who willfully, deliberately neglects the assembly. We are not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together.

You say, "Well, I get just as much by listening to somebody on television, or I get just as much by reading a book." Well, you may. But you see, you don't just come to church for what you can get. You come to church for what you can give. And I'm not just talking about money.

Hebrews 10:25 says, "*But exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*" We're living in dangerous and deceptive times. And we owe to one another a fearful loyalty. Do you know what you say, when you were here this morning in this worship service? You're saying three things to me. First, "God is important to me." And second, "You are important to me." Thirdly, you're saying to the person next to you, "You are important to me." We need to be faithful to the fellowship. We are members one of another.

E. Faithfulness to the Faith

Let me mention one other thing before I move on. I'm just talking about the marks of faithfulness. We need to be faithful to the faith. I mean, to the Word of God. There are times, today, when people are taking this book, and shredding it, mimicking it, or dissecting it. We have some people who call themselves, today, theologians. The word *theos* means, "God"; *logos* means, "word." A theologian is somebody who's supposed to know the Word of God. I don't why they call them theologians, because they don't believe the *logos*, so they must not know the *theos*. They're like Grape nuts, neither grapes nor nuts. And these people set themselves up in judgment of the Word of God. Friend, *we're not to judge the Word of God. The Word of God is to judge us.* "*For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword*" (Hebrews 4:12).

William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, said, "The chief danger of the 20th century will be religion without the Holy Spirit, Christianity without Christ, forgiveness without repentance, salvation without regeneration, politics without God, and Heaven without Hell." Friend, if there were ever a generation that needed to be faithful to the faith, it's this generation.

Did you know that we're just one generation away from paganism? If we don't pass it on to the next generation, they won't have it. And friend, we need to pass the faith on, and be faithful to the faith. We are stewards of the faith of God.

Now those are just marks of faithfulness. I could mention many others but I've just simply mentioned five to give you the idea.

II. The Motivator for Faithfulness

Now let me give, secondly, the motivator for faithfulness. Why should we be faithful? I've already said that you don't have any character, if you're not faithful. If you can't be counted on, you just don't have any character; you're rotten through and through.

But let me give you even a higher motivation than that. And that is the incredible faithfulness of God toward us. Have you ever thought about God's faithfulness? I mean, just think about it: in so many areas, how faithful God is. For example, the Bible says, in 1 John 1:9, *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*

What if you weren't sure He would forgive you? Can you just imagine what that would be? Suppose you've done something wrong, and you come to the Lord, and say, "O God, forgive me." And suppose you don't know whether He would or not. Wouldn't that be incredibly sad? What a joy, that every time we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sin, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Hallelujah! What a Savior!

Not only that, dear friend, but the Bible says, in 1 Corinthians 10:13, *"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."* Wouldn't this be a terrible world, if you just knew that out there are forces—the power of Satan, the pull of the flesh—and you knew that you had no promise of victory? But what if something out there might be so big, and so strong, that you wouldn't be able to overcome it? But glory to God, I can wake up every morning, and know that God is faithful to keep me, if I'll just let Him. That's great.

You say, "Well, what if the devil gets you, and takes you out of the hand of God?" In 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, verses 23 and 24, the Apostle Paul says, *"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it"* (1 Thessalonians 5:23–24). The God who saved me is the God who keeps me. *"It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness"* (Lamentations 3:22–23).

Now dear friend, if God has been so faithful to me, then I need, indeed, to return that faithfulness, and be faithful to Him. There's so much that I could talk about there, in the faithfulness of our Lord.

III. The Method of Faithfulness

But let me just move on to the final and last thing: the method of faithfulness. How are we going to be faithful? Let me mention some ways that you need to be faithful.

A. Be Faithful in the Small Things

First of all, be faithful in the small things. Remember that verse that we read, when we turned to Luke chapter 16, verse 10? *“He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much”* (Luke 16:10). You see, big things are made up of smaller things.

Everything big is made up of something smaller. Your body is made up of the various members of your body. And the various members of your body are made up of cells. And those cells are made up of molecules. And structure molecules are made up of atomic structure. And that atomic structure has within it even smaller particles that can be split apart. Everything that’s big is made up of something small. Take the ocean, the vast Atlantic Ocean. It’s made up of drops of water; as big as the ocean is, all it is made up of is drops of water.

Think of all of the ages, and the ages of time. Well, time is made up of ages, but ages are made up of millenniums. And millenniums are made up of centuries; and centuries are made up of years; and years are made up of months; and months are made of weeks; and weeks of days; and days of hours; and hours of minutes; and minutes of seconds; and seconds of milliseconds. Everything big is made up of something small.

And that’s the way your life is. Your entire life is not just one or two big decisions. It is day by day. It is that honesty; it is that smile; it is that kindness; it is that warmth; it is that integrity. He that is faithful in the small things. You see, it’s the small things that really count.

Joyce said to me, *“Adrian, I didn’t marry you for your looks; I married you for your brains. It’s the little things that really do make the difference.”*

When you’re faithful in the little things, it follows, as night follows day, you’re already faithful in that which is much. Because, the only way you get big things is the little things.

You think about David. He was a man after God’s own heart. But before David could be the king, he had to be the shepherd. He watched over few sheep, before he could watch over an entire nation. Before he kills Goliath, he slew a lion and a bear. He was faithful in that which is least; and, therefore, he could be faithful in that which is much.

Wilbur Chapman, a great evangelist of yesteryear, said this: “The rule that governs my life is this: Anything that dims my vision of Christ, or takes away my taste for Bible study, or cramps my prayer life, or makes Christian work difficult, is wrong for me; and, I must, as a Christian, turn away from it.”

Do you know what you parents need to do? Have the little children that come to church with you on Sunday morning bring an offering. Don't give them money to bring. Let them take it out of their own allowance. Let them take their part out, and bring their pennies to church. You say, "But does the church need those pennies?" That's not the point. Those children learn to give, so that, when they're grown, they may give a hospital, an educational wing to a Sunday School building, or they may underwrite a mission society. You teach him to be faithful in the small things, and they will be faithful in that which is great.

B. Be Faithful in the Secret Things

And then, dear friend, be faithful in the secret things. What you are in the dark, when nobody else knows, that's what you really are. Let me give you a test of your character. What would you do, if you knew that nobody else would ever know, either good or bad? Friend, you are what you are in secret—nothing more, nothing less. Be faithful in the secret things.

This morning, I was reading about Michelangelo, painting on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, in a niche where human eyes would not be able to see. He was spending so much time, meticulously painting. Someone said, "Michelangelo, why are you painting there? No one will ever see that." He said, "I see it. And God will see it." That's faithfulness. Whether anyone else ever knows or not, you should be faithful in the secret things.

When you're in that hotel room, Mr. Businessman, that's what you are—when you're away at that convention, when you are by yourself, when nobody else knows.

C. Be Faithful in the Sacred Things

And I'll tell you one other thing: you should be faithful in the sacred things. That's the root of all faithfulness. Just keep your heart warm and right with God. The Apostle Paul said, in 2 Timothy 4:6, "*For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.*"—I have finished my course—"henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (2 Timothy 4:6–8).

He's waiting in prison to be executed. I can see the old Apostle, as he signs his name to this Epistle. About that time, there comes a knock at the door, and the guard says, "Paul, get your things. It's time to go. I hate to tell you this, but they're going to execute you. They're going to take off your head."

And I see that old Apostle, as he gets his old ragged coat, and he goes out. He's got a stooped body. I see those little squinty eyes, and that grey hair. I see him now as he limps, because he's been stoned, he's been shipwrecked, and he's been beaten. And

there he goes. And the Roman guard is beside him. And then, the Roman guard says, “Hey, who is that humming?” Old Paul said, “Pardon me, I didn’t know I was humming. It’s just a little habit I have.” “Well, what’s that song you’re humming?” “Oh,” he says, “just a little song: ‘It will be worth it all when we see Jesus.’” And he says, “Well, you’re a strange duck. You mean, you’re not afraid to die?” “Well,” he says, “you see, I’m used to it.” He said, “What do you mean, you’re used to it?” “Oh, I die daily.” He said, “I don’t understand you, mister.”

But they go on, and they put the old Apostle there on that chopping block. He stretches his neck out, and before the blade falls, the executioner says, “Paul, do you have any last words?” He says, “Oh, yes, brother. Jesus Christ is Lord.” Then the axe falls, and the head rolls.

The next scene is Heaven. I don’t know what took place there, but I think I know. The Apostle looks into the face of his dear Savior, and he says, “Lord Jesus, I wasn’t big. I wasn’t strong. I didn’t end up wealthy. I was kind of ugly; didn’t have a good voice, or a pleasing personality. But Lord, I kept the faith. I fought a good fight. I finished my course.”

I don’t know what the Lord said to him, but I think I know. I’m almost certain of it. The Lord said: *“Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things”* (Matthew 25:21).

Do you know why he’s such a great Christian? Friend, I’ll tell you why he was such a great Christian. He was faithful to the faith; he was faithful to the fight; and, he was faithful to the finish.

Conclusion

Do you know what I want in my own life, John? I want to end well. I want to finish my course with joy. And do you know what I want for you? I want you to end well. I want you to do well. I want you to be faithful. It is the fruit of the Spirit that is faithfulness.

Joy Is an Inside Job

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: August 13, 1989

Main Scripture Text: Galatians 5:22

Outline

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- I. The Difference Between Happiness and Joy
- II. Why Joy Is So Important
 - A. Joy Is Important to Winning People to Jesus Christ
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 - A. Cleansing
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Introduction

Galatians chapter 5 and verse 22—be finding it here. We'll share that with you, in just a moment. Before you read it, and before I read it to you, I want to ask you a question. How long do you believe you could smile, and keep on smiling, without stopping? How long could you hold a smile on your face? Do you know what the *Guinness World Book of Records* is? Ten hours and five minutes.

A little lady named Lisa Lester, a little girl, smiled for 10 hours and 5 minutes, without breaking that smile. She broke the old record of 7 hours and 32 minutes. And then, she had to stop smiling. And that is illustrative of what I'm talking about, dear friend. I'm going to be talking to you, today, about joy that goes far beyond a smile. A smile is outward. Joy is inward. A smile, at its best, can last a few hours. Joy is eternal.

As a matter of fact, do you know what the shortest verse in the Bible is? You say, "Oh, I know that. It's '*Jesus wept*' (John 11:35)." You're wrong. "*Jesus wept*" (John 11:35) is the shortest verse in English, but not in Greek. In Greek, the shortest verse is 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 and verse 16, which says, "*Rejoice evermore*" (1 Thessalonians 5:16). Not 10 hours—"Rejoice evermore."

And I want to talk to you, today, about how to have fullness of joy. And I'm going to remind you that joy is an inside job. And I want to show you, even before I get into the message, of the difference between happiness and joy, because we live in a generation that's seeking happiness. "Don't worry, be happy"—everybody thinks that's good

advice. That's terrible advice. Dear friend, you're not to be happy all of the time. You'd get tired of being happy all of time, even if you could be happy all of the time.

I. The Difference Between Happiness and Joy

What's the difference between happiness and joy? Happiness depends upon what happens, and, therefore, we call it *happiness*. If your *hap* is good, you're happy. If your *hap* is bad, you're unhappy. But if you put your trust in happiness, then you're going to be a victim of circumstances, because your happenstance will change. But you see, God never changes. The Bible doesn't tell us to rejoice in circumstances. The Bible says, "*Rejoice in the Lord*" (Philippians 3:1). And therefore, since He never changes, the Bible says, "*Rejoice evermore*" (1 Thessalonians 5:16).

Now happiness is like cosmetics. Joy is like character. Happiness comes, dear friend, from outside circumstances. Joy comes from within. And happiness meets surface needs. Joy meets your deepest needs. Happiness is like a thermometer—it registers conditions. Joy is like a thermostat—it regulates conditions. Now happiness, many times, evaporates, and disappears, in times of suffering. But joy frequently intensifies, in times of suffering. Joy intensifies, and often, as we're going to see from the Scripture, is intertwined with suffering.

Now happiness always works best—and, there's nothing wrong with being happy—but happiness always functions best, when happiness is rooted in joy. Now friend, if you have joy, and then you overlay that joy with happiness, that's a wonderful thing. But my dear friend, joy, on the other hand, is not dependent upon happiness, and may function even better, when happiness is taken away.

So it's cruel to say to people, sometimes, who are in sorrow, "Smile, and be happy." That's cruel. People are not to be happy all of the time. There's no way that people can paste a smile on their face, and go around with a saccharine grin all of the time. You're not expected to. The Bible says, of the Lord Jesus, in Isaiah chapter 53 and verse 3: "*He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief*" (Isaiah 53:3). And yet, the Bible spoke of the joy of the Lord. The Bible says, of the Lord, that He "*hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows*" (Psalm 45:7).

It may be mockery for us to sing, "I'm in-right, outright, upright, downright, happy all the time." That would probably be a downright lie. You're not happy, in-right, outright, and downright, all the time. You see, dear friend, this is a life of tragedy, sorrow, heartache, pain, pang, moan, groan, and woe. Yet, in sorrow, and heartache, and difficulty, you can have joy. Happiness is an outside job. Joy is an inside job.

II. Why Joy Is So Important

Now I want you to see why joy is so important.

A. Joy Is Important to Winning People to Jesus Christ

Friend, listen. Joy is important to winning people to Jesus Christ. Did you know that we have nothing that is more winsome and more attractive to bringing people to Jesus Christ than the joy of the Lord? A cold, dry faith has no appeal. David, the man who wrote the Psalms, got out of fellowship with God, and he lost his joy. And when he lost his joy, he stopped being a soul winner. And he prayed, in Psalm 51, verses 12 through 13, *“Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee”* (Psalm 51:12–13). What is David saying? David said, “When I get my joy back, I’ll be a soul winner.”

You see, joy is the proof that what we have is real, and that it satisfies. Did you hear me? Joy is the proof that what we have is real, and that it satisfies. Joy is necessary in bringing unsaved people to Jesus Christ.

B. Joy Is Important for Living the Christian Life

I’ll tell you something else. Joy is necessary just to living the Christian life. The Bible says we are to *“serve the LORD with gladness”* (Psalm 100:2). Serve Him with gladness. Nehemiah said, *“The joy of the LORD is your strength”* (Nehemiah 8:10). It is joy that lubricates life. It is joy that lifts the burden. It is joy that takes the pain and the dreariness out, and the weariness out of any work. I can tell you from personal testimony that there are times when I get weary in body, and weary in mind, and I begin to praise the Lord, and His joy floods my soul and my body, and it literally energizes my physical frame—that the joy of the Lord is strength.

III. Four Ingredients of Joy

Now there are four ingredients to joy. And I’ve searched for a text, and I believe I’ve found one over here, in Romans chapter 5. And I want you to turn with me to Romans chapter 5. And in Romans chapter 5, I want you to see what I consider to be the four qualities of life that bring joy that makes life worth living.

A. Cleansing

Now I’m reading, first of all, Romans chapter 5, verses 1 and 2. And you’re going to find, in these verses, the first ingredient, which I’m going to call a cleansed life, or cleansing. Because, to be clean and to be pure before God, to know that you know that you know that you know there’s no sin between you and God, causes indescribable joy.

Now watch this—Romans 5, verses 1 and 2: *“Therefore being justified by faith, we*

have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice" (Romans 5:1–2). Do you see it? "*Wherein we stand, and rejoice.*" Now what he's saying is that joy comes from having peace with God. And peace with God comes by the grace of God. And the grace of God brings justification. And that justification brings joy. And so what he's saying is, faith brings justification; justification brings peace; and peace brings joy to know that your sin is forgiven.

Now what is justification? Well, *justification* is a legal term. You know, the Bible says that righteousness is reckoned to us (Romans 4:9). And the word *reckoned* is a bookkeeping term. Now I want you to imagine your life, and everything that you've done, is recorded in God's book. And by the way, it is. The Bible says, "*Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment*" (Matthew 12:36). The Bible says that there's not a thought in my mind, but God knows it afar off (Psalm 139:2). He knows our words, our thoughts, our deeds, and our failures. He knows everything that you've ever done, every lie that you ever told, every penny you ever stole, every vile thought, and every lustful deed. He knows all of the things that you ought to have done that you did not do, and all of these have been put in a ledger. All right, over here is that ledger, those horrible things that you've done.

Now what is justification? Remember, *reckoning* is a bookkeeping term, when God justifies you. He takes all of those things that you've done, and He takes them off this side of the ledger, and He puts them over here on this side of the ledger, on Jesus' side of the ledger. He takes all of your sin, and He puts them on Jesus' side of the ledger. And Jesus writes across all of those sins, "paid in full," with the crimson blood of Calvary. And all of those things are transferred over to that side of the ledger. But justification is not finished yet. Then, God takes all of the righteousness, the holiness, and the purity of Jesus Christ that is inherently His, and He takes that, and He puts it on this side of the ledger, on your side of the ledger. And the Bible says He imputes to you righteousness (Romans 4:6). Now friend, that is called *justification*. And it means that we are justified, that the righteousness of God is imputed to us.

Now when that happens, we are clean; and, when we're clean, dear friend, we have this great joy. You know, Jesus took 70, and He sent them out, and He gave them great power. And then, He sent them out two by two. When they came back, they were leaping, and they were dancing. They were so happy. They said, "Lord, oh, it's wonderful!" They said, "Even the demons were subject to us in your name" (Luke 10:17).

And then, this is what Jesus said, in Luke chapter 10 and verse 20—he said, "*Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven*" (Luke 10:20). Oh, friend, better

than having demons cringe before you is that you've been justified, that your name is written in Heaven on God's side of the ledger. Now that is justification.

Now having said that, if cleansing brings joy, do you know what takes the joy out of your life? Sin. When you as a Christian allow sin to creep back into your life after you've been justified, that stultifies, and that destroys that joy. That's the reason that David prayed, in Psalm 51 and verse 12: *"Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit"* (Psalm 51:12). He didn't pray, "God, have my salvation restored." Once you get saved, you can't lose it. But you can lose the joy of your salvation. And there's only one thing can take the joy of your salvation.

Friend, listen. If you were to go to the doctor, and the doctor were to tell you that you have cancer, that can't take the joy out of your heart. If you have a broken home, that can't take the joy out of your heart. If you have a wayward child, that can't take the joy out of your heart. If your house burns down, that can't take the joy out of your heart. *There's only one thing that can steal your joy, and that is sin.*

You say, "What if somebody does something mean to me?" That can't take the joy out of your heart. That takes the joy out of his heart. Your reaction to what he does to you can take the joy out of your heart. And by the way, I've told you before, *if you want to see what a person is, don't watch their actions. Watch their reactions.* See, what you see in me, right now, you're seeing my actions. You're watching me. I'm watching you, too. You don't look so good, either.

All right now, watch. You're seeing my actions. I'm aware of the fact that you're watching me. I try to wear a clean shirt. I comb my hair. I'm thinking about what I'm saying. What you're seeing, right now, is something that is planned, okay? I know what I'm about to say. It's planned. You are watching my actions. If you want to see the real Adrian Rogers, don't watch my actions—watch my reactions, when somebody heads me off on the expressway, steals a parking place, or insults me, and see how I react. And then, you'll know what I am, right? See, you can plan your actions. Your reactions show the real you.

Now what I'm trying to say is this: If somebody comes up, and spits in my face for preaching the gospel, that can't take my joy. That takes his joy. As a matter of fact, it could only increase my joy. The Bible says, when men persecute you, to do what? *"Rejoice, and be exceeding glad"* (Matthew 5:12). But if my reaction is bad, that takes my joy. Friend, there's only one thing that can take your joy out of your heart. Not what your children do, not what your wife did, not what your husband did, not what circumstances do—there's only one thing that can take the joy out of your life. It is sin, and only one kind of sin. Do you want to know what kind? Yours. That's the only kind of sin—not somebody else's sin, but your sin.

You see, we are justified. When we're made right, then that burden of sin is gone.

There's nothing between us and our Lord. And that's where the joy begins to come. It's not happiness. It is joy that knows there nothing between my soul and the Savior. And the only thing that can erode that away is when you allow sin to come back in. And then, you're going to have to be like David, and say, O Lord, "*Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation*" (Psalm 51:12). You got it, when you got saved. You may need to have it restored, if you've allowed sin to come back into your heart, and into your life. I guess I've said a thousand times. I'll say it one more time. *The most miserable man on earth is not an unsaved man. The most miserable man on earth is a saved man out of fellowship with God, who has lost the joy of his salvation—more miserable than an unsaved man.*

B. Confidence

All right now, number one, if you would have this joy, there is this cleansing, that cleansing. We're justified. And then, the Bible says, we rejoice. Here's a second thing. All right? Not only cleansing, but confidence. Now continue to read—Romans chapter 5, verses 1 and 2: "*Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope*" (Romans 5:1–2). Now look at the next two words I've added there, or just read in God's Word: "*Rejoice in hope.*"

Now what does the word *hope* mean? The word *hope* means, "confidence based on the Word of God." It doesn't mean, *maybe so*, like, "I *hope* it's going to happen," as we use in our colloquial expressions. But it literally means, "a rock-ribbed confidence based on the Word of God."

Now do you know why a Christian has joy? Because a Christian has confidence. A Christian knows that, no matter what happens to him, "*all things work together for good*" (Romans 8:28)—are worked together, by God, for good, for God's glory, and, therefore, our good. We have this confidence. You see, we "*rejoice in hope*" (Romans 5:1–2). Do you know the saddest word in the English language is? It is *hopeless*. The situation is hopeless. Now I want you to listen to me this morning. If you are a child of God, there is no situation for you that is hopeless. And that's the reason that you have joy. You see, dear friend, hope is confidence.

Now the Bible teaches here, in Romans chapter 5, verse 2, that we "*rejoice in hope*" (Romans 5:2). Paul repeated the same thing, in Romans chapter 12 and verse 12, where he says, "*Rejoicing in hope*" (Romans 12:12). You see, friend, I know that no matter what happens to me, no matter what—I don't care; you name the worst thing you can think of—I know that my God is greater, when I love Him. You say, "What if they tell you you're going to die in five minutes?" Okay, I'm going to Heaven. I'm going to be made like the Lord Jesus Christ.

You see, this joy is steadfast in sorrow. This joy is triumphant in tribulation. The Apostle Paul said, *“I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation”* (2 Corinthians 7:4). He said that, in 2 Corinthians 7 and verse 4: *“exceeding joyful in all our tribulation.”* The little lady said, “Well, if God gives us tribulation, He expects us to *tribulate*.” No, He expects you to rejoice.

This joy, dear friend, is lasting in losses. Hebrews 10, verse 34: *“For ye...took joyfully the spoiling of your goods”* (Hebrews 10:34). That’s what the writer of Hebrews said: *“For ye...took joyfully the spoiling of your goods.”* What if you came home from church, today, and found out your house had been broken in to. I mean, everything gone. Your jewelry gone, your mementoes, your television gone, your microwave gone—it’s all gone, just gone. Or, maybe come home—worse than that—your house is burned down to the ground; it’s smoldering. Would you still have joy? Well, if you got your joy from your house, you wouldn’t still have joy. But if you got your joy from the Lord, and you still have the Lord, you’d still have joy. See what I’m talking about?

You see, the Bible never says, “Rejoice in your house.” The Bible never says, “Rejoice in your furniture.” The Bible never says, “Rejoice in your automobile.” It says, *“Rejoice in the Lord”* (Philippians 4:4). And therefore, it says of these Christians, they *“took joyfully the spoiling of [their] goods”* (Hebrews 10:34).

I got a letter from a lady the other day—well, some time back now. She wrote me a letter about this subject. Now she’s a member of this congregation. I’ll not call her name. But this is what she said—she said: “I’m writing to tell you of something.” She said some other things, and I’m breaking in the middle of the letter: “I’m writing to tell you of something that happened to me, today, because I would like for you to know of this one instance where a particular sermon or message hit the spot in a very powerful way. There must be many others who could give accounts of similar occurrences.” And by the way, it’s good to know at least one lady listens. “As I was getting ready to go to work this morning, I was listening to my Steve Green tape.” You know, Steve Green’s a great Gospel singer. “I was listening to my Steve Green tape, as I frequently do, and in particular, to the song, ‘That’s Where the Joy Comes From.’” And then, she quotes a line from that song:

Thieves may try to rob my treasure
But they don’t hold the key
That leads into the sanctuary
Where God’s Spirit lives in me. (John Elliott)

“I left home at seven and turned on the radio and what was playing? “That’s Where the Joy Comes From.”

I have a 30-minute drive to work, and usually spend the time listening to the radio, and preparing for the day. This morning, I found myself thinking about a certain one of

your sermons, a message referring to the sources of your joy. I remembered you saying, “If a tragic or traumatic thing happens—a child dies, your car is stolen, your home burglarized, valuable possessions lost—and you lose your joy, then you might well consider where your joy comes from. If your joy is in things, or even a person—a child—and you lose that, you can lose your joy. But if your joy is in the Lord, if your joy comes from the Lord, and He is enthroned in your heart, that joy cannot be taken away.

Soon after I arrived at work, one of my sons called to tell me that, when he drove to our house about 10 a.m., he found all of the doors open, and the house terribly ransacked, and quite a lot of our belongings stolen. Right then, I realized that the Lord had been preparing me for this that very morning. I thought of the words of the song, and what you had said in your message, that came so clearly to my mind. If I ever wondered what it’s like when God speaks to a person, I know now.

When I got home, I saw the awful sight. I never even felt like shedding a tear. It took us all afternoon to straighten up the mess the burglars left. And yet, this feeling of joy kept popping out. I want you to know that day is a day I will never forget—not because of the burglary, but because of the way that God spoke to me, and prepared me through your message. And the fact that I really saw, today, that thieves may rob my treasures, but they don’t hold the key that leads into the sanctuary where God’s Spirit lives in me.”

Then she says, “Glory!”—with an exclamation point—“Even if the thieves come back, how great to know that my joy is protected!” Isn’t that a beautiful letter? See, that’s what I’m talking about, friend. And it’s not just a theory; it is real.

You need to get your joy in the Lord. You see, the Bible says, “*Rejoice in hope*” (Romans 5:2). That is, we rejoice in confidence. The devil doesn’t have that key that can get inside that treasury. One of my daughters wrote a poem when she was in the 12th grade. Here’s what she said:

Joy thru my teardrops, and gains thru my losses;
Beauty for ashes, and crowns for my crosses;
He binds up my wounds, and He dries all my tears,
Calms every storm, and He conquers my fears.
He gives me hinds’ feet to walk on high places;
He floods my soul with His heavenly graces.
When I am weak, then His strength makes me strong.
I know I can trust Him, He’s never been wrong.
Trials may come, and temptations assail me;
Though I may falter, He never will fail me.
So Satan, I bind you in His holy name,
For at the cross Jesus’ blood overcame.

When the doubt comes, when I'm lonely, when my heart is sad, I'll lift
up my eyes to my Savior above,

And Jesus will make me glad. (Janice Rogers Edmiston)

Friend, how true that is, "Joy thru my teardrops, and gains through my losses."

C. **Commitment**

You see, dear friend, what is this joy? Well, it's rooted in cleansing—justification. It is rooted in confidence—"We...rejoice in hope" (Romans 5:2). Nothing is hopeless to the child of God. And then, my dear friend, I want to say that it comes, thirdly, from commitment. Look again here, in Romans chapter 5, verses 1 and 2: "*Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God*"—now, watch this—"through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). Now what does *Lord* mean? It means, "sovereign." It means, "authority." It means, "boss." The Apostle Paul said, "I have made Jesus Lord; and therefore, I rejoice—I rejoice."

Now listen, friend. There must be a commitment. You see, I said. There's cleansing and confidence; but, that cleansing and that confidence comes with that commitment. You can't separate them. You can't have the cleansing, and you can't have the confidence, unless you have the commitment to the lordship of Jesus Christ. And it is that commitment that is the secret of cleansing, and staying clean.

F. B. Meyer is one of my favorite authors. Our bookstore has a lot of books by F. B. Meyer. He was an Englishman, a Britisher. He's dead now, in Heaven. He's not dead; he's really kicking up gold dust. But friend, he is there rejoicing in the Lord. But he didn't always have joy. F. B. Meyer, in one of his books, told about the secret of his joy, and how he found joy. And I want you to listen to what he said. I'm going to read it to you. He said:

"Joy began in my life one solemn night, when I knelt before Christ, and had the holy light of His Spirit turned upon one thing in my heart that was filthy. I had accumulated it there, and I hardly knew it. I had been living a very unsettled life for some time, when a young fellow came and spoke in my church, which led me to feel that he possessed the secret which I did not have myself. I came to him the next morning at seven o'clock. I said, 'You will excuse my coming, won't you? The fact is I am very unhappy. I am a Christian minister, and my people expect a great deal of me. But my heart is full of evil, and I cannot deal with it. Will you please give me your secret?' 'Have you given yourself entirely to Jesus Christ?' he asked. I replied, 'In a general way, I have.' 'If you have not done so entirely, go get alone with God, and settle it.'"

F. B. Meyer said, "That night, I knelt by my bed, with the door of my room locked, and resolved that I would not sleep, until I had settled the matter, and surrendered everything to Jesus. It seemed as if Jesus Christ were standing at my side, and as if I

took from my pocket a large bunch of keys, which I generally carry, when I am at home. I took from that bunch one tiny key, which I kept; and then, held to Jesus the bunch with one key missing. And I said to him, 'Here are the keys to my life.' He looked at me sadly, and said, 'Are they all there?' 'All but one tiny one to a small cupboard; it's so small that it could not possibly amount to anything.' He replied, 'My child, if you cannot trust me with everything, you cannot trust me with anything.' Satan whispered to me, 'You can't give that thing up. Besides, if you let Christ have His way, no telling what He'll ask next. Don't give it to Him.' At last, I said, 'Lord. I can't give you the key. But at least I'm willing for You to come and take it.' And He said, 'It was as I expected.' I seemed to hold out my hand, and He came, and opened my fingers, and took that key from me. Then, He went straight to that cupboard, unlocked, and opened it. And I saw there a thing that was terrible and hideous. And He said, 'This must go out, and you must never go this way again.'"

Then, F. B. Meyer said, "At that moment, He took the thing from me, and He took the desire for it out of my soul, and I began to hate it. Then, I yielded myself absolutely to Him, and said, 'From this night, Lord, I want You to do as You will with my life.' The next morning, I expected a sort of a hallelujah feeling. But I was as calm and quiet as I am now. I only had a delightful sense that I did belong to Jesus Christ. And a hundred times that day, I said to myself, 'I am His! I am absolutely His.'" He said that was the secret of his joy.

I wonder, is there one small key that may be spoiling your joy? The Apostle Paul spoke of our Lord Jesus Christ. And someone has well said, "If he's not Lord of all, He's what?—not Lord at all." Hmm?

D. Communion

All right now, watch. Paul is talking about joy, and he's talking about cleansing—justification. Then he's talking, dear friend, about confidence—hope. And then, he's talking about commitment—lordship. One last thing, and that's communion. Just go on down to Romans chapter 5 and verse 11: "*And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement*" (Romans 5:11). You see, dear friend, communion with our Lord. You remember, the Bible says, "*The fruit of the Spirit is... joy*" (Galatians 5:22). You see, you rejoice in the Lord. It's the fruit of the Spirit. Joy is not found in circumstances; it's found in a person.

Just jot these verses down. Philippians 4:4: "*Rejoice in the Lord always*" (Philippians 4:4). John 15, verse 11—Jesus said, "*These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you*" (John 15:11). John chapter 17, verse 13—Jesus is praying, and He says to the Father, "*And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves*" (John 17:13).

Friend, when you commune in the Lord Jesus Christ, “He is the vine, you are the branch” (John 15:5); and, when you commune in the Lord Jesus Christ, His joy comes into you. Not an imitation of his joy—it’s not your joy; it is His joy. And you rejoice in the Lord, and you rejoice through the Lord, because joy is the fruit of the Spirit. You have that cleansed life; and then, when you have that confidence that He’s over all; and then, my dear friend, when you come to the Lord Jesus Christ, and make a commitment, and say, “I am yours, totally yours,” then, friend, you just rejoice in the Lord. Not in anything else but in God Himself. You don’t produce this joy. It’s the fruit of the Spirit. It just is produced by the Spirit in your life; and you bear this joy.

Conclusion

Now I’m finished; but let me tell you something. Look right up here at me. Friend, if you don’t hear anything else I say, I want to tell you this, and I mean it from my heart. I don’t care how much you own; I don’t care how handsome you are; I don’t care how beautiful you are; I don’t care how so-called *happy* you are; I don’t care what your family is like; if you don’t have joy, for you, life is meaningless. No matter what else you own—you may be Donald Trump. I wouldn’t trade places with Donald Trump for 20 seconds, if he doesn’t know the joy of Jesus. Friend, listen. If you don’t have joy, life is meaningless.

And I want to tell you something else. To rejoice is a choice. That’s the reason the Bible tells us, “*Rejoice in the Lord*” (Philippians 3:1). That means you don’t have to, or the Bible wouldn’t command us to. It’s not automatic. It’s a choice. To rejoice is a choice. And that choice begins with choosing Jesus, knowing Jesus. No Jesus, *and no joy. But know Jesus, and you’ll know joy.* Amen?

Let’s pray. Father God, I thank you for joy that is steadfast in sorrow, triumphant in trouble, lasting in losses, and triumphant in tribulation. And I pray, dear God, if there are members here who’ve not given Jesus that small key, that they will do so; and, if there are people who’ve not given Jesus their lives, and have been justified, Lord, that today, they might come to Him, and trust Him for salvation. In His name I pray. Amen.

Peace in the Midst of Your Storm

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: August 20, 1989

Main Scripture Text: Galatians 5:22

Outline

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- II. Entreaty: His Prayers Protect Me Here
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Introduction

Galatians chapter 5, verse 22: *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace”* (Galatians 5:22)—and that’s the element we’re talking about today. We’ve already talked about that love, and that joy; and, today, we’re talking about the peace that is the fruit of the Spirit.

Now when we talk about peace, we need to understand what kind of peace we’re talking about. First of all, you see, there is peace *with* God. Now you don’t have peace *with* God until you become a child of God—till you’re saved—because the Bible says, in Romans chapter 5, verse 1: *“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ”* (Romans 5:1). That means the war’s over; the hostilities have ceased; Jesus has conquered; we have surrendered, and there’s peace *with* God. Amen?

Now I hope you have that—I hope you have peace *with* God. But that’s not what Galatians chapter 5, verse 22, is talking about. Galatians chapter 5, verse 22, is talking about the peace *of* God. Now there are some people that have peace *with* God who don’t have God’s kind of peace in their heart—the peace *of* God.

Colossians chapter 3, verse 15, says, *“And let the peace of God rule in your hearts”* (Colossians 3:15). Do you have the peace of God ruling in your heart? Or, do you remember that wonderful passage over there, in Philipians chapter 4, verse 7? The Bible says, *“And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus”* (Philipians 4:7)—the peace of God.

Now when the Lord Jesus Christ was facing that cross, He made out His last will and testament. And He mentioned you in His will. Did you know that? Jesus Christ willed His body to Joseph of Arimathea for a while. He willed His mother to John the Apostle. But do you know what He left you? He left you His peace. That's what the Lord Jesus said, in John chapter 14, verse 27: *"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you:"*—and then, He said—*"not as the world giveth, give I unto you"* (John 14:27). It's not the kind of peace that the world gives, and, as someone has well said, "Therefore, it's not the kind of peace that the world can take away." It is supernatural peace. It is the peace of God that passes all understanding. It is the peace of God that is to rule in your heart.

Now we need to understand what peace is. This kind of peace is not the absence of problems. You will never have the absence of problems as long as you are on this earth. "Man that is born of woman is full of trouble" (Job 14:1). Amen? That's just true. You're not going to have the absence of problems. Peace is not the absence of problems; it is the addition of power, as we're well going to see.

I've tried to find an illustration of this kind of peace, and I believe I've found one over here, in Matthew chapter 14. It's the story of Jesus walking on the water. And I want to tell you this is more than a miracle. It is a miracle—it literally, actually happened; I believe it with all of my heart. But it was a miracle with a message; and, God is illustrating to us here, in Matthew chapter 14, what real peace is—peace in the midst of your storm.

And if you're in a storm right now, I want to show you how to have peace. "Well," you say, "Pastor, you don't have a message for me, because I'm not in a storm. Everything is fine. I am just sailing along smoothly." Are you? I'm so happy for you. Enjoy it. And wait a while—sooner or later, you're going to be in a storm. And so you just store this up in your heart, if you're not in a storm right now, so you can have peace in the midst of your storm. I remind you, one more time, the peace that we're talking about is not the absence of problems; it is the addition of power. And how well God has illustrated it here, in this story.

Do you know—life is often like a storm? David, who wrote the Psalms, said, in Psalm 42, verse 7: *"All thy waves and thy billows have come over me"* (Psalm 42:7). Now he was speaking poetically, but he was speaking graphically. It seems like, sometimes, we're just engulfed in a storm, and all of God's waves and billows come over us.

Notice Matthew chapter 14, verse 22: *"And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away. And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone. But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the*

disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased. Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God. And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Gennesaret” (Matthew 14:22–34).

Now there’s the story from the Word of God. And dear friend, it tells us, clearly and plainly, how to have peace in the midst of our storms. Now if we were to spell peace—p-e-a-c-e—perhaps we can understand what the message is about, today. I want to give you five words that spell *peace*, and they all come out of this story. I want you to see what they are.

I. Providence: His Purpose Brought Me Here

The very first word stands for “p”; it is *providence*. So I want you to put down the word *providence*. And look, in verse 22: “*And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side*” (Matthew 14:22).

Now the Lord Jesus Christ told them to get into that ship. They were not in that ship because they were out of the will of God; they were in that ship because they were in the will of God. Jesus Christ told them to go, and Jesus Christ providentially led them into a storm. Now don’t get the idea, dear friend, that, if you’re in the will of God, you’ll not have any storms. They were in the will of God, and they went right into a storm. “Well,” you say, “maybe Jesus didn’t know there was a storm.” Are you telling me that the Lord Jesus Christ did not know there was a storm there, that day? Of course He knew that a storm was brewing. He was the One who could walk on the water. He was the One who could say to the waves, “Peace, be still,” and they would be still.

The Bible says He knew all things. He knew that there was going to be a storm. And knowing that, the Lord Jesus Christ led them into a storm. You know, there is a false theology that goes around today, saying, “If we’re just right with God, we won’t have any problems; we won’t have any storms in our lives. It will be all honey and no bees. We’ll live a serene life and die happy in our old age.” There are two things wrong with that: number one, it’s not true; number two, it’s not biblical. I want to tell you, dear friend, that you’re going to have storms. There are two kinds of storms that come to us in life. Sometimes, they’re the storms that we ourselves cause. Jonah got into that kind of a

storm—didn't he? Jonah was out of the will of God, and he got in a storm because he was out of the will of God. That's what we call a *correcting storm*. But the disciples got into a storm because they were in the will of God. That's what we call a *perfecting storm*.

But whether it is a correcting storm or a perfecting storm, God was over all. I mean, the Bible speaks of the winds and the waves that obey Him. The Bible says, in Psalm 42, verse 7: "*Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts*" (Psalm 42:7). Psalm 148, verse 8, says, "*Hail; snow, and vapours; stormy wind fulfilling his word*" (Psalm 148:8). God is in control. And so if you're in a storm right now, you know that, if God did not cause it, God allowed it; it did not take Him by surprise. There's nothing that comes to you but that God knows about it, and that He is over it, beyond it, through it, above it, and in it. He is the providential God. And dear friend, if you're in a storm, I want you to say, "Providence: His purpose brought me here—His purpose brought me here." It didn't take Him by surprise. *One thing you'll never hear* God say *is this*: "Oops"—*never. Nothing takes Him by* surprise.

The very first word—if you want to have peace in the midst of your storm—just remember the word *providence*—providence, providence, providence. "All things works together for good to those who love God, who are the called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28). Providence: His purpose brought me here.

II. Entreaty: His Prayers Protect Me Here

The next word begins with the letter "e," and that word is *entreaty*. Entreaty: His prayers protect me here. He is entreating for you. He is praying for you in the midst of your storm, and His prayer brings a mantle of protection over you.

Now look, if you will, in verse 23 of this same chapter: "*And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up to a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone*" (Matthew 14:23). And what was Jesus Christ doing up there on the mountain? He was entreating for His disciples; He was praying for them. You say, "Pastor, how do you know He was praying for them?" Well, Mark tells us, in Mark chapter 6, verses 47 to 48, where the same story is told (Mark 6:47–48). Mark says, "*And he saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary*" (Mark 6:48).

Now get the picture: Here they are. The waves are boisterous. They are toiling at the oars. Their backs are arching. The perspiration is on their brow. Their knuckles are white; their lips are trembling. They're pulling, and the wind is contrary. Where is Jesus? He is there on the mountain, and He has His eyes on them! And He is praying for them—He's praying for them. He is entreating the Father for them. In your storm, I want to remind you, the Bible teaches that Jesus ever lives to make intercession for you (Hebrews 7:25).

Sometimes people say, “Would you put me on your prayer list?” I don’t have room for everybody on my prayer list, but I can guarantee you’re on His prayer list. Jesus Christ has you on His prayer list. And the wonderful thing is, His prayers are always answered. He said, “Father I thank You that You always hear Me” (John 11:42). If you have a problem—I mean, a real big problem—how would you feel if you knew, in the next room—I mean, right outside the door—Jesus Christ were there, in a literal body, on His knees, praying for you? How would you feel? You’d say, “You mean, right outside that door, Jesus Christ is there, praying for me?” Well, friend, it is nonetheless true that He is now in Glory, praying for you.

He is interceding; He is entreating the Father on your behalf. He has His eyes upon you. “His eyes are on the sparrow, and I know He watches me.” What a comfort to know—what a comfort to know! So if you’re in a storm, first of all, put down the word *providence*, and say, “His purpose brought me here.” Put down the word *entreaty*, and say, “His prayers protect me here.”

III. Assurance: His Presence Comes to Me Here

All right—p-e-a. Write the word *assurance*. Assurance: His presence comes to me here. Jesus Christ will be more real to you in your storm than in any other time.

Those waves that seemed to threaten them—that storm was really but a superhighway that brought Him to them. Look, in verses 24 and 25: “*But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with the waves: for the wind was contrary. And in the forth watch of the night*”—watch it—“*Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea*” (Matthew 14:24–25). The very sea that they thought was going to drown them was the vehicle that brought Him to them. He came to them; He always comes to you in the midst of your storm. You may not recognize Him; but, if you are a child of God, He is there. Isaiah chapter 43, verses 1 and 2: “*But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee*” (Isaiah 43:1–2).

The Lord is always with you in your storm. He came to them walking on the water—He came to them! Study the stories of people who have been in storms and problems. The three Hebrew children in the fiery furnace: When the king looked into the fiery furnace, he said, “Didn’t we put three men in this fiery furnace? I see four! And the fourth is like the Son of God” (Daniel 3:24–25). Jesus walked with them. He was with Daniel in the lion’s den. He was with the disciples in the upper room. They were there after the resurrection. After the crucifixion, they were trembling behind closed doors.

And the Bible says that Jesus appeared to them in their midst. And in John chapter 20, He said to them, *“Peace be unto you”* (John 20:19). He always appears; He always says, “Peace,” in the middle of your storm. Notice, in verse 27: *“But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I”* (Matthew 14:27). The words *it is I* in the Greek language are the words *I AM*. He is the great *I AM* in the midst of your storm.

Do you know what we need to do? We need to learn how to recognize Jesus in the storm. The disciples, at first, didn’t recognize Him. They said, “Well, it’s a ghost!” They were afraid. Now here is the point: Jesus Christ was there in the storm, but because they did not recognize His presence at first, they had no peace. Isaiah chapter 26 and verse 3: *“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee”* (Isaiah 26:3). Stayed upon Jehovah: *“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.”* Now what you need to do in your storm is to put your eyes upon the Lord Jesus. If you take them off of Jesus—that’s what Peter did; he began to sink. *“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee.”*

Romans chapter 8 and verse 6 says, *“For...to be spiritually minded is life and peace”* (Romans 8:6)—*“to be spiritually minded is life and peace.”* What is a spiritually minded person? Well, you have people who are circumstance-minded, trouble-minded, problem-minded, self-minded; some people who are spiritually minded.

You see, listen. You need to understand that there is, dear friend, this wonderful, wonderful assurance that His presence will come to you in the midst of the storm. Corrie ten Boom said this—she said: “If you look at circumstances, you look at the world, you’ll be distressed. If you look within, you will be depressed. If you look at Christ, you will be at rest.” Look at the world—you’ll be distressed. Who wouldn’t be? Look within—you’ll be depressed. Who wouldn’t be? Look at Christ—you’ll be at rest. In Colossians, the Bible says, *“Let the peace of God rule in your hearts”* (Colossians 3:15). Run free in your heart. When you lose the peace of God, you know, you’re stressed. Stress is that measurement, that degree—you’re stressed to the degree that you’ve taken your eyes from Jesus and put them on the problem; that is what stress is. Stress, my dear friend, is the measure of the degree that you have your eyes upon the storm and not upon God.

Now let me illustrate what I am talking about. In Psalm chapter 46, verses 1 through 3—listen to this: *“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble...”*—now, notice what it says: “He is present in your trouble”—*“a very present help in trouble. Therefore”*—because He is present—*“will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;”*—now, he’s not talking about a small trouble. I mean, he’s gone to the zenith here. I mean, if the earth be removed, the mountains be cast into the sea—*“though the waters thereof roar and be*

troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah” (Psalm 46:1–3). That means, “Just stop and consider this.” “God is our refuge, our strength, a very present help in time of trouble” (Psalm 46:1).

Okay, if He is, then what should you do? Well, go on down in Psalm 46 to verse 10, and hear what it is God says you should do then: “*Be still, and know that I am God*” (Psalm 46:10). Now what we fail to do when we get in the storm—we get our eyes on the waves and not on the Lord. And the difference between the amount that you have your eyes on the storm and not on God—that is called *stress*. Jesus said, “Don’t be afraid. I am here! It is Me! I have come to you in this storm.” Now my dear friend, you have the assurance. What is the assurance? He said, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5).

All right, what is it? Listen. How do you spell *peace*? Providence—His purpose brought me here; entreaty—His prayers protect me here; assurance—His presence comes to me here. And if His presence comes to me here, I need to recognize Him. At first, they didn’t recognize Him, and they were still afraid.

Down in Florida, where I was raised, we had a lot of hurricanes that came through our city of West Palm Beach. Even as a child, I learned something about hurricanes. I learned that, in the center of the very worst hurricane, the very worst storm, there is a calm spot—the eye of the storm—when the storm passes over—right? And the eye of the storm is just as calm as a millpond on a summer evening—just that calm is the eye of the storm. In your storm, there is a center that is calm; it is the heart of God—the heart of God. Right in the midst of that storm, you need to understand that He is there. He is the *I AM* in the midst of your storm.

IV. Comfort: His Power Sustains Me Here

Now there is a fourth thing I want you to learn. All right, we are talking about assurance. And now what’s the “c” stand for? The “c” stands for *comfort*—His power sustains me here.

Look, if you will, in verse 26: “*And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus*” (Matthew 14:26–29).

Now friend, it takes power to walk on the water. Do you know what the word *comfort* means? Comfort doesn’t mean just soothing somebody, saying, “There, there.” It’s a compound word—*com-fort*—and it literally means, “with strength”—“with strength.” You see, the word *comfort* means, “His power sustains me here.” Why did Jesus put them in

that ship, knowing the storm was going to come? Why did He intercede for them, and then coming walking on the water, and then allow Peter to walk on the water? Why? Was Jesus showing off? Of course not. He is teaching one of the grandest, most glorious spiritual lessons you will ever learn. God wants to give you power to sustain you in your storm.

You see, what was Jesus showing them? Listen. Don't miss it. They were afraid they were going to sink. They were afraid they were going to drown. They were afraid all of these waves were going to come over there. And the very waves that they were afraid were going to put them under Jesus is walking on. And what is He showing them? He's showing them that what looked like it was going to be over their head was already under His feet. You say, "Are you sure that's the interpretation?" Absolutely!

Let me give you a verse of Scripture that backs it up: John chapter 16, verse 33. Now Jesus is talking about peace: "*These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace...*"—okay? That's the setting. All right, listen—"*These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world*" (John 16:33). "You're going to have storms, but I have overcome them. What looks like it's over your head is under My feet."

Now you see, the Bible teaches, in the first chapter of Ephesians, that Jesus Christ is exalted. He is at the right hand of the Father. He is over everything. The Bible says He is seated at the right hand of the Father; and then, the Bible says, "*And [God] hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things*" (Ephesians 1:22). He is head over all, and all things are under His feet—okay?

Now He is head of the Church. The Church is His Body. He is our head—right? All things are under His feet—amen? Are all things under your feet? He is your head; we are His Body. All things are under His feet. Are all things under your feet? Yes! He is our head. Every one of us has enough sense to know that you can drown with your head above water—amen? Jesus is in the heavenlies. Your problem is not a problem to Him. What looks like it was going to be over their head was under His feet. That, my friend, is the comfort that you have. I don't care what your problem is—He has subdued your problem. "In this world, you shall have tribulation. Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). I hope you believe that; I hope you understand that.

Someone said, a long time ago, "The will of God will never take me where the grace of God cannot keep me." Amen? "The will of God will never take me where the grace of God cannot keep me." You'll never get in a storm but what somehow He allows it, even if He doesn't cause it. There's that providence—His purpose brought me here. There's that entreaty—His prayers protect me here. There's that assurance—His presence comes to me here. There's that comfort—His power sustains me here. And when Peter said, "Lord, let me come to You," what He's saying is, "Lord, let me put my feet where

You put Your feet. And Lord, let Your victory be my victory.” And what did Jesus say? “Come. Come. Come.” That’s exactly what He’s saying to you today: “Come on. Come on.”

V. Expectation: His Promise Assures Me Here

All right, the last letter is “e,” and it stands for *expectation*. Expectation: His promise assures me here. I can expect Him to keep His word.

Look, if you will, in verse 30: “*But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.*” Looked like old Peter wasn’t going to make it, didn’t it? Have you ever been there? I’ve been there plenty of times. “*And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased. Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.*” Now notice verse 34: “*And when they were gone over, they came into the land*” (Matthew 14:30–34). They did not go under; they went over. Why? Because, Jesus had commanded them, “Go to the other side.”

Now friend, behind *every* command *of God is the* promise *of God to carry out that command*. They didn’t need to understand *how*. *How* is none of your business; God’s going to take care of that. *We do not* live *by* explanations; *we live by* promises. I mean, if God were to explain things to us, most of us wouldn’t understand it, because “His ways are not our ways; His thoughts are not our thoughts. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so are His ways above our ways, His thoughts above our thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8–9). You just remember this, dear friend: that you have this full expectation that God will keep His word; He will see you through; He will perfect that which concerns you. Whether it be a perfecting storm or correcting storm, God is going to see you through. You get a lock on it, and you live by the promise of God, and He is going to bring you through.

I like what the great Andrew Murray said. He said, “God is willing to assume the full responsibility of a life totally committed to Him.” Isn’t that beautiful? “God is willing to assume the full responsibility of a life committed to Him.” “Well,” you say, “but Peter began to sink for a while.” But He didn’t drown. “*The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD... Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand*” (Psalm 37:23–24). Thank God for it.

“It is Well with My Soul”: it was written by a man named Horatio Spafford. He was born in 1828. He was a real estate magnate. And for a long time, his life was picture perfect. And then, the storms began to come into his life. There was a great fire in Chicago, and he lost most of his holdings—just stripped of his wealth. He had one son; the son died tragically, was killed. The storm was swirling around him. He got things

kind of straightened out, and he said to his wife, “I’m going to send you on a vacation. We’re going to send you back home to England.” So he put his wife and four daughters on that ship, and they set sail for England. Just when the ship was in sight of Wales—now remember, Spafford was staying home to take care of the business; he was going to follow later—when the ship was in sight of land, a great ferocious storm hit, and that ship sank. Many were drowned. Among those who were drowned were Spafford’s four daughters. Only his wife survived. She sent a wire back. It was a verse terse wire, very short. It said this: “Saved alone”—just the wife was saved. Spafford, heartbroken, knew that he had to set sail to England to bring back his wife. When they came to the place where that ship went down, he asked the captain, “Is this the spot?” The captain said, “This is the spot.” He took out a pen, and began to write these words:

When peace, like a river, attendeth my way
When sorrows like sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,
It is well, it is well, with my soul (Horatio Spafford).

“It is Well”—Horatio Spafford.

Now I want you to notice what he said. He said, “When peace, like a river, attendeth my way.” Oh, that’s the kind of peace we all like. The river is beautiful. It comes from a higher source, and it just keeps on flowing. We say, “Lord, just let it flow—peace like a river.” But there’s another kind of experience that comes to us: Sorrows like sea billows roll and just engulf us. “Whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to say, ‘It is well, it is well, with my soul.’”

Conclusion

You have peace in the midst of your storm. Providence: His purpose brought me here.
Entreaty: His prayers protect me here. Assurance: His presence comes to me here.
Comfort: His power sustains me here. Expectation: His promise assures me here.
Peace in the midst of the storm.

The Mighty Meek

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: October 8, 1989

Main Scripture Text: Galatians 5:22

Outline

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- I. The Meaning of Meekness
 - A. Meekness Is Not Cowardice
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Conclusion

Introduction

Take God's Word and find Galatians chapter 5 and verse 22, as we continue in this thrilling study on the fruit of the Spirit, what we are calling "Son-Ripened Fruit." Galatians chapter 5 and verse 22: *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith"* (Galatians 5:22). And then, we come to that quality in the life of our Lord Jesus called *meekness*. And all these are qualities in the life and temperament of our dear Savior. And therefore, it is fruit that He produces in us and through us that we want to call the fruit of the Spirit.

Now I have a proposition for you. I want to see if you're ready for it. Here it is. How would you like to be immensely wealthy? Not just Donald Trump. I mean, immensely wealthy. How would you like to have more money and more wealth than you could possibly ever spend?

All right, added to that, how would you like to have the wisdom to know how to use your wealth? How would you like to have wisdom, guidance, leadership, and insight—no matter what crisis you faced in life, you would know exactly and precisely what to

do? How would you like that?

All right now, thirdly, how would you like to have, along with that wealth and that wisdom, great peace and great serenity that came out of a vital relationship with God, and a way to worship God that just brought to you great peace and great rest—all three? How would you like to have that? “Well,” you say, “that’s impossible. Nobody could have that kind of wealth, wisdom, and worship.” Well, I’m going to show you the way, and I’ll let you judge, at the close of the message, whether I’m guilty of false advertising or not, okay? I want to show you how to have this incredible wealth, how to have this guidance, how to have this leadership in your life, and how to have great peace and great joy in the midst of it. And it is all wrapped up in this word: *meekness*.

Now let me talk to you about that wealth. For example, in Matthew chapter 5 and verse 5, what does the Lord Jesus say? He says, “*Blessed are the meek: for they shall*”—what?—“*inherit the earth*” (Matthew 5:5). That’s pretty wealthy. I mean, all of it. People have tried to get it all before, but nobody ever has. But the Bible says, “*Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth*” (Matthew 5:5). That’s indescribable wealth.

And what about the wisdom and the guidance that you need? Put this verse down. Matthew chapter 25 and verse 9—God says, “If you will just get meek, I will guide you and I will teach you. You will know my way. I’ll give you wisdom for whatever circumstance you’re in, whatever crisis you face.”

And what about the rest, the peace, and the serenity that I said you can have? Well, in Matthew chapter 11 and verses 28 to 30, the Lord Jesus makes this proposition and this invitation to us. He says, “*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls*” (Matthew 11:28–29). Take my yoke upon you. Learn of my meekness. And you’re going to have this kind of rest. So now, let’s see how, therefore, this can unfold, and work out in our lives. How can we get a handle on it?

I. The Meaning of Meekness

First of all, let’s talk about the meaning of meekness. What is this thing called *meekness*? Well, let me tell you what it is not.

A. Meekness Is Not Cowardice

A lot of people think that meekness is cowardice, that, if you’re a meek person, you can’t stand up for what is right, and that you’re sort of a timid, milquetoast sort of a character. Let me tell you, once and for all, that meekness is not cowardliness.

The Lord Jesus said, *“For I am meek and lowly in heart”* (Matthew 11:29). I ask you this question: Was Jesus Christ a coward? The One who took a whip and drove the moneychangers out of the temple, would you call Him a coward? I ask you this question: The Lord Jesus, who fasted and prayed for 40 nights alone in the wilderness, and the Bible says there were wild beasts out there, do you think that man was a coward? The Lord Jesus, who set His face like a flint toward Jerusalem? The Lord Jesus, who embraced the cross, and said, *“No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself”* (John 10:18)? The Lord Jesus Christ, who sweat drops of blood in the Garden of Gethsemane? The Lord Jesus, who suffered in agony and blood? Would anybody here dare say that Jesus was a coward? He was the manliest man that ever lived. And yet, He said, *“For I am meek and lowly in heart”* (Matthew 11:29).

B. Meekness is Not Weakness

You see, meekness is not weakness, either. The only similarity between meekness and weakness is that they rhyme, that’s all. So many times, we associate meekness with weakness, but it’s just the opposite. Meekness is incredible strength. Now Bible trivia question: The Bible says, of human beings, other than the Lord Jesus, who was the meekest man who ever lived? Moses. Thank you. Give that man an extra church bulletin. Moses. Now Moses was the meekest man who ever lived (Numbers 12:3). Was Moses the weakest man? No. Moses was a commander-in-chief, a general, who led the children of Israel out of the land of bondage over toward the Promised Land. Moses was a mighty man, and a valiant man of valor, but the Bible says that Moses was a meek man. Now if you think that meekness is weakness, you’ve got another thought coming.

A while back, several weeks ago, I was in another state driving, and I saw a sign. I can’t even remember where I saw it, but what I saw wrote itself upon my mind. And this is what it said: “If you think that meekness is weakness, try spending a week being meek.” Isn’t that pretty good? “If you think that meekness is weakness, try spending a week being meek.”

Now it takes incredible strength to be meek. And let me tell you what meekness is. Meekness is strength under control. In Bible times—as in the frontier days of our country, and still in some places in the country—when they take a wild horse—a stallion—and they break that stallion, so he can be ridden upon; or, when they domesticate some kind of an animal as a workhorse, or an oxen, or a mule, they will say that he has been made meek. He has been meeked. That is, to be broken, so that he can be used, so that he can be ridden, he can be utilized. And so what is meekness? Meekness is strength under control. Have you got it? Meekness is strength under control.

C. What You Can Do with Your Abilities, Drives, and Ambitions

There was a man named Wallace Hamilton, who wrote a book called *Ride the Wild Horses*. And this book called *Ride the Wild Horses* illustrates the point I'm talking about. He says that we come into this world with all sorts of drives, instincts, proclivities, abilities, and ambitions, that are all gifts of God that the devil would like to take and pervert for his own use. But these natural gifts, these strengths, and these ambitions are all gifts of God. And what God does is not to take these things away from us, but what God does is want to bring these things under His control for His glory. But the devil, on the other hand, wants to take these things and pervert them, to bring shame upon the Lord Jesus Christ. And therefore, there are three things that you can do with those natural abilities and drives and ambitions that God has given you.

1. Self-Assertion

The very first is what I want to call self-assertion. Just assert yourself. And that means, just let the horses run wild, just let the horses do whatever they want to do. Back in the sixties, they even sloganized that idea, by saying, "Whatever is natural is beautiful, and whatever is beautiful must be right; so just, whatever you want to do, just do it."

Now the ancient people were somewhat smarter than the people of this generation in their wickedness. The ancient people, if they wanted to do something that was ungodly, wicked, and vile, if they wanted to let the horses run wild, what they would do is to take that vice, that wicked desire that they had, and they would deify it, and make a god out of it. For example, if they wanted to drink, if they wanted to get drunk, they said, "Well, let's legitimize this thing." So they got a god. They named him Bacchus. Bacchus was the god of wine. And so they worshiped the god of wine, by getting drunk. Pretty smart, huh? Smart in a perverted way, I mean.

And then, they wanted to commit adultery, and fornication, and unbridled lust; so, they said, "Let's get us a goddess. We'll name her Venus, and she'll be the goddess of sexuality and promiscuity." And so they worshiped at the altar of Venus, by committing immorality. And so they just let the horses run wild. Or, if they got angry, and they wanted to let their blood lust for revenge, hate, and war, they said, "How can we do this? Well, we'll just get us a god. We'll name him Mars—Mars, the god of war." And so they worshiped the god of war, by just simply letting the horses run wild.

Now there was a man named Nietzsche. Nietzsche was a philosopher. And Nietzsche was the apostle of letting the horses run wild. He was the apostle of self-assertion. And Adolph Hitler studied Nietzsche. Let me read to you what Nietzsche said. Nietzsche said, "Get rid of your pious priests, and their weak-livered gospel of mercy. Purge out of your souls this disease—this devil—of Christianity. Progress depends upon the strong man, and strong people. Therefore, be strong. Assert yourself. Be a

superman.” Hitler bought into that, and the gas ovens were the result.

2. Self-Restraint

All right, so there’s self-assertion—“let the horses run wild.” Then there’s another answer to what you’re going to do with these desires and these drives, and that is self-restraint. Just dampen all of those desires. Just hold yourself down, restrain yourself. Now the first way lets the horses run wild. The second way is to cripple the horse. The first person, who says, “Express yourself,” he says, “Eliminate the rider. There won’t be any rider on the horse.” The second person says, “Just cripple the horse.”

And that’s a form of Buddhism. Actually, the Buddhists believe this type of religion. They have an idea of what makes a man unhappy: The reason that people can’t get along is because they’re not at peace with themselves and other people. It is that they have all of these unbridled desires. They have all of these drives in their hearts and in their lives. And that leads to frustration. So what the Buddhists says is this: that you just bring yourself to a place where you don’t have these strong desires anymore, that you just sublimate all of your desires, that you dampen all of your desires, and that you just restrain yourself, until you come to a place of nothingness, as it were. And they call that *nirvana*. And you have achieved *nirvana*. It’s kind of like cutting off your head to get rid of a headache. And they’re in a state of nothingness like a fat Buddha. And when you’re there, that’s all right with them.

Well, the best you can say about that is that it is negative, and Christianity is not a negative faith; it is a positive faith. And God’s way is not to eliminate the rider, nor to cripple the horse; but, God’s way is to take that strength, that ambition, that drive—all that God has given you—and then, take it and yield it to the Lord Jesus Christ, and let Him control us. The Bible says, in Romans chapter 6 and verse 19, that we are to yield our members as instruments of righteousness (Romans 6:19).

3. Self-Control or Self-Surrender

Now what does God want to do? Does God want to take your abilities, your gifts, your proclivities, and does God want to cripple you? No. What God wants to do is to take all that He gave you, and control it for His glory. For example, you have a temper. Well, God says that you’re not to lose your temper, but does teach that you are to use your temper. God doesn’t want to take the temper out of you. The Bible says, “*Be ye angry, and sin not*” (Ephesians 4:26). The Bible says, when Jesus saw the moneychangers in the temple, He was moved with anger (Matthew 12:12–13). He didn’t lose His temper. He used it. Now His temper is not out of control. His temper is in control. Dear friend, if you don’t have any temper, there’s something wrong with you. Jesus wants to control that temper, and use it for His glory.

There are certain things that ought to make you good and mad. You ought to rise up against the pornography business, the dope business, and all of the slumlords, and

everything else that is turning this world into a wilderness.

And what about your tongue? The Lord Jesus Christ wants you to use your tongue, not to lose your tongue. Now the Nichols, you just sang—Jarvis Rose and Clint Nichols. They have a gift of music the world would love to get hold of, but that gift of music is being used for the Lord Jesus Christ. Now when the Lord Jesus came to Clint and Jarvis Rose, He didn't say, "Now that you're saved, I'm going to make you sound like a couple of bullfrogs. I'm going to dampen your voice. I don't want you to sing with such joy and such exuberance." Oh, no! He said, "I want you to sing as you have never sung before. I want that voice to sing the sweetest note it can sing. But now, it's under my control." It doesn't mean that it's weakness. It means that it is strength controlled.

Dear friend, this is what we need. Your tongue—that has been used to gripe and slander, and to fuss and feud—now is used to praise the Lord Jesus. You have ambition? Is ambition wrong for a Christian? No, it's not wrong for a Christian. If you don't have any ambition, you're not worth much. Dear friend, you ought to have an ambition, but not to be greedy, not to be the biggest, not to be the best, and not to be the most powerful. Your ambition ought to be like the Apostle Paul, to say, "This one thing I do. Oh, I want to be like the Lord Jesus. I want to serve Him with every ounce and inch and every nerve and fiber of my being" (Philippians 3:12–14). It is strength under control.

When I was in another city, one day I was driving down the street where I was pastor, and I saw a drunk staggering down the street. I thought I recognized him. I pulled over my car. I did. It was a young man in our community, and he was making a fool of himself. And I got out, and said, "Come. Why don't you get in my car? Let me take you home." He consented, and got in the car. I drove him home, pulled up in front of his house, put his arm around my neck, so he could walk without staggering more, brought him up the stairs of that humble house, and into that house. His mother and daddy were there. They were so ashamed. They were mortified that the pastor was bringing their son home a drunkard. Took him into that back bedroom, loosened his shoes, got him stretched out there upon that bed, and hoped that he would go to sleep, and stay there.

On my way out, the father of that young man followed me out. He said, "Preacher, I am so embarrassed that you would bring my son home like that, drunk." But he said, "Let me tell you something. I need to confess it to you." He said, "My son is probably drunk, because I'm a drunkard. I am a drunkard. I'm an alcoholic. And I confess to you that I am helpless before this thing of drink." He said, "I've tried to quit, but," he said, "I can't quit. There's a part of me that desires it, and there's a part of me that hates it." And he used a curse word: "hates the blank stuff." He said, "I don't know what to do."

I said, "Friend, let me ask you a question." I said, "If you had a wagon hitched to a

team of wild horses, and those horses were running away, and you couldn't control it, and you were afraid for your life, and afraid for the wagon, and all that you had there, and you were afraid there was going to be a terrible catastrophe, and the horses were running wild, and," I said, "sitting next to you was someone in that wagon that you knew who could control those horses," I said, "friend, what would you do?" He said, "Preacher, I'd hand the reins over to him." And I said, "That's right, friend; and Jesus is that person. And what you need to do is turn those reins over to Him, and say, "I can't control these wild horses. I can't do it. But Lord Jesus, I yield the reins to You. And Lord Jesus, I want You to take control."

Now my dear friend, that's what a meek person is: a person who has turned the reins over to the Lord Jesus Christ, and let Jesus do for him, and through him, and with him, what he could not do for himself. It is not, dear friend, self-assertion. Nor is it, self-repression; but it is self-control, under the mastery of the Lord Jesus Christ. Or, let me put it another way: not even self-control, but self-surrender, turning the reins over to the Lord Jesus Christ.

II. The Method of Meekness

Now secondly, let me talk to you about the method of meekness. How are you going to be a meek person? Would you turn with me, please, to the Book of James chapter 1. Now you're in Galatians chapter 5, so just turn right to James chapter 1, and look with me, in verse 21. Here is the method of meekness. I want you to listen as I read these verses, and be listening and see how meekness can become a reality in your life. Look at it: "*Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.*" Now the word *soul* here is the Greek word *psyche*. And we could read it: "This word is able to save your psyche." "*But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves*" (James 1:21–22).

Now here our Lord tells us the method of meekness. We're to receive with meekness the Word. Why do you have to receive with meekness the Word? Because meekness is what? It is strength under control. Now to be controlled by the Lord, you have to know His will and His way. And in order to know His will and His way, you have to know His Word. And therefore, you have to receive the Word with meekness. You don't know enough to guide your life.

A man was in a courtroom, and he was asked to swear to this: Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God? He said, "If I knew the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, I would be God." Now that's pretty smart.

Dear friend, listen. You need guidance. God knows what you don't know. And so if

you are going to be a meek person, if God is going to have the reins of your life, if God is going to guide your life, if God is going to bring you to this wealth, wisdom, and worship, then you've got to receive the engrafted word with meekness, which is able to save your soul. Now let me tell you, therefore, how to do this. Okay now, listen. Three things are necessary, according to James.

A. A Repentant Spirit

First of all, there has to be a repentant spirit. Now look in verse 21—James chapter 1 and verse 21—it says this: “*Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness*” (James 1:21). Now what does that mean? Well, the word *filthiness* here is the word *rhupos*, and it literally means, “wax in the ear.” Get the wax out of your ear. Get the spiritual wax out of your ear. And what is that spiritual wax that's in your ear? It's what he calls the “*superfluity of naughtiness*” (James 1:21). Well, *superfluity* means, just simply, “that which is in excess, or remains, or is left over.” You see, many of us have been saved, but we've got sort of that remainder sin, that residual sin, that's still in our lives, that stubbornness that is there, that the *King James* calls the “*superfluity of naughtiness*” (James 1:21). It's that remainder, the unsanctified part of our lives. And what he is saying is this: You get the spiritual wax out of your ear, and you have to lay it apart.

Now my dear friend, a horse may be broken; but God does not break you the way a man breaks a horse. You have to come to a place where you yourself say, “I lay apart this wickedness. I turn from it.” My friend, if you want God to speak to you, if you want to understand this book, if you want the Bible to burst a flame in your heart and mind, you've got to get the spiritual wax out of your ear. And the only way to do that is by repentance. Repent of that sin.

B. A Receptive Spirit

Now there must be a repentant spirit. I'll tell you what else there must be. There must be a receptive spirit. Now look again in verse 21—and, he says there: “*And receive*”—are you watching?—“*with meekness the engrafted word*” (James 1:21).

Do you see the word *receive*? Now in the Greek language, there are two words that are translated, “receive.” One word is *lambano*. That's not the word that is used here. What is *lambano*? Well, that's also translated, “receive,” but it has the idea of self-prompted taking. That is a sort of reaching out, and grasping something, or getting something, for yourself. That's the word *lambano*. And that's not the word he uses here. And what he is saying is this: that you're not going to understand, you're not going to receive the Word, with that kind of a spirit. You may know Greek; you may know Hebrew; you may know logic; and, you may have a high IQ; but, you're not going to go into the Word of God, and pull the truth out with those things. Did you know that? Oh,

you'll learn the facts, but you will never know the truth. You will never really be able to understand the real message of the Word of God, if that's the way you try to get truth.

God uses another word here, in James chapter 1 and verse 21, and that word is not the word *lambano*. It is the word *dechomai*, and it means, "to receive like you were to receive a gift, as somebody gives you a gift, and you say, 'Oh thank you, thank you.'; or, to receive as you would welcome a guest. You would say, 'Come into our house. We are delighted to have you.'"

Dear friend, do you welcome the Word of God? Have you opened the door of your heart? Do you say, "O God, I receive Your truth, I receive Your truth"? There are people who come and sit in a service like this, with their arms folded like this, and they try to make the Word of God pass by the judgment bar of their mind, to make up their mind whether or not the Word is welcome. Dear friend, you'll never learn truth that way. Lay your intellectual pride in the dust. Humble your heart. Get your heart right with God. And welcome the Word of God. You have to do it with meekness. There has to be a repentant spirit. You lay aside that—set apart that—filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness. A repentant spirit. And then, there has to be a receptive spirit. Receive, receive, and receive. Welcome the Word with meekness.

C. A Responsive Spirit

And then, dear friend, here it comes. Not only must there be a repentant spirit, and not only must there be a receptive spirit, but there must be a responsive spirit. Look, if you will, in verse 22 of this same chapter: "*But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves*" (James 1:22).

When you welcome the Word, why do you welcome the Word? Just so you can get more facts? Oh, no! Once you get the Word in your heart, then you become a doer of the Word. What we really believe, we live by. The rest of it is just religious talk. Listen. Be a doer of The Word. If you're not a doer of the Word, then you deceive yourself. If you come and sit here in church, and listen to me preach, and think you understand what I say, and yet you don't practice what I say; or, if you do your morning devotions, and you say, "Well, I got a nugget from the Word," but you don't live by it; you are guilty of one grand self-deception, and you're deceiving your own selves. And therefore, you're losing your psyche, rather than saving your psyche.

"*A double minded man is unstable in all his ways*" (James 1:8). Jesus said, in the Sermon on the Mount, "When a man hears these words of mine, and does them not, he is a foolish man." To hear and not to do is absolute soul insanity. Dear friend, impression without expression leads to depression. And if you just simply come here and get facts, and you don't live by those facts, it will have a bad effect on your life. Somebody said, "A college education is that process by which 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'm afraid, so many times, that's what our Bible knowledge is about. But dear friend, not only does it need to go through our heads; it needs to go through our hearts, and come out in our lives.

Now what is the method of meekness? It is to receive with meekness the engrafted word that is able to save our psyches. You do it with a repentant spirit. Get the sin out. Do it with a receptive spirit. And do it with a responsive spirit.

III. The Motive for Meekness

Now let me move on to the third and final thing. I've talked to you about the meaning of meekness. I've talked to you about the method of meekness. Now let me talk to you about the motive for meekness.

A. The Wealth

I gave it to you in the introduction. Remember what I said? I said I have a proposition for you. I want to show you how you can be incredibly wealthy. I want to show you how you can have guidance, insight, and leadership in every crisis of life. And I want to show you how you can have serenity, and rest to your soul. Okay now, let's see if that is a good motivation.

First of all, again, I remind you of Matthew chapter 5 and verse 5, where the Lord Jesus says, "*Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth*" (Matthew 5:5). You say, "Pastor, you don't get much today by being meek. You've got to get out there and kick, claw, scratch, fight, bite, and cheat. That's the only way you get it today." Well, my dear friend, I want to tell you that man lost his inheritance, by lack of meekness, when he rebelled against God in the garden. And people today are not able to enjoy what they think they have, because of a rebellious spirit; and, they never do have their true resources, because of rebellion.

Well, you say, "What does that mean? '*Inherit the earth*'—what does that mean?" All right, let me give it to you. Write down this verse: 1 Corinthians chapter 3 and verse 21: "*All things are your's*" (1 Corinthians 3:21). All things are yours. And then, 2 Corinthians 6:10. All things are yours. "Having nothing, yet possessing all things." What does that mean? It means, dear friend, that, "*The earth is the LORD's, and the fulness thereof*" (Psalm 24:1). We belong to God, and therefore, everything that God has, we have, and it all belongs to us. And yet, nothing belongs to us, because we're but stewards of the Lord.

It's a wonderful arrangement, because the devil comes to you, and the devil says to you, "Hey, if you don't do what I tell you to do, and if you don't get yourself in line, I'm going to take away everything you have." You say, "Devil, just get out of here. You can't

take away everything I have, because I don't have anything. I have nothing." "Oh?" he says. "Well then," he says, "I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I've got a little deal for you here: If you'll just serve me, I'll give you this, and I'll give you this, and I'll give you this." Say, "Devil, don't offer anything to me. I've already got everything. I own everything." Now you talk about frustrating the devil. Listen, dear friend: "*Having nothing, and yet possessing all things*" (2 Corinthians 6:10).

But there comes a time, dear friend, when all of this comes into the possession of God's children, for the Bible says we will inherit the earth (Matthew 5:5). We're going to reign with the Lord Jesus (Revelation 20:6). Jesus is coming from Heaven, and the Lord Jesus is going to sit upon the throne of His Father, David.

Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
Does his successive journeys run;
His kingdom spread from shore to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more. (Isaac Watts)

And the sea will swarm with fish, and the boughs of the trees will bend low with fruit, and the air will be filled with birds, and the desert shall blossom as a rose; and it will all belong to the children of our great God. The meek shall inherit the earth. Listen. That's what He's talking about. We have it now, as an inheritance in our heart; and, dear friend, one day, as an inheritance in our home.

B. The Wisdom

So that's the wealth. Let me talk to you about the wisdom. Oh, listen. He says again, in Psalm 25 and verse 9, "*The meek will he guide in judgment*" (Psalm 25:9). You see, listen, folks. It is not that God is not speaking. People say, "Oh, why doesn't God speak?" It is not that God is not speaking; we're not hearing. We're not getting ourselves meek, where God can guide us. You want God to guide you? You want God to lead you? I'll tell you, dear friend, if you will get meek; if you will humble yourself with that repentant spirit, with that receptive spirit, and with that responsive spirit; God will guide you, and you will not be like a ship at sail on a dark and stormy night, without a compass, and without a rudder, and without a mast, and without a sail, being driven by the winds and the waves of this world. "*The meek will he guide in judgment.*" He will show you His way, you will be able to hear, because He can touch the bridle here, and you'll turn this way; and, He'll touch the bridle here, and you'll turn that way; because, dear friend, He has mastered you, and He is guiding you.

C. The Worship

And the third thing. Oh, not only that wealth and that wisdom, but that worship. Again, I remind you, Matthew chapter 11 and verses 28, and following—the Lord Jesus says, "*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*"

Take my yoke upon you...” (Matthew 11:28–29). You see, Jesus was a carpenter. Jesus knew what it was to make yokes for oxen. And I don’t think that Jesus ever made one that didn’t fit just right. No yoke that Jesus made ever would misfit an ox. When an ox is in a yoke, he has been made meek. That ox has that tremendous strength, but the yoke of the Master is on that ox, so he can pull that load. And Jesus says, *“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart:”*—you’ll be like I am—“and you’ll find rest unto your soul” (Matthew 11:29). Dear friend, that’s the meekness that the Lord Jesus wants to give to you today.

Conclusion

Those of you who are listening by television, do you want to know this wonderful Savior, the Lord Jesus? Do you? Do you want to have your sin forgiven? Do you want peace with God? Oh, He loves you so much. Do you want this wealth, this wisdom, this worship, and this rest? Come to Jesus, come. Dial the number of the screen. A friend is standing by to pray with you, and tell you about the Lord Jesus.

There was a man whose name was Henry Morehouse. He was a great evangelist, but he never held big, great meetings. He was in little churches. He had but one text that he used all the time. It was John 3:16. And almost everywhere he preached, he preached John 3:16: “For God so loved the world.” He was in a little Welsh mining town one time, and there was a man in that town who hated God, hated Christ, hated the Bible, hated churches, and hated evangelists, most of all. His name was Ike Miller. And Ike Miller sent out word. He said, “You go tell Henry Morehouse that, if he preaches tonight, I’m going to come to the service, and I am personally going to pistol whip him out of town.” The people came to Henry Morehouse, and they said, “Preacher, let’s don’t have the meeting tonight. Let’s just skip a night, or let’s get someone else to preach.” He said, “No, I prayed about it, and I really believe that God wants me to preach. I’ll trust Him. It’ll be all right. You come.”

That night, that little church in that mining town was filled with people, and Henry Morehouse stood up to preach. About that time, the back doors burst open, and in came this big, burly man named Ike Miller. He plopped himself down in a seat, and folded those muscular arms, as if to say, “All right, Preacher, you do your stuff, and then I’ll do mine.” Mr. Morehouse, the evangelist, opened his Bible to John 3:16, and he preached, when God loved, He loved the world, and when God gave, He gave His Son. And he preached the love of God with such passion and pathos that the Spirit of God fell on that place. And then, he said, “I’m going to invite those who want to receive the Lord Jesus to come forward.” Ike Miller was the first on his feet. People wondered, “Could he possibly be getting saved? Or, is he coming down there to start the fight? What’s going to happen?”

But he didn't come forward at all. He just turned around, wheeled around, went out the back door, and slammed it behind him. And he walked down the main street of that little mining town. There were his buddies in the saloon, saying, "Hey, Ike. Come on in, and get a drink." But he just kept walking. Some of the wicked women from the upper stories of that little town windows said, "Hey, Ike. Come up. Let's have a big time, a good time." He just kept walking. He walked right on through that town, until he got down to a little lane that turned right—a little dusty lane, and a little dirt road. And he went down that road till he came to a rickety fence, and a sagging gate, and a little weather-boarded shack, unpainted. He pushed that gate back, went up those splintered steps, and, with his fists, he knocked the door open. And in that house—that little one-room house where the bed and the kitchen were all in one room—was a faded wife, and little children.

When they saw their drunkard daddy come home, those little children, like mice, scurried under the bed, afraid of what he might do. And this wife, who had been beaten and abused so many times, she just stepped back, and spread her skirt, as if to hide the children from their father. He looked at her, and said, "Woman, you don't have to be afraid. It's all right." He said, "Get the kids out from under the bed." He said, "We're going to pray." She said, "What did you say?" He said, "I said, 'Get the kids. We're going to pray.'" She said, "Well, all right."

The little kids scurried out from under the bed like little mice with big eyes, wondering about what was going to happen. He said, "Now kneel. You kneel, and you kneel, and you kneel." Then, he knelt down, this big hulk of a man, and he tried to pray. He said, "O God." He didn't know how to pray. He knew how to curse; he didn't know how to pray. He said, "Dear Lord." But no other words would come. And then, he remembered a prayer that his mother had taught him when he was a little boy, and this is what he prayed: "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild, look upon a little child. Forgive my simplicity, and suffer me to come to Thee." And there, on his knees, Ike Miller was born again, and wept his way into the arms of Jesus.

The way we know the story is that Ike himself told what happened, as he gave his heart to the Lord Jesus. "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild, look upon a little child. Forgive my simplicity, and suffer me to come to Thee."

Now you may be here, today, and you're not wicked, mean, and cruel, like Ike Miller; but, I'll tell you, dear friend, if you get saved, you'll get saved the same way. *There's* no one *here so* bad *he cannot be* saved, *no one so* good *he need not be* saved. Dear friend, you'll come to Jesus, take His yoke, and you'll find rest to your soul.

Try a Little Kindness

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: September 10, 1989

Main Scripture Text: Galatians 5:22

Outline

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Introduction

Take God's Word, and turn, please, to Galatians chapter 5 and verse 22, and let us read together what God says. He's speaking here of the fruit of the Spirit. And he says, the fruit is love. And we brought a message on that. Then he says the fruit of the Spirit is joy. And we brought a message on that. Then, he says the fruit of the Spirit is peace." And we thought together about that. And then, the fruit of the Spirit is longsuffering or patience. And we dealt with that.

And now we come to what the Bible says, in the King James Version: "*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness*" (Galatians 5:22). In some translations, it is given "kindness." The fruit of the Spirit is kindness. That's what we're going to be talking about: "Try a Little Kindness."

President George Bush was inaugurated as the president of the United States, and everybody was waiting to hear what kind of a challenge he would give to us as a nation. And do you know what his challenge was? To be a kinder and gentler nation. And I thought, "What a challenge for the President of the United States to say to the greatest nation on earth, the need is kindness, the need is gentleness!" But my dear friend, that's not just the need of America, or the need of Bellevue Baptist Church—that's the need of

your home and of your life. Oh, how we need kindness!

I agree with the little girl who prayed, “O God, make all the bad people good, and make all the good people nice.”

Now we have a lot of people who are good, but they just need to learn how to be kind.

I. What Is Kindness?

What is kindness? Let’s talk about kindness. What is the word *kindness* here in Galatians chapter 5 and verse 22, also called *gentleness*? Well, it comes from a root word, which means, “to be useful; to be good; to be helpful; or to be suitable.” That’s what it literally means. It is translated sometimes “goodness,” sometimes “tenderness,” sometimes “friendliness,” and sometimes “generosity.” But actually, I think all of us know what kindness is when we see it.

Let me tell you, really, what kindness is. Kindness *is* love *in* shoe leather. The Bible says, in 1 Corinthians chapter 13 and verse 4, “Love is kind” (1 Corinthians 13:4). And so all kindness is just simply love in practical and personal ways. That’s what kindness is. That is the *what* of kindness.

II. Why We Ought to Be Kind

Now let me tell you why we ought to be kind. And I want to mention three reasons why we ought to be kind.

A. God Saved Us Through His Kindness

First of all, because God has saved us through His kindness. God has been so kind to us. Think of these scriptures. The first is found in Titus chapter 3 and verses 4 and 5: “*But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us*” (Titus 3:4–5). Do you know what the Bible calls the coming of Jesus Christ into the world? God’s kindness toward us. You have been saved by the kindness of God, and therefore, the Apostle Paul says, in Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 32, to those of us who have been saved, “*And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you*” (Ephesians 4:32). We have received kindness; therefore, we must show kindness. That’s one reason we ought to be kind.

B. The World Is Not Going to See the Lord in Us Until They See Our Kindness

But I would tell you again another reason is, the world is not going to see the Lord Jesus Christ in us until they see our kindness. The world is not primarily interested in our theology. They want to know, has it changed your life? Someone has well written,

“People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.” You see, God is love, and love is kind. And as the Lord Jesus Christ inhabits my humanity, He’s going to display His deity to the degree that I am a kind and a gentle person.

C. If You Want Kindness, You Need to Give It

There’s a third reason we ought to be kind. It’s simply this, friend. If you want kindness, you need to give it. Whatever you want, learn to give. Because the Bible says we’re going to reap what we sow (Galatians 6:7).

Now very quickly I’ve talked to you about the *what* of kindness. I’ve talked to you about the *why* of kindness. Let me say that, when I talk to you about being kind, there are some of us who are afraid, if we’re too kind, people are going to take advantage of us. Have you ever felt that way? You know, afraid that people are just going to move in, and we kind of have to keep up a little shell, a little crust.

I read something this past week that deeply touched my heart about a PGA golfer. Now most of us have never heard his name, because he really was never a great golfer. He was an Argentine. He was from Argentina. And his name is Robert DeVincenzo. Now Mr. DeVincenzo won a PGA tournament, one of the few that he won, and, at the 18th hole, they gave Mr. DeVincenzo his check. They handed it to him, and he was happy to receive it. And he was going out behind the clubhouse, putting his clubs in his automobile, when a woman met him. And this woman was sad and forlorn. And she said to him, “It’s a big day for you; but it’s a sad day for me.” He said, “Well, what is it, Madam?” She said, “I have a baby who is dying. My baby has been diagnosed with an incurable disease in the blood; and my little baby is dying.” His heart was touched. He said, “Madam,” in broken English, “may I do something for you and your child?” And he took his check, and endorsed it on the back, and gave it to her, right there. He said, “Take this, and try to buy some happiness for yourself, and for the child.” And then, he put his clubs in his car, and friends just stood around amazed. The woman looked so shocked. And he drove off.

A week later, he was in the clubhouse, having lunch, and one of the PGA officials came up to him, and said, “You know that woman to whom you gave that check? She doesn’t have a sick baby. As a matter of fact, she doesn’t have a child at all. As a matter of fact, she’s not even married. She is a phony, a con artist.” And this golfer said, “Do you mean to tell me that there is no baby dying of an incurable disease?” He said, “That’s right.” He said, “That’s wonderful!” He said, “That’s the best news I’ve heard all week! There is no baby that is dying!”

O dear friend, when I read that, I thought, “What an attitude!” You know, so many of us are so cynical, we’re afraid that we’re going to do something, and have somebody take advantage of us. Aren’t you glad that God keeps the score? Aren’t you glad that

God knows? It doesn't matter if somebody takes advantage of us, if we're acting like the Lord Jesus. People took advantage of the Lord Jesus Christ. Indeed they did. But He was kind, and is kind.

III. When We Ought to Be Kind

Now let me talk to you about when we ought to be kind. This is so important. You know, the Bible says, in Galatians chapter 6 and verse 10: *“As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men”* (Galatians 6:10). You see, opportunities come to be kind, and, so many times, we let them go past. Let me ask you a question. Has the Holy Spirit ever impressed you to do an act of kindness to someone—maybe make a phone call and encourage them, maybe to write a note, maybe to send a gift, maybe to send a book, or maybe just to do some little thing for somebody that you really knew would mean something to them? And you said, “I’m going to do it”; but you delayed, the time passed, you got too busy, after a while, it was just too late, and you would have been embarrassed to do it? Has that ever happened to you, so you just didn’t do it? Just nod your head. Don’t look so pious. Just go ahead, and nod your head. You know, that’s happened to all of us. And what happens is, we have an opportunity to do good, and then, somehow, we just simply let it pass by.

Do you remember the story of the Good Samaritan, who was there, and he saw that man bruised and bleeding? He was on his journey, and he stopped, and he helped that man, right there. He didn’t make excuses. He didn’t say, “I’m too busy.” He didn’t say, “I’m on a journey.” He didn’t say, “It’s too dangerous.” He didn’t say, “It’s none of my business.” But right there, at that moment, he stopped, and did what he could do. There was a golden moment, and he took it.

May I tell you that all around us are people who are bruised and bleeding. Some are bleeding financially. Some are bleeding emotionally. Some are bleeding spiritually. And they need you to say, “This is an opportunity, and I’m going to take it right now.” If you don’t remember anything else, I want you to remember this: The chief enemy to kindness is busyness. We’re so busy. We have our priorities, our jobs, our duties, our responsibilities; and we’re too busy. But if we’re too busy to be kind, we’re too busy. And the Bible says, *“As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good”* (Galatians 6:10).

There was a French-born Quaker; his name was Stephen Grellet. He died in New Jersey, in the last century. And he would be unknown; nobody would even remember this man, except for one paragraph that he wrote. You’ve heard it before. But I want you to listen to what he said. He said, “I shall pass through this world but once. Any good, therefore, that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to any human being, let me do it now. Let me not defer nor neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again.” Listen to it: “I

shall pass through this world but once. Any good, therefore, that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to any human being, let me do it now. Let me not defer nor neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again.” You can’t do a kindness too soon, because you never know how soon it may be too late. As you have opportunity, let’s do good.

IV. Where We Ought to Be Kind

Now I’ve talked to you about the *what* of kindness. I’ve talked to you about the *why* of kindness. I’ve talked to you about the *when* of kindness. Let me talk to you about the *where* of kindness. Where should you be kind? Well, be kind in times of conflict, in times of arguments, and in times of quarrels. You know, the Bible says, in 2 Timothy chapter 2 and verse 24: “*And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men*” (2 Timothy 2:24). Are you a servant of the Lord? Then you can’t be quarrelsome.

A. In Times of Conflict

You’ve got to be kind in times of conflict. We all have times of conflict. But you need to be very careful, when you get in an argument with any human being. It doesn’t matter whether that human being is saved, or that human being is lost.

Let’s just take an individual out here. And there’s somebody that you have a conflict with. Well, first of all, you have to ask yourself, “Is this man a brother?” Well, if he’s a brother, then he’s a part of your body. You and he are members of the same body, and Jesus Christ is the head. And if he is a brother, if you harm him, you harm yourself. Well, suppose he is not a brother. Suppose he is an unsaved person. Well then, if you’re unkind to an unsaved person, you’re driving him further away from Jesus. If he’s unsaved, how do expect him to understand spiritual things? He’s more an object of your pity rather than he is of your wrath. And whether he is saved or lost, your desire is not to drive him away, but—I would hope—to win back your brother, or to win this man to the Lord Jesus Christ. I have found that in my own life there have been people that have opposed me, and I’ve tried to be kind to them. And God is used—not every time—but many times.

I’d not been here very long—I had been pastor just a few months—when I got a letter from one of the members of this church. Frankly, it was quite an excoriating letter. He didn’t like my mannerisms. He didn’t like the way I preached. He didn’t like the way I gave an invitation. And he told me so in no uncertain terms. And frankly, I want to tell you I felt the letter was unfair. But I said, “Dear Lord, help me to write back the kindest letter I can write.” I wrote that man back a letter—not a pious piosity—but genuine kindness. He’s in Heaven today. But before he died, he came past the office, and said to me, “You are the best friend I have.”

I thank God that kindness can do what perhaps nothing else can do. Maybe he is my brother. Then I need to treat him as Jesus would treat him. Maybe he's my enemy. Then I need to make him the object of my pity. And whether he is a brother or whether he is an enemy, I have to remember this: When I'm in a quarrelsome attitude with anybody, I have to remember that the heathen are standing all around. They don't know who's who or what's what, but they know how they see us react.

One woman came to her pastor, and said, "I have become a Christian because of you." Well, pastors want to know whether their preaching is effective or not. And he said, "Madam, what sermon was it? What touched your heart? What was it that I preached that brought you to Jesus?" She said, "It was nothing that you preached." But she said, "I was watching, when a woman criticized you to your face, and your kindness to that woman convicted my heart. I knew what you had was real, and I gave my heart to Jesus Christ."

B. In Our Conversation

In times of conflict, dear friend, we need to be kind. Just in our conversation, we need to be kind. Did you know that your words can bless or burn? Did you know that your words can hurt or heal? The Bible says, "*Death and life are in the power of the tongue*" (Proverbs 18:21). Proverbs 15, verse 4: "Gentle words cause life and health" (Proverbs 15:4). Kind words. Everybody needs a little kindness.

I heard of a man who went into a little roadside diner for breakfast, and a waitress came out with her hands on her hips. She said, "What do you want?" "Well," he said, "I'd like some eggs, and a few kind words." She didn't say anything. She just went around back to the kitchen. After a while, she came out with a plate with some greasy eggs, and slapped them down in front of him. He said, "Where are my kind words?" She said, "Don't eat them eggs."

Friend, everybody needs some kind words. You'd be surprised how you can just rest somebody just with a word of kindness.

C. When People Are Hurting

Not only in times of conflict, and times of conversation, but in times when people are hurting, and times when you need compassion. So many times, we don't know what to do. We have people who are hurting all around us. And there are people who are hurting all around us. We need to learn how to be sensitive. The Bible says, in Philippians chapter 2 and verse 4: "*Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others*" (Philippians 2:4). Don't be so concerned about yourself that you can't see. The key word there is *look*: "*Look not every man on his own things.*" Be sensitive. Open your eyes. I'm telling you, all around you people are hurting.

You just think, in your neighborhood, in your acquaintances. There is probably

somebody who's moving in, and doesn't have any friends, or somebody who's moving out, and leaving their friends. There is probably somebody who's going through a divorce, or has a broken home. There is probably somebody who is facing a business failure, or financial loss. There is perhaps somebody who lost a friend or child by death. There is perhaps somebody who is sick. There is perhaps somebody who is lonely. You say, "Pastor, I'm not good at helping people when they're suffering. I just don't know what to say." I can appreciate that. Sometimes, friend, it's not what you say. It's just that little act of kindness that means so much.

Joyce and I have a little baby in Heaven. His name is Philip. And he died on a Sunday afternoon, on Mother's Day—one of those unexpected crib deaths. Members of our little church came by to see us, and to comfort us. One by one, the members of the church would come in—so many of them fumbled. They didn't know what to say. They were so grieved. But I never will forget one man that was kind of gruff in the way he spoke. He didn't know how to express himself very well. He was a deacon in our church. He loved me. I knew that. But he didn't know what to say. But I never will forget when Richard Hayes just laid his hand on this shoulder right up there, and squeezed it, and looked into my face. A tear popped out in his eyes. He just looked at me, and turned his face away, and went out. That touch, that squeeze, that look, meant more than a sermon would have meant to me. It was just a gentle touch, just an act of kindness.

Oh, how we need to learn to be kind! I'm talking to you, friend, about the where of kindness. There are opportunities all around, if we'll just look.

D. In Our Homes

You know where we need to be kind the most? In our homes, now, don't we? Why is it that we sometimes are most unkind to those we love the best? The most cutting remarks are sometimes in the home. Friend, may I tell you that *the religion that doesn't begin at home doesn't begin. And the religion that is not kind is not the Christian kind of religion.* There are many marriages that could be saved by a little gentleness. Do you know what Emerson said that courtesy is? He said, "Courtesy is made up of little sacrifices."

Now you men are to be the head of your home. But do you know what one of the marks of leadership is? Second Timothy 2, verse 4, says, "*And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle*" (2 Timothy 2:24). Gentleness is a mark of leadership. God said, in Psalm 18 and verse 35—or the Psalmist said to the Lord, "*Thy gentleness hath made me great*" (Psalm 18:35). What a great text! "*Thy gentleness*"—O God—"*hath made me great.*" Do you want your children to be great? Be gentle to your children. You know, your words can so encourage them. Or, do you nag, or do you

brag? Do you encourage, or do you belittle? Friend, to belittle is to be little. Your children need gentleness. They will grow, and they will blossom, with a father or mother who is gentle. The Bible says of a gracious woman, a wife, the law of kindness is in her mouth (Proverbs 31:26). Your children need this kindness, perhaps, more than anything else.

E. In Church

We need to be kind to our brothers and sisters in Christ. We need to be kind in church. We advertise Bellevue Baptist Church as *Love Worth Finding*, don't we? And we ought to, because the Bible says, in Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 32: "*And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you*" (Ephesians 4:32).

I received a letter a while back. I'm going to tell his story in such a way that you'll not know who wrote the letter, because I wouldn't want to embarrass anybody. But I feel free to tell you this story. A man wrote me a letter. He said, "I had in my heart, and have even right now in my life, excruciating pain and heartache." And he told me a terrible tale, a sordid thing that had happened in his life—that had happened to him. "But," he said, "I heard about Bellevue church." He said, "I came to Bellevue church. I went to a Sunday School class, and I listened." He said, "It was a great lesson." He said, "I came into the worship service. The music momentarily buoyed me up. Your message was a help to me." But he said, "The burden was so heavy." He said, "I was leaving the parking lot at Bellevue Baptist Church with a heavy heart." He said, "There was a woman there, waiting, also, to get out of the parking lot." He said, "Somehow, my eye caught hers. She looked at me, smiled, and waved her hand at me. She just smiled, and a waved."

He said, "I went home that night." He said, "I couldn't sleep." He said, "The devil began to tell me, 'Life is not worth living.' The devil began to tell me, 'Why don't you take the easy way out?'" He said, "I knew it would have been the selfish way. But the devil called it the easy way. And," he said, "my mind went to that shotgun in the closet. And I began to get up, and think about moving toward that shotgun in that closet." And he said, "Do you know what God did?" He said, "God brought an image to my mind. It was the image of a woman on the parking lot of Bellevue Baptist Church. And I saw a smile, and a hand in the air. It was just a smile, and just a wave. And," he said, "Mr. Rogers, that smile saved my life."

That woman probably doesn't remember that. She may be here this morning. It was just an act of kindness, just a small thing, just the beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ. There are people around us who need somebody to love them. There are people around us who need somebody to care in this world. We need to show kindness at home. We

need to show kindness on the job. We need to show kindness in church.

V. The Way of Kindness

Let me conclude this message by talking to you, very briefly, about the way of kindness. I've talked to you about the *where*, and the *when*, and the *why*, and the *what*. But the way—*how* can we be kind? Well, our Bible text says the fruit of the Spirit is kindness (Galatians 5:22). Do you know what kindness is? It's the life of Jesus. The Bible says of the Lord Jesus, He "*went about doing good*" (Acts 10:38). You see, dear friend, I don't have it in me to be kind, not the Bible kind of kindness. I don't have what it takes, and neither do you.

Years ago, when I was a high school student, I read a book. It was called, *In His Steps*. Many of you have read that book, a little devotional book about some people in the community. It's a fictitious story, but a novel. It tells about these people, who, when faced with various circumstances, decided they would first ask this question: "What would Jesus do, if He were here?" And they said, "We will do what Jesus would do, if He were here." And then, it tells all of the wonderful things that happened. It was a good book, and it blessed my life.

But really, if you think about it, and analyze it, there are three flaws in that book, and in that whole premise. Number one is this: that we would know what Jesus would do, if He were here. There can't be anybody who can be Jesus but Jesus, and sometimes He'll surprise you. Number two, the second flaw is this: If we knew what Jesus would do, we wouldn't have the strength to do it, anyway. There can't be anybody be Jesus like Jesus. My dear friend, *there's only one person who's ever lived the Christian life. And do you know who it is? His name is Jesus. And if it's lived where you are, it'll be Jesus Christ still living it in you, and through you.* Do you understand that? Now the third thing is this: They asked the question, "What would Jesus do, if He were here?" O friend, Jesus is here. He is here. He lives in us. We are His body. And what we need to do is to say, "Lord Jesus, You are here; and I abide in You just like a branch abides in a vine; and I draw from you, Lord Jesus, kindness. And the fruit of the Spirit is kindness. It is the life of the Lord Jesus Christ in me.

But now, wait a minute. In Colossians chapter 3 and verse 12, the Bible says, as elect of God, we're to put on kindness (Colossians 3:12). When I got up this morning, I chose my tie, I chose my suit, I chose my shirt, and I put it on. May I tell you that, every morning, when you wake up, you can also choose your attitude. You can just put on kindness. Put it on, because Jesus Christ is there in you to live His life through you. "*Be ye kind*" (Ephesians 4:32), for the fruit of the Spirit is kindness (Galatians 5:22).

Conclusion

Let's pray. Father God, help us, as You inhabit our humanity, to display Your deity. And Lord we know that You are love, and love is God. In your name we pray. Amen.

What Is the Good Life?

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: September 24, 1989

Main Scripture Text: Galatians 5:22

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Introduction

Take God's Word and find Galatians chapter 5 and verse 22. We're in a series, speaking about the fruit of the Spirit. Galatians chapter 5, verse 22, says, "*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness*" (Galatians 5:22). And then, we come to that quality of the Christ life that the Bible calls *goodness*. And I want to speak to you on this subject: "What is the Good Life?" Now the word *good* is an overworked word today. Something feels good, tastes good, and looks good. You've done a good job, or whatever. We just throw the word *good* all around. And people, today, are interested in living the good life. And for some people, what is the good life?

Well, for some people, the good life is feeling good. That means, it's having a hot tub and a back rub. That's the good life. For other people, the good life is not feeling good, but it's looking good. I mean, everybody today wants to look good. And the cosmetics industry is a very big industry today. Billions of dollars are spent on looking good. There are many here today that look as good as you ever did. It just takes you longer to get that way. And some don't look as good as you used to. For other people, the good life is not just feeling good, and looking good, but it's having the goods. I mean, you know, just accumulating. They call that the good life. If you have enough money to have enough

power to do what you want to do.

I saw a red Ferrari the other day. It had a bumper sticker on it. And it said, “The one who wins has the most toys at the end of life.” And you know, they say, “The only difference between men and boys is the cost of their toys.” And so that guy had a big red one. And to him, that was the good life.

Well, there’s the good life. What is the good life? Well, in all of these things that I’ve mentioned, none of these things has a moral quality to it. But the good that the Bible is talking about has a moral characteristic. You see, the fruit of the Spirit is goodness.

Now what is goodness? Well, number one, it is being good. And therefore, because you are good, it is doing good. Now I want to give you a verse of Scripture to put in your margin. And it is Micah 6 and verse 8. If you want, in one verse, a definition of goodness, here it is, my dear friend. Here is what goodness is. Just put it in the margin, and listen to me. Don’t try to look it up now, because the sermon will be over, and some of you will not have found Micah yet. Some don’t even know Micah’s in the Bible. You will get to Heaven, and you meet Micah, and he’ll say, “Did you read my book?” And you’ll say, “Oh, you wrote a book?” Micah chapter 6, verse 8—now listen to it: *“He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”* (Micah 6:8). Isn’t that good? Isn’t that beautiful? *“He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”*

Now having said that, real goodness—the good life—has a moral quality to it. It is to be good, and, therefore, to do good. And because it is the fruit of the Spirit, our message is organized around three simple thoughts.

I. The Reasons for Goodness

First of all, I want us to think about the reasons for goodness. Why should we be good?

I mean, if you look around you, it doesn’t seem, sometimes, like we should. The young ladies, sometimes, say to me, “Pastor, you know, it just seems like we can’t get a date, unless we are less than pure. It seems like the other girls—the girls that don’t have the highest standards—they’re the ones who are getting the phone calls. They are the ones who are being carried out.” Businessmen say, “You know, Pastor, I’d like to run my business according to certain principles. But it seems like that where I am, if you don’t hedge a little, bend a little, trim a little, politic a little, then you’re not going to make the big bucks. The big bucks are made by the guys who don’t necessarily do it the right way—that is, according to the Word of God.” And the kids at school say, “If you want to be popular, the most popular kids at school are not always the best kids.” Does it pay to be good? You better believe it pays to be good, my dear friend.

And I want to tell you why you ought to be good. And I want to give you three major reasons for being good.

A. The Inward Reason

And reason number one is what I want to call the *inward* reason. You see, dear friend, you will never have inward peace and tranquility until you have inward—*intrinsic*—goodness. You know yourself. You may deceive others. You may deceive me, and I may deceive you. But we can't really deceive ourselves. We know what we are. We can't run away from ourselves. If you run away—if you leave town—you have to go with you. You just take you everywhere you go. When I was a teenager, I learned these words:

I have to live with myself and so
I want to be fit for myself to know.
I want to be able as days go by,
always to look myself straight in the eye;
I don't want to stand with the setting sun
and hate myself for the things I have done. (Edgar A. Guest)

Now this being able to look yourself in the eye is what the Bible calls a *good conscience*. Take your Bibles, and turn with me to Acts chapter 23, for a moment. I want you to see what happened in the life of the Apostle Paul. Now Paul is held, and taken into court. Now he's not guilty of doing anything, except preaching the gospel of Jesus. But it's a very serious matter, and they are accusing him of all kinds of things. And there's a possibility, of course, that he may not only be put in prison, but his life may be taken from him. And I want you to see what the Apostle Paul does here. Let's look in Acts 23, and notice this, in verse 1. Now here he is before the tribunal; here he is before the court.

Now look at it—Acts 23 verse 1: *“And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day”* (Acts 23:1). Now the Apostle Paul says, “I have a good conscience.” That is, “When I look into my heart, I have a good conscience.” Well, what is a good conscience? Well, just go on, now, to Acts 24, and look at verse 16. Here's what his good conscience was. He said this: *“And herein do I exercise myself...”*—now, underscore the word *exercise*. That is, “this is something that I diligently do”—*“I exercise myself, to have always”*—underscore the word *always*—*“a conscience void to offence toward God, and toward men”* (Acts 24:16). Now that, my friend, is a good conscience.

A conscience that is void of offence toward God and toward men. Bill Gothard said this: “A good conscience is that inner freedom of spirit and assurance, knowing that you have a transparency toward everyone, that no one is able to point a finger at you, and

accuse you of wrongs toward him that you've not made right." Isn't that wonderful? Do you know what a good conscience is? A good conscience is this: knowing that, if you knew me as I know me, you would still respect me. You know, I have to ask myself this question: If people knew me as God knows me, would they come hear me preach? I mean, do you have that transparency? The transparency to be able to meet anyone, and have no one be able to point a finger of accusation against you, because you have a conscience devoid of offence toward God and toward man. Friend, what a liberty there is there!

You see, the Apostle Paul is in trouble. I mean, he's in real trouble. But the thing that has enabled him to stand there without flinching is that he doesn't have to run through his life, and say, "I wonder if what I did wrong has me right here today." You see, there's something about a clear conscience that just liberates you in time of trouble. It just removes fear. You have a bad conscience that causes that fear that we have toward God—a bad conscience.

And when God came walking in the garden, after Adam and Eve sinned, what did they do? They ran, and hid themselves from the Lord, in the midst of the garden. Now why did Adam hide himself? He hid himself, because he had a defiled conscience. He didn't have a clear conscience. He wasn't right with God. And so Adam and Eve hid themselves. And rather than having fellowship with God, rather than saying, "What a friend we have in Jesus," they're hiding from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Do you know why some people don't want to come to church? Oh, there are people who just feel uncomfortable about coming to church. Do you know why some people don't read the Bible? Do you know why some people don't pray? They have a conscience that has an offence toward God. And their conscience, you see, the conscience is that inner judge that God has put in you that tells you, that accuses you, or excuses you. It cannot make you do right, but it shows you what is right, or what is wrong. And when your conscience is right, you have that tremendous freedom.

After David had sinned, and done the terrible thing that he had done by committing adultery, he said there, in Psalm 53, "*My sin is ever before me*" (Psalm 51:3). Can you imagine what it would be like for David to live that way? Can you imagine what it would be like, knowing that he'd sinned, and now, the thing that he's done—the deed that he's done—reverberates through his consciousness? Everybody that he sees, he wonders, "Do they know? Do they know?" Two men are whispering. He wonders, "Are they talking about me?" A letter comes. He says, "I wonder is this the affidavit that proves that I'm guilty?" If they had telephones in that day, every time the telephone rang, he'd jump. You see? But a good conscience will do something for you, friend, that a sleeping pill will not do. And when you get into trouble and difficulty, as the Apostle Paul did, you can say, "Look, I have lived with a good conscience."

B. The Outward Reason

There's the inward reason. That's one reason. But let me give you another reason that you ought to be good. Not only the inward reason, but oh, there is the outward reason. Not only are you looking in, but others are looking on. Our lives influence others. The Apostle Paul said, in 1 Corinthians chapter 8, verse 13—he says, *“Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend”* (1 Corinthians 8:13). Now what Paul meant by that is this: He said, “I don't want to do anything that will cause anybody else to stumble, or anybody else to fail.”

I've been hearing and reading, today, about all these terrible things that are happening—some who are prominent evangelists, some who are on television, and all of these things—and it breaks my heart. It literally breaks my heart. It just causes me to weep. It causes me anguish on the inside. I'd rather die five minutes before I would disgrace the cause of Jesus. And I think how many people are caused to fall and stumble. *When a giant oak falls in the woods, not only does that oak fall, but it just pulls down all kinds of saplings, and other trees with it, when it falls.* And what a tragedy this is! How terrible it is for these to do this!

When I was a teenager I learned these words also:

I would be true, for there are those who trust me;
I would be pure, for there are those who care;
I would be strong, for there is much to suffer;
I would be brave, for there is much to dare. (Howard Arnold Walter)

Others are looking on. Why be good? None of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. You're the best Christian, and you're the worst Christian, that somebody knows. You're the only Bible that somebody is reading. Oh, I'll tell you the Hell of Hell to me would be to know, not only did I go to Hell, but that I took others with me—I took my wife, my loved ones, and my children.

C. The Upward Reason

Why be good? Because, dear friend, there's the inward reason, there's the outward reason, and there is the upward reason. There is a God in glory. And that God is looking down. What a joy to know that you have a conscience that's void of offence toward God!

There are times when I get backslidden. There are times when I get cold. There are times when the things that I do for the Lord Jesus Christ seem to take the place of the Lord Jesus Christ, and I find myself studying more than praying. And I find myself counseling with others more than talking with God. And I find myself caring about the buildings, and the budgets, and all of these things, more than the blessed Savior. And I know that my heart has gotten cold. And I just have to get alone, and get with myself,

and get down on my face before God, and give to God every blessed thing—give to God my health, give to God my family, give to God my reputation, give to God anything—and say, “Dear God, if there’s something that I haven’t surrendered, I want you to show it to me,” and sign a blank piece of paper, and say, “It’s yours, Lord; fill it in. Whatever it is, O God, I give it all to You.” And I can tell you, there comes a time, my dear friend, when God’s light floods my body. And the Bible says, “*When thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light*” (Luke 11:34). And what a time that is to know, to be able to say, “There is nothing between my soul and the Savior”!

And that, my friend, is a good reason for being good. There is that inward reason, and there is that outward reason. And there is that upward reason, as we are what God wants us to be.

I was thinking last night, when I was with some friends, just talking, and it came to my mind about a man in the New Testament whose name was Barnabas. And this is what it said about Barnabas—oh, I think it is a tremendous thing—it said: “*For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost*” (Acts 11:24). Now hey folks, when I die, I’d like to be worthy to have that put on my tombstone. That would be enough for me: “He was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost.”

Friend, it’s more important to be good than it is to be great. As a matter of fact, if you’re not good, then you’re not great. I don’t care what you’ve done, or how much money you have. You see, he was a good man. “*He was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost.*” Why be good? Inward look, outward look, and upward look: all of them tell us that we need to be good.

II. The Problems with Goodness: We Are Not Good

But oh, there’s a problem about this matter of goodness. Let’s move to the second point that deals, not only with the purpose of goodness, but the problems with goodness. Now the problem is this: very frankly, folks, we’re not good. I mean, that’s right. Amen? We are not good.

A. The Bible Teaches It

Let me give you a verse of Scripture. All of the self-righteous people, just tune in now and listen. Romans chapter 3, verse 12, says, “*There is none that doeth good, no, not one*” (Romans 3:12). Hmm? Not one.

Well, you say, “I gave to the Red Cross. I did this, and did that.” God says, “Your righteousness is as filthy rags in my sight” (Isaiah 64:6). “In my flesh,” the Apostle Paul said, “is no good thing” (Romans 7:18).

How do we know this is true? Well, number one: the Bible teaches it—Romans chapter 3, verse 12.

B. History Proves It

Number two: history proves it. Just read the newspapers. Look around you.

C. Personal Experience Teaches It

Any of you have any children? All right, that ought to be enough to teach you there's none good, no not one. Any of you have to teach your children to lie? No. They just lie by nature. A little child can lie before it can talk. It'll make you think it needs changing, you come in there, and the little rascal's lying. He just wants to be held. Before he can verbalize, and before he can talk, he can lie. The Bible says that. The Bible says, "*The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born*" (Psalm 58:3). That's what the Bible says. Experience proves to us—human nature. You don't have to teach little children to be selfish; you have to teach them not to be selfish. You don't have to teach them to be hurtful; you have to say, "Don't hurt, don't bite, don't do this, don't do that." It's just bound up. The Bible says, "*Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child*" (Proverbs 22:15). You see, the Bible teaches it, history teaches it, and personal experience teaches it.

Let me show you a verse of Scripture. This one, I want you to turn to—Jeremiah chapter 13, look in verse 23. Many of us have decided we're going to be good, haven't we? All right now, look what the Bible says here, in Jeremiah chapter 13 and verse 23: "*Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then...*"—that means, if an Ethiopian can change his skin, and a leopard can change his spots—"then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil" (Jeremiah 13:23). Friend, you could no more will to be good, and be good, than you could will to change the color of your skin, or a leopard could will to change the spots on his back. It takes something, there's a principle within us. "*There is none that doeth good, no, not one*" (Romans 3:12). And we know that we know that there's a problem of wickedness and sin in our lives.

III. The Pathway to Goodness

Now let's move to the most important part of this message. I've talked to you about the purpose of goodness, and I've talked to you about problems with goodness. Let me talk to you about the pathway to goodness—the fruit of the Spirit—and how to be good. Turn with me, please, this time, to Romans chapter 7. This time, just keep your Bible's open, as we get into Romans chapter 7. Now look here, in Romans chapter 7. The Apostle Paul says this, in verse 18: "*For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing*" (Romans 7:18).

Have you ever come to that place where you say, "In me, inherently in me, in my flesh?" Now when he says, your *flesh*, he doesn't mean, your skin, bones, hide, and hair. He's not talking about that. Your flesh is that old nature that you have, that Adamic

nature that the Bible calls *the flesh*. He, the Apostle Paul, says, “*For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing:*”—and continue to read in verse 18—“*for that will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not*” (Romans 7:18). The Apostle Paul says, “Hey, I want to do good; but how to do it, I don’t know.” Verse 19 says, “*For the good that I would I do not*” (Romans 7:19).

Have you ever been that way? Said, “I’m going to do this, and really make a New Year’s resolution”? How many of you have kept all your New Year’s resolutions? Never mind, don’t even raise your hands. All right, “*For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do*” (Romans 7:19). Now continue to read: “*Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I delight in the law*” (Romans 7:19). Now the word *law* here means, “a principle”: “*that, when I would do good, evil is present with me*” (Romans 7:21).

Now look up here, and let me ask you a question. Do you identify with that? Oh, you hypocrite, nod your head. Do you identify with that? I want to do good, and I desire to do good. I’m going to say I’ll never do that. Do what you want to do. You don’t know how. You just find a principle—a law—“*that when I would do good, evil is present with me.*”

Well, friend, I want to say to you that this 7th chapter of the Book of Romans is a tremendous chapter. This chapter shows you how the fruit of the Spirit will work in your life, and become that goodness that gives you that transparency, that conscience that is void of offence toward God, and toward man.

A. Paul’s Desire

So I want you to look at it with me very carefully, now. Let’s look in verse 17. And the very first thing I want you to see, in verse 17, is Paul’s desire for goodness. Notice, in verse 17—he says here, “*Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me*” (Romans 7:17). The Apostle says, “The real me, true nature that I have, the one that’s been born from above, I don’t want to do these bad things. But there’s something that’s in me that’s ugly and awful. It’s sin. And that sin just dwells in me.” Skip on down to verse 22: “*For I delight in the law of God after the inward man*” (Romans 7:22). You see, Paul—in his innermost nature—had been born again. Oh, he loved God. He wanted to serve God. This was his great desire. He said, “*I delight in the law of God after the inward man.*”

Now I believe that this is the testimony of a saved man. I believe the Apostle Paul was saved, when he wrote Romans chapter 7, or wrote what he is describing in Romans chapter 7. He is describing himself as a saved man, but he had not discovered the way of victory.

B. Paul's Determination

So you notice, not only did he have the desire—verse 22—but he also had the determination. Look in the last part of verse 18. He says, “*For to will is present with me...*” (Romans 7:22), “*...but how to perform that which is good I find not*” (Romans 7:18). Paul had not given up. I mean, he is determined. He said, “I have a will. Not only do I have a desire—I have determination to do good.”

Let me show you something now. If you take these verses, Romans chapter 7, verses 7 through 24. I want you to do something, when you go home. I want you to take a pen or a pencil—if you don't mind marking in your Bible—and you put a circle around every time the Apostle Paul uses the personal pronoun to refer to himself—*I, me, or my*. And just put a circle around it. You'll be amazed. In these brief verses, you will find that Paul refers to himself with a personal pronoun over 40 times. He uses *I, me, my, and mine* over 40 times. I wish we had time, in this brief message this morning, to do that. Then, I want you to do something else. Take another word, and this time, don't put a circle around it, but put a box around it. And that's the word *law*. And you'll find, in that brief passage—chapter 7, verses 7 through 24—you'll find the word *law* will be used over 20 times. And then, when you go home, continue to read and reread that passage, and you'll find out that he doesn't mention Jesus or the Holy Spirit one time. Not once.

Now what is happening here is this: that here is Paul, who knew the law of God, then he got saved, and he's like so many Christians. He says, “Well, now that I'm saved, I'm going to keep God's commandments, and I'm going to live for God. I'm going to be a good man.” Do you remember how you felt, when you first got saved? You said, “Wonderful, I'm saved. I'll never sin again, never. Praise God, I'm saved.” And then, you sin. You say, “Oh, hmm. That was a mistake. I won't do it again, God.” And you promise God. And you fail again. You say, “Well, Lord, I've got to learn.” And you get clean again, and then you fail again. And then, the devil says, “Hey, you probably weren't saved at all”; or, “There is no God”; or, “All of that they're preaching in the Bible is not true”; and, “There is no victory for people, especially there's no victory for you”; and, “Why are you going to go back down there to that church? You'll be a hypocrite, if you go down there. Why don't you just stay out of church, and think it over for a while?” And boy, he's already got you backsliding, already away from God.

C. Paul's Despair

And you had a desire, but that wasn't enough. Then, you had a determination, and that wasn't enough. I hope you came to the third place that Paul came to, which was despair. Look, if you will, now, in verse 24 of this same chapter, and look at it. He says, “*O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*” (Romans 7:24).

Now you know what happens to a lot of folks? A lot of people read Romans 7, and they use that as, somehow, as sort of a pillow to rest their sinful head on. And they say this: “Well, if the Apostle Paul couldn’t be victorious, neither can I. And if the Apostle Paul couldn’t do good, neither can I. So I’ll just settle back in my sin.” Well, I want to tell you, the Apostle Paul didn’t settle back in his sin. Friend, Romans 7 doesn’t stop in Romans 7. Bless God, it goes on to Romans 8, and it goes on to victory. And this is not the place you’re supposed to stop. And this is not a place you just sit down and make a pillow for your head. The Apostle Paul not only had a desire, and a determination, but that desire, and that determination, when it failed, led to despair. And would to God, that there are many today who would at least come to the place of despair, where you realize that you can’t do it, and you throw up your hands in one final cry of desperation, and say, “*O wretched man that I am!*” (Romans 7:24)—“*O wretched man that I am!*”

Now I’m going to tell you something very inelegant. But Bible scholars tell us that, what Paul is referring to, is one of the most ironical forms of punishment that the ancient people ever had upon a murderer. When one man would kill another man, sometimes, they would take the corpse of the man who had been murdered, and strap the corpse to the living body of the murderer—foot-to-foot, hand-to-hand, and face-to-face. And that living man would carry about the rotting, decaying, putrefying corpse of the man he had killed, until the putrefication of that corpse, and that dead body, would eat into his own body, and bring his own death. Face to face with the man he had killed, strapped hand-in-foot. That’s what they say is the figure of speech that the Apostle Paul is using, when he says, “*O wretched man that I am!*”: “Who’ll get this corpse off of me? Who will deliver me from this dead body? This old flesh that I’m carrying around with me—who will set me free?” (Romans 7:24).

Friend, that doesn’t sound to me like a man who’s made Romans 7 a pillow for his sin. You see, here was a man who had a desire; here was a man who had a determination; and finally, here was a man who came to despair. God wants to bring you to that place. You know the problem with many of us? Do you know what most of us think? Most of us think that we are too weak. But that’s not our problem. Do you know what our problem is? We’re too strong. We’re too strong. We still think we can do it. It’s still us, and the law. So we just resolve, one more time: “Lord, I’m going to do it.” And we fall, one more time.

Watchman Nee tells of a Chinese man who was drowning. Some men were standing there on the banks. This man was floundering. He was going under. None of the other Chinese knew how to swim. Finally, there was one man. They said, “Can you swim?” They said, “Rescue him.” He said, “No, wait.” And the man went under, and he came up again, and said, “Help me.” And the man who could swim just stood there. They said, “Help him.” The man said, “No.” Again, he went under, and he came up, and he said,

“Help me.” But this man simply stood there. This is a true story. It really happened. Finally, when it looked like the drowning man was going under for the last time, this man went into the water, and pulled him out to the shore to safety. The friends around did not brag on the man who rescued the drowning man. But one man said, “I don’t believe I’ve ever seen a man so much in love with his own life as you. I don’t believe I’ve ever seen a man as cruel as you are. You let that man almost drown. And then, reluctantly, you saved his life. Why did you do that?” Well, he said, “You don’t understand. You don’t understand at all. It wasn’t that I didn’t want to save his life. But I’m not a strong swimmer myself.” He said, “If I had gone out there, that man would have drowned us both.” He said, “I had to wait till all his strength was gone, before I could rescue him.”

You know, the problem with many of us, dear friend, is this: It’s not that we’re too weak—we’re just too strong. We’re still struggling. We’re still trying, rather than trusting. But the Apostle Paul came to the place where he says, “*O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*” (Romans 7:24). Notice, he didn’t say, “What?” He’d been trying *what* for long enough. And now he decides he’s going to try this word: “*Who shall deliver me?*” And then, God gives him the answer, and he says, in verse 25, “*I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord*” (Romans 7:25). Goodness—he learned—was not the work of the flesh. “In my flesh dwells no good thing” (Romans 7:18). Goodness is the fruit of the Spirit.

Then, dear friend, when you leave Romans 7, and you get into Romans 8, it changes like darkness to light. In Romans 8, you pick up a word, two words that are used over and over again. The Spirit, and Christ Jesus; the Spirit, and Christ Jesus; the Spirit, the Spirit, the Spirit. And he says, in Romans chapter 8 and verse 2—look at it: “*For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death*” (Romans 8:2).

Yesterday, I was in Florida. I landed here at the airport. I thought I’d come to Siberia—all that snow. It was wonderful. But then, when they I got on that airplane down there, that big airplane, these incredible big airplanes which seat maybe 25% of this congregation this morning, just one of these big airplanes. And you know, those things are so heavy. And then, they put all that luggage on there. Then, all those people get on there. And that airplane is sitting there on that runway, on that tarmac, and the law of gravity just is holding it there. But that pilot gets behind there, and he moves that throttle, and those great engines begin to roar loud, and that airplane starts to move slowly. And then, faster and faster and faster, and it begins to bump like that. And the first thing you know, up it goes. I mean, all that weight, all that luggage, all those people, all that steel. It’s just flying.

Question: Has the law of gravity been cancelled? No. But there’s another law. We’ll call it *the law of aerodynamics*, which is a greater law than the law of gravity. And friend

even though the law of gravity was still working, there was the law of aerodynamics that made me free from the law of gravity. That's what the Apostle Paul is talking about. When you get saved, and right with God, that old flesh is still there. And the law of sin and death has never been cancelled. It's still there. But there's a new law. It's the law of life in Christ Jesus that makes you free from the law of sin and death. It doesn't cancel the law. It's not sinless perfection.

Now suppose, when I was on that airplane the other day, and I decided this is getting boring, so I stepped off for some fresh air. The law of gravity is still there. But you see, as long as you abide in the Lord Jesus Christ, then, as you abide in Christ, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus makes you free from the law of sin and death.

Now there are a lot of people today who would like to have an experience that would free them from sin, and eradicate the old nature. God will never allow it. Do you know why? He wants—it's imperative—that you abide in the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, He'll never give you an experience that you could rest in, but He gives you a relationship that you abide in. That relationship is to abide in the Lord Jesus, just as you abide in that airplane. And the Apostle Paul said, "I have tried and I can't; *'For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death'*" (Romans 8:2).

D. Paul's Deliverance

And you have Paul's desire, Paul's determination, and Paul's despair; and then, you have Paul's deliverance.

Now what he's said is this: "In my flesh is no good thing" (Romans 7:18). In Galatians chapter 5, Paul mentions the works of the flesh. But then, he says, "*But the fruit of the Spirit...*" (Galatians 5:22). Do you know how to be good? The Bible says, "*For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure*" (Philippians 2:13). God gives the desire and the dynamic, but you must abide in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The fruit of the Spirit is goodness. May I say one more time—listen to me—the best thing that could be said about you, when they put it on your tombstone, is this: "He was a good man—she was a good lady—full of the Holy Spirit." And if you're not full of the Holy Spirit, you won't be full of goodness.

Now you've tried and tried and tried to be good. Haven't you? All right now, let me tell you what to do this morning. Are you listening? Quit trying and start trusting. The fruit of the Spirit is goodness. You don't produce this fruit. You bear it. He produces it, as you abide in Jesus.

Conclusion

Let's pray. Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. O Father God, I pray, today, that you'll make good daddies, good mamas, good brothers, good sisters, good employees, good employers, and good citizens out of bad people, like we are. Lord, we know that we have been created by Christ Jesus unto good works that You have before ordained that we would walk in them (Ephesians 2:10). In your name we pray. Amen.

You're Never a Failure Until You Quit

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: August 27, 1989

Main Scripture Text: Galatians 5:22

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith."
GALATIANS 5:22

Outline

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- II. Why Is Patience Important?
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 - C. It Is Necessary for Prosperity
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- III. How Can You Have Patience?
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Conclusion

Introduction

Are you a patient person? Maybe I ought to ask your wife, or your husband, or your children. Are you a patient person? Well, the Bible says that, "*The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace,*"—and then, the next quality—"*longsuffering*" (Galatians 5:22). And the word *longsuffering* means, "patience." The fruit of the Spirit is patience.

Well, let's take a test and find out whether you're patient or not. How do you do with interruptions? When you're very busy doing something—I mean, that has to be done, has to be done on time—and somebody interrupts you, how do you react? Or, let me ask you another question: How do you deal with irritations? Anything bug you? Things irritate you? Cold food? Long lines? Inept clerks? Traffic jams? Lost keys? Flat tires? Or, how about, dear friend, inconveniences? You know, we like everything fast now. We don't want to be inconvenient, so we have fast foods; we've got the fast lines at the checkout counter; we've got instant coffee; we have instant oatmeal; we have microwave ovens. Everything is fast, because we want it and we want it now.

But you know, I was interested to note, the other day, I discovered that if we live a normal lifetime, we will spend six months waiting on red lights—six months! You know, if you're waiting at one of those red lights, and the light turns green, and you don't move in three seconds, the man behind you turns red. We are an impatient people. How do you deal with inconveniences? Or, let's get more serious: How do you deal with incapacities? When you have a situation in your family with your loved ones; and you have a situation with your health; or you have a situation with your business; or you have a situation—somehow, you find yourself wanting to do something; you find yourself saying, "I would give all that I possess and all that I am to change this situation," and you do not have the capacity; there's nothing you can do about it—how do you react?

Or, let me just tighten the focus a little more. How do you deal with imponderables? Not only is there nothing you can do about it, but you can't even understand it; it doesn't even make sense; and, you run it through all of your little formulas, and all your little shibboleths, and all your little proof texts; and, it just doesn't work out. What do you do? How do you react? Well, if you say, "Pastor, you know, really, I'm not doing so good on your checklist," it might be that you have need of patience. No, you do have need of patience. I have need of patience.

And you know why we have these irritations, inconveniences, incapacities, imponderables, irritations? Do you know why they come to us? Romans chapter 5 and verse 3 says that, "Tribulation works patience" (Romans 5:3). You wondering why all of these things are coming into your life? They're not only coming there to reveal impatience, but God is allowing them to grow patience in your life.

Now I want us to learn that the fruit of the Spirit is patience. And these irritations—they're not obstacles; they're opportunities to grow patience. We've become so impatient that *tomorrow* is a dirty word. Let's think under three headings.

I. What Is Patience?

First of all, what is *patience*, that is called here, in the *King James Version* of the Scripture, *longsuffering* (Galatians 5:22). What is it? Well, it's not merely the ability to put up with some tedious task. That is patience, but that's not what he's speaking about here. Nor is it even the ability to endure pain and suffering, or irritable people. It is that, but it is also more than that.

Let me read to you what one man said about patience. Mr. Barkley said, "It is not the patience which can sit down, and bow its head, and let things descend upon it, and passively endure until the storm is passed. It is the spirit which can bear things not simply with resignation, but with blazing hope. It is not the spirit which sits statically, enduring in one place, but the spirit which bears things because it knows that these

things are leading to a goal of glory.” And then, listen to what he said: “It is not patience which grimly waits for the end, but patience which radiantly hopes for the dawn.” That’s what the word *longsuffering* is—not just simply sticking it out, not just simply grinning and bearing it, but saying, “I know, I know, that whatever befall, Jesus doeth all things well. So in the midst of this, whatever it is, I will give Him praise.” That, my friend, is patience, endurance, longsuffering.

Now friend, if you don’t learn this, you’ll never learn anything else. If you don’t have patience in life, I can guarantee you, you are a failure. Not *will be* a failure; you’re *already* a failure. Without patience you are a failure. You are not a failure until you quit, but if you quit, you’re always a failure.

Let me illustrate: Suppose you’re running a hundred-yard dash, and you’re ten yards ahead of everybody else, and three feet from the goal, and you quit—I don’t care how far ahead you are, you just lost the race.

You are never a failure until you quit. You’re always a failure if you quit. Without patience, without endurance, without longsuffering, without this fruit of the Spirit, you, my friend, are a failure. But you’re never a failure until you quit.

II. Why Is Patience Important?

Now I want us to think about the qualities of patience. Why is patience so important? Turn with me to the Book of James.

How would you like to be a full-grown Christian—I mean, a Christian with all of the flowers, and the fruits, the graces, and the beauties of the Lord Jesus Christ in your life? How would you like for people to look at you and see Jesus Christ? Furthermore, how would you like, in every circumstance, to be victorious—I mean, to be triumphing over everything that comes to you? Thirdly, how would you like to have all of your needs met—everything, to have a sufficiency for your life? And fourthly, how would you like to have perfect peace and tranquility? How would you like to be that kind of a person; be like the Lord Jesus Christ; be victorious in every situation, have every need met; and then, my dear friend, be at peace and calm? How would you like that? “Well,” you say, “I’d really like it.” May I tell you, everything I’ve described comes through patience.

A. It Is Necessary for Maturity

And that’s what James is talking about. For example, look here, in James chapter 1 and verses 3 and 4: “*Knowing this, that the testing of your faith worketh patience...*”—now, the testing of your faith are those irritations, those imponderables, those incapacities that I’m talking about—those inconveniences, those trials, those tears, those tribulations—“*Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect*” (James 1:3–4). You know what

the word *perfect* means? It means “mature”—“mature.” What does God want out of you? God wants you to be a full-grown Christian. He wants you to be mature. Are you listening? There is no maturity without patience and no patience without trials.

And if you’re not mature, you’re not like the Lord Jesus Christ. You see, the Bible says that God wants to bring you to the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:13). And the way God does that is to allow you to have trials and tribulations, in order that you might be mature.

Are children patient? Of course not! Anybody who’s got any children knows that children don’t know the difference between *no* and *not yet*. Isn’t that right? They don’t know the difference. I mean, if you just say, “Wait a while,” to them, that is “no.” They want it now. But God is interested in growing you up and making you mature. And I’m going to tell you, dear friend, that the only way that you will learn maturity is through tribulation that leads to patience. You see, we’re like little children.

A Danish proverb says, “Give to a pig when it grunts, and give to a child when it cries, and you will have a fine pig and a bad child.” “Well,” you say, “Lord, I don’t want to suffer. Lord, I don’t want any problems. I want it to be all honey and no bees. I just want to sail through life in perfect peace.” Well, if you do, you will never be mature Christians.

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

*I walked a mile with Sorrow,
And ne’er a word said she;
But oh! The things I learned from her,
When Sorrow walked with me. (Robert Browning Hamilton)*

Tribulation brings patience, and patience makes us mature. So if you’re having difficulty, what should you do? Look in verse 5: “*If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him*” (James 1:5). Now so many times, when tribulation comes, what do we do? We say, “Lord, take it away!” That ought not to be your prayer to begin with: not, “Lord, take it away,” but, “Lord, give me wisdom. What is it, God, that I’m supposed to learn in this situation?” Don’t waste your sorrows; don’t waste your troubles. I mean, if God is bringing those things into your life to make you mature, then, if it is a test, pray to God that He would give you wisdom to pass the test, so He won’t have to keep giving it, because, friend, He’s not going to flunk you out; He’s just going to re-enroll you. I mean, He’s just going to keep on giving the test.

So listen. What is the fruit of patience? It is, number one, maturity.

B. It is Necessary for Victory

All right now, look again. Not only did I say, “Would you want to be a full-grown, mature Christian?” but, “How would you want to be a victorious Christian?”

Look down here, in James chapter 1, again—verse 12: *“Blessed is the man that endureth temptation...”*—you know what the word *endure* means? “Has patience”—*“Blessed is the man that [is patient in trials]: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life”* (James 1:12). Now when we go to Heaven, we’re going to have crowns that we’re going to cast at Jesus’ feet. But that is not what James is talking about. Paul said, in the Book of Romans, that we are to rule, we are to reign, in this life (Romans 5:17). We are to be victors in this life. Now my dear friend, a child is not a victor. A spiritual child is a victim. God wants you to be strong. God doesn’t want you to be putty in the devil’s hands; He wants you to be a warrior, and He wants you to be a victorious warrior.

And the only way that you’re going to do that—to live victoriously—is to triumph in the Lord Jesus Christ. As the Apostle Paul said, in 2 Corinthians 2, verse 14: *“Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ”* (2 Corinthians 2:14). You see, here’s what happens: When trials come, and you endure, then you mature. Then, when you mature—then, when the devil comes with these things—you are a victor, rather than a victim, because you’re strong. Your spirit has been exercised. Let me give you a Proverb—Proverbs chapter 25, verse 28, says this: *“He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls”* (Proverbs 25:28).

Have you every seen anybody that didn’t have any rule over their own spirit? Do you know why? They’ve never learned maturity. And they haven’t learned maturity, because they have no patience. And they’re like a city, broken down, that has no walls. You know what that means? It means the enemy and the vandals can come and go at will. Do you know anybody like that? I know plenty of people that way. The devil is making you a dirty plaything. Your life, your home, your business, your witness, is in shambles. And the reason it’s in shambles is you have no rule over your own spirit; you’re putty in the devil’s hands. And do you know why? You’ve never learned patience—you’ve never learned patience. The devil can come and go at will; you’re like a city broken down, whose walls have crumbled.

“Well,” you say, “Pastor, what am I supposed to do?” I’ll tell you what you’re supposed to do: You’re supposed to endure until you mature. And then, when the enemy comes—I don’t care what happens—you begin to praise God. Just praise God. Just say, “Lord, I don’t know what it is. I don’t know why You brought it. I can’t understand it. But Lord, I’m going to stand under it. I’m going to endure. I’m going to be patient. And I praise You.”

Now if it’s from God, why shouldn’t you praise Him? “But,” you say, “what if it’s from

the devil?” Praise Him anyway. “Why?” The last thing the devil wants you to do is praise God—isn’t that right? So suppose the devil put something on you, and you begin to praise God. The devil’s going to say, “Hey, this thing’s backfiring on me. I mean, here I am persecuting him; I’m bringing trials and tribulations—and he’s praising God. Maybe I’d better stop.” You understand? I mean, it just blows up in the devil’s face. Listen. If it’s from God, praise Him. If it’s from the devil, praise Him. *“In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you”* (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

C. It Is Necessary for Prosperity

You see, listen. Patience is necessary to maturity; it is necessary to victory; and then, it is necessary to prosperity. Turn to James chapter 5 here, for a moment, and look in verse 7: *“Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth...”*—now, the word *husbandman* means “farmer.” He—*“waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh”* (James 5:7–8).

Now what’s he saying? He’s saying, “If you’re a farmer, remember this: You can’t hurry the harvest—you can’t hurry the harvest. If you want prosperity, you’re going to have to have patience. Your crop will come in.” Galatians chapter 6 and verse 9: “In due season you will reap, if ye faint not” (Galatians 6:9). What is the law of the harvest? You reap what you sow; you reap more than you sow; and you always reap later than you sow. Now the reason many of us don’t reap is, we don’t wait.

Patience, endurance, is necessary—it is necessary. You see, he says, “The farmer, first of all, he has the former rain—that is, the early rain, the rain in the spring. He puts a seed in the ground, and God rains upon it. And that causes that little grain of wheat to swell up, and just burst, and begin to grow. And then, the farmer has to wait—he has to wait. And finally, there comes the latter rain in the fall that causes the shoot to grow and the grain to form, and ripen, and ready for the harvest. And the farmer just waits on the former rain and the latter rain, and he waits patiently for it.”

When we were little boys, sometimes we used to run up and ring somebody’s doorbell and run away before they could answer. Did you ever do that? We do that sometimes with the Lord.

The Bible says, over and over, “Wait on the Lord.” *“Wait, I say, on the LORD”* (Psalm 27:14). *“Therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted”* (Isaiah 30:18). Delays are not denials. If you want God to answer your prayer, you’re going to have to learn to wait on the Lord. You say, “Why doesn’t God answer right away?” Simple: He wants you to grow. It’s His way of ripening grain and ripening you. The answer’s not ripe yet. Friend, listen. With God, timing is far more

important than time. Okay? Just wait on the Lord.

I was reading about the Anjali Mission in India that was begun in the middle of the 1800s. They started a church there—the only evangelical church in India at that time. They named it *The Lone Star of India*. And that church was there for 15 years; and, after 15 years of prayer, and labor, and money, and arduous concern, do you know how many converts they had after 15 years? Ten. Fifteen years of work, and they had ten converts. They had not even won one to Jesus Christ for each year. The mission board met, of that denomination, and they were ready to close that mission down. “*The Lone Star of India*,” they said, “it’s a failure. We’ll back out.”

There was a man there on that mission board whose name was Samuel Smith. He wrote, “My country ’tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing.” He wrote those words—beautiful words. His heart was broken. He didn’t think that the *Lone Star of India* ought to be closed down. He went back to his room that night. He took out his pen, and he wrote these words:

*Shine on, Lone Star, in grief and tears
And sad reverses oft baptized
Shine on amid thy founders’ fears*

Lone stars in Heaven are not despised. (Samuel Smith)

He took that word and read it back to the mission board. And they said, “Well, we’ll just let the star of India—we’ll let *The Lone Star of India*—shine on.” Thirty years later, the Anjali church had 15,000 members.

“In due season”—in due season—“we’ll reap, if we faint not” (Galatians 6:9). It’s just necessary, dear friend, to the harvest.

D. It Is Necessary for Tranquility

Now you see, God knows what is good for the child, and God also knows when it is good for the child. I’ll tell you something else that patience is necessary for. It’s necessary for maturity; it’s necessary for victory; it’s necessary for prosperity. Here’s what else patience is necessary for: It is necessary for tranquility. Look, if you will here, in James chapter 5, in verses 10 and 11—look at it: “*Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure*” (James 5:10–11).

There is no happiness, no tranquility, without patience. An impatient person is always an unhappy person. “*Behold, we count them happy which endure*” (James 5:11). You cannot be happy and impatient at the same time. Now friend, if you are having trouble with patience, try a little laughter. I mean, hey, learn to laugh at your problems, and you’ll never run out of anything to laugh at. You say, “You’re being frivolous.” No, laughter is not frivolous—I don’t think so. I think God made us to laugh. You see, God’s

not a cosmic killjoy. Have you ever seen things just get so bad you've got nothing to do but laugh? You say, "This is ridiculous," and you just sit back and laugh. But there are some things, folks, that you're not going to have tranquility about, until you just accept them with patience. I mean, you're just going to have to endure. It might not be a laughing matter at all. You're just going to have to live with something.

Listen. In life, there are a lot of things you can't change—isn't that right? You might as well admit it. I was coming down I-40, and there was a traffic jam that started just at about at Whitten Road. It looked like at least three miles of solid automobiles—the world's longest parking lot. So I just thought I'd look at the faces of people sitting in that line. Folks, I've seen better-looking faces on bottles of iodine! They couldn't change it. So why not tune in to something on the radio? Why not just take a little time to praise the Lord? Why not just say, "Lord, I can't change it; I'll endure it; and, whatsoever state I am in therewith to be content"? I mean, you'd might as well.

I was reading about a guy who had a great, beautiful lawn. He loved his lawn. It was beautiful. But it got some dandelions on it. He went down to the garden store, and they said, "Do this," and that didn't work. And he went somewhere else, and they said, "Do this," and that didn't work. Finally, he wrote the Department of Agriculture, and said, "I've done this, and I've done this, and I've done this. Now what should I do?" They wrote back and said, "Try getting used to them." You see, happy are they which endure (James 5:11). Just say, "Hey, I've got some dandelions. Praise the Lord!" Might as well—right? You'd might as well.

III. How Can You Have Patience?

All right now, listen. What is the fruit of patience, which is the fruit of the Spirit? It is maturity; it is victory; it is prosperity; it is tranquility. That's what James says. All right now, last of all: we've talked about what it is, what it does—now, how to have it.

I was interested to note, as I studied this passage of Scripture, the sequence. Watch it: "*The fruit of the Spirit is*"—what?—"love, joy, peace, longsuffering" (Galatians 5:22). That is not by accident, because, my dear friend, longsuffering—or, patience—is the composite of love, joy, and peace. I can show you that from the Scripture.

A. Patience Comes from Love

For example, let's take love—1 Corinthians chapter 13, verse 4: "[Love] suffereth long"—"[Love] suffereth long" (1 Corinthians 13:4). Or, let me give you another verse—Ephesians chapter 4, verse 2: "*With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love*" (Ephesians 4:2). Loveless people are impatient people. If you're impatient with your wife, you're not showing her the love that you ought to show her. If you're impatient with your children, you're not showing them the love. The

problem is not your impatience; it's your lack of love.

You want me to give you one of the secrets of success in doing anything? It's to see the thing from the other person's point of view. You see, a loveless person is always a selfish person. He's always looking at it from his own viewpoint; he never thinks about the other person's viewpoint. A successful parent is a parent who can see life from his child's point of view. Do you know what a successful businessman is? A successful businessman is a man who can see his business from his customers' point of view. Do you know what a successful husband is? A successful husband is one who can see life from his wife's point of view—amen?

Now listen. A selfish person sees it from his own point of view. A loving person sees it from the other person's point of view. And that's the reason the Bible says we forbear one another in love and longsuffering (Ephesians 4:2). Love suffers long (1 Corinthians 13:4). If you're impatient with the faults and foibles of other people, it's because you're an unloving person. So you ought to be filled with love.

You know, a person, if he's full of love, almost nothing will provoke him. And if he's not filled with love, almost anything will provoke him. Longsuffering, patience, comes from love.

B. Patience Comes from Joy

But not only does it come from love; it comes from joy. You see, *"The joy of the LORD is your strength"* (Nehemiah 8:10). What does it take to endure? Strength. The next time that you feel in need of patience, check your joy quotient. Are you rejoicing in the Lord? Or, has that thing that you've become impatient with—has it made you grumbly, and hateful, and spiteful? Impatient people are nasty people. And nasty people are people who are not rejoicing in the Lord. I said, "You even need to learn how to laugh." Laughter is life's shock absorber. Listen, friend. If you're having trouble with impatience, have a little joy; have a little happiness; have a little fun; take some time off; relax a little; smile a little; laugh a little. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, and peace.

C. Patience Comes from Peace

An impatient person is just simply a person with no peace. And why doesn't he have any peace? He's got his eyes on what's making him impatient, rather than the Lord. Remember our scripture, Isaiah 26, verse 3: *"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee"* (Isaiah 26:3). The Bible says, *"The fruit of the Spirit is...longsuffering"* (Galatians 5:22).

I'll tell you one thing about fruit: You will never see a fruit factory—isn't that right? You see a shirt factory, but you see a fruit orchard. You see, there is no fruit without life—without life. You cannot manufacture patience. The fruit of the Spirit is patience. And the same Bible that says, in Galatians chapter 5, verse 22, *"The fruit of the Spirit*

is...patience” (Galatians 5:22), says, a few verses later, “If we live in the Spirit, let’s walk in the Spirit” (Galatians 5:25). The only way that fruit is going to ripen and grow is in the right climate. You can’t grow bananas in Alaska. And friend, you’re not going to grow and produce the fruit of the Spirit unless you’re walking in the Spirit in the right climate.

Conclusion

I’m telling you, you’re never a failure until you quit. And you’ll never have patience until you abide in the Spirit. And then, you don’t produce that fruit—you bear it. Jesus said, “You abide in Me. Let My Word abide in you, and then you will be fruitful” (John 15:7–8).



What Do You Do with a Burden?

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: December 10, 1995

Main Scripture Text: Galatians 6:1–5

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Introduction

Would you be finding in your Bibles, please, the Book of Galatians, chapter 6? And when you've found it, look up here—Galatians chapter 6. In a few moments, we're going to read, together, the first three verses. But I want to talk to you, today, about burdens—about your burdens. I know you have burdens. The strangest thing in the world, the most rare thing in the world, would be to find a thinking person without a burden. And every preacher needs to understand, when he preaches, that on every row in his congregation is a burdened heart. Now the question is this: What do you do with a burden? What do you do with a burden?

Well, look, if you will please, in Galatians chapter 6, verse 1: *“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of*

meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For every man shall bear his own burden" (Galatians 6:1–5).

We're going to see, really, there are three kinds of burdens: There are the burdens we willingly take up; there are the burdens we faithfully bear up; and, there are the burdens we wisely give up. And it's very important that you understand the distinction in these, as we think together on: "What Do You Do with a Burden?"

I. The Burden That We Willingly Take Up: The Burden That We Share

Now the first burden I'm going to talk about is the burden we share: that is the burden we willingly take up.

Look in verses 1 and 2 again. He says here, "*Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ"* (Galatians 6:1–2). There are certain burdens that we willingly take up. These are the burdens that we share. They're not our burden. They're someone else's burdens. And what is the burden that our brother has? He has been overtaken in a fault. We're not talking, here, about a wicked man, a bad man. We're talking about a good man, a good woman, who has been sabotaged by sin. You see, the word *overtaken* means someone who has been tripped up, someone who has been trapped by temptation, someone who has been sabotaged by sin, somebody who has been overtaken in a fault. And if you'll think, you know somebody just like that: somebody who is a good man or woman, who gave his or her heart to the Lord Jesus Christ, and was saved, and walked with our Lord in victory and joy, and then, something happened. That person fell. That person tripped up. That person, as the young people would say, "He blew it." And he's carrying a burden, and that's the burden of his sin.

A. The Ministry of Restoration

Now what is my ministry? What is your ministry? There are certain burdens that we're to take up. There is the ministry of restoration. Look, if you will, here, in this passage of Scripture. And see, in verse 1, the Bible says, "*Restore such an one"* (Galatians 6:1). The word here for *restore* is a Greek word that was used to mend a bone, like a doctor would put a bone back in place to set that bone that has been broken. And that is the ministry of reconciliation that God has given to us. Do you know someone like that? I mean, think, right now. Don't you know someone who used to be a member of this church and perhaps doesn't attend anymore? Or, don't you have

someone in your family? Or, don't you have someone in your office? Or, don't you know someone in your neighborhood—someone who has been ambushed by sin?

Let me tell you what the message, today, is: If you are that person who has fallen, there's hope for you. If you're that person that has not fallen, there is a warning for you. And whether you have fallen, or whether you have not, there is a call to action for all of us. And the Bible says, if we're spiritual, we're to restore such a one (Galatians 6:1). Now I've got wonderful news for you: If you have fallen, if you once walked with God, and you have fallen into sin, God is the God of a second chance. And with a Christian—listen to me—failure is not final.

I was thinking, recently, about all of the saints of God in the Bible who fell, and yet, by the grace of God, they were restored. Jonah was a prophet, a man of God, and we criticize Jonah so often; but, the Bible says, "*The word of the LORD came unto Jonah*" (Jonah 1:1; Jonah 3:1). That means Jonah was in contact with God. He was the kind of a man who could hear the Word of God. He was the kind of a man that God would choose to preach a message. "*The word of the LORD came unto Jonah,*" and Jonah was commissioned to go and preach to Nineveh. And you remember that Jonah ran from the presence of the Lord. You know the story, how he spent the night on a *foam blubber mattress*. And then, God restored Jonah, and he preached the Word of God. And God used to him to hold a great citywide crusade in a city about the size of our Memphis, Tennessee. Thank God, He's the God of a second chance!

We remember Samson, the heavyweight champion of the Old Testament, yet he lost his testimony. He lost his purity. His eyes are put out. He's grinding in the mill. But the Bible says, "*The hair of his head began to grow again*" (Judges 16:22). That's just another way of saying that God gave him a second chance.

I think of Simon Peter, the big fisherman. What a wonderful man was Simon Peter! He loved God. He had courage. He had zeal. But he tripped up, and he fell. He was overtaken in a fault. He cursed, and swore, and denied the Lord Jesus. And what a field day the gossips would have had! There's old Simon Peter—Reverend Peter—that old hypocrite, *The Rock*. He's nothing but grains of sand. Yet, he was the mighty apostle of Pentecost, because Jesus looked at him, and said, "When you're converted—when—then, you strengthen your brethren" (Luke 22:32).

I think of David. David was a man after God's own heart. What a man of integrity and love, and wisdom, and skill, and courage was David! And yet, David fell into temptation. He sinned egregiously against Almighty God. But while David was a great sinner, David was a great repentor. And God used David in the latter years of his life. God restored the bones that were broken in David's life. As a matter of fact, David prayed this prayer: "*Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation*" (Psalm 51:12), "*that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice*" (Psalm 51:8).

If you ever read the Gospel of Mark—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—remember that the Gospel of Mark was written by a man whose name was John Mark. John Mark started out to be a missionary, and he became a failure. He was a turncoat. He was a dropout. He failed so miserably that the Apostle Paul said, “I can’t use him again in the missionary journey. I don’t want him around me. He’s a failure.” And yet, he was restored by a man named Barnabas, who was an encourager. And later on in Paul’s ministry, he said, “Bring John Mark. He is profitable unto me for the ministry” (2 Timothy 4:11). He was the man—John Mark—who wrote the Gospel of Mark.

Now look up here, and let me tell you something: There is a ministry of restoration. Our God is a God of a second chance, and the Bible says, “If a man be overtaken in a fault, we are to restore such a one in the spirit of meekness” (Galatians 6:1). I say it again: If you have fallen, there is hope for you. If you have not fallen, there is a warning for you. And there’s a call to action for every one of us. We are to restore such a one. And again, the word *restore* has the idea of mending a broken bone.

I was raised in West Palm Beach, Florida. One of the things that we loved to do in the wintertime, my brother and I, was to collect coconuts, and sell them to the Yankees. I could get a whole dime for a coconut; and, of course, you know the coconut tree is different than other trees. It doesn’t have limbs on it, but it has fronds at the top. We learned how to climb a coconut tree like a monkey. I could go up a coconut tree, just like that, and collect coconuts. I was up a coconut tree. It must have been 30 feet tall. I had my left arm around a palm frond, and I had my right hand disconnecting a coconut, when that palm frond let go. It was yellowed, and it was ready to fall. The coconut fell; the frond fell; and the boy fell. I fell about 30 feet. I fell on the grass, but my left arm fell on the sidewalk; and then, the palm frond came down and fell on the boy. And the coconut fell down and fell on the frond. And there I was with my left arm mangled with a compound fracture, and the bone actually going right through the skin, protruding. It was a bad situation. Now my brother was there, and he saw what happened to me.

Now I want to ask you a question: As I was lying there, having fallen—and, by the way, it was my fault. I was careless. I didn’t look. I didn’t pay attention that the limb was weak and yellowed. It was really something that I got myself into—but, what did I need? What did a boy squirming on the ground with a broken arm—what did I—need? Well, I didn’t need a lecture, not at that time. What I needed was restoration. I didn’t my brother to say, “Adrian, didn’t you see the limb was yellow?” I’ll tell you something else: I didn’t need my brother to ignore me, and walk away, and leave me there in agony and pain on the ground. I’ll tell you something else I didn’t need: I didn’t need my brother to go around to the community and say, “Did you hear about Adrian? He fell out of a coconut tree.” I’ll tell you something else I didn’t need: for him to come along and shoot me, to put me out of my misery. I’ll tell you something else I didn’t need: I didn’t need them to

amputate that arm. Now I had that arm in a sling for a while—and, you can't tell, but it's still just a little crooked. But I can use it. Because, what I needed was somebody, at that time, to realize that I'd fallen. I needed somebody to come and help me.

Now what do we do when we have a member—a brother or sister—who is overtaken with a fault? What do we do with broken brothers? It's a good question. Do we ignore them? Let me tell you something: If there's a member of this church that has fallen, do you know what the member of this church is? He is a member of this body. And when one member suffers, what happens? Every member suffers with him. That brother, that sister, is a member of this body. We are members one of another. And when your arm is broken, you're supposed to hurt all over. What do you do when a brother has a burden? What do you do when a sister has fallen? Do you say, "It's none of my business?" What do you do? Do you condemn him? Let me tell you this about the Church, and it breaks my heart to say it: But sometimes, people in the Church have this tendency—we crucify living saints; we worship dead saints; and we shoot fallen saints. May God have mercy upon us! What do we do when a brother falls? Do we report him to somebody else, that somebody else might minister to him? What do we do when a brother falls? Do we lecture him, and tell him he ought not to fall?

Do you know what Jesus Christ said about the Pharisees—the legalists—these people who were quick to point out the faults in somebody else—some fallen brother? Jesus said of them, in Matthew chapter 23 and verse 4: *"For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers"* (Matthew 23:4). They push a person further down. They put burdens on men's shoulders, rather than lifting burdens.

What do we do with a broken brother? What do we do with a fallen saint? I'll tell you what we do, according to this verse: We restore him, in the name of Jesus. And I'm going to tell you something else, folks: Don't think I'm talking to you about what the church staff ought to do. Look at it again—look at it: *"If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one"* (Galatians 6:1). Now if you don't care, or if you don't feel qualified, you're just admitting that you're not spiritual. If you claim to be a Spirit-filled person, the message is for you. It is your responsibility.

Don't come to me and say, "Brother Rogers, I know somebody who is not coming to Bellevue anymore. Will you please go visit him?" It's not my responsibility; it is your responsibility. God called me, as the pastor, to equip you to do the work of the ministry. And if you're a spiritual person, and God has laid someone on your heart—you have a friend, a neighbor, a brother, a sister, somebody that you know, who has been tripped; someone who has fallen into sin—it is your solemn responsibility before Almighty God to restore such a one, if you call yourself a spiritual person.

B. The Manner of Restoration

Now that, friend, is the ministry of restoration; and, I want you to notice the manner of it. Notice how you're to do it. Look at it, again, in verse 1: "*Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one*"—remember, that means "to set a bone"—"*in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens*" (Galatians 6:1–2).

1. How Are You to Restore Him?

Now how are you restore him?

a. Gently

Well, number one: You're to restore him gently—gently. Now that's "*in the spirit of meekness*" (Galatians 6:1). You're not to be belligerent. You're not to be bellicose. You're not to be judgmental. You're to do it in a spirit of meekness. Do you know what a person with a broken arm needs? I'll tell you one thing from experience: He needs a tender touch. He needs a tender touch, because he's broken, and he hurts. You're setting bones; and, if you are harsh, and overbearing, and judgmental, God can't use you.

b. Humbly

I'll tell you something else: Not only are you to restore him gently, but you're to restore him humbly. Now look at what it says here: The Bible says, here, that you are to consider your own self also, "*lest thou also be tempted*" (Galatians 6:1). Remember, you also have feet of clay. You also are subject to temptation. And the Bible says, if a man "*thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall*" (1 Corinthians 10:12). And when you're going around trying to mend a broken brother, just consider yourself, because one of these days, you may be the one who needs to be restored. You may not understand the possibility that you may have to fall out of a coconut tree. And it'll happen to you real suddenly. Do you know what sin is? Sin is an undetected weakness, an unexpected opportunity, and an unprotected life. And you put those things together, and down you go. You think, "Well, I'm just sailing along fine." You may be in serious trouble this time next week. If you have an unprotected life, if you have an undetected weakness, an unexpected opportunity, you may fall into sin.

I've told you before, there are three persons who are sitting in the seat that you occupy, this morning: the person you are right now; the person you could be for good, for God, and for His glory; and the person you could be in depravity and sin, if you take your eyes off of Jesus Christ. And few of us dare realize how high we may rise or how low we may sink, according to what we do with Jesus Christ.

c. Sympathetically

But I'm telling you that when you go to restore a brother or a sister in the name of

Jesus, number one, you're to do it gently, with meekness. Number two: You're to do it humbly, considering yourself, lest you also be tempted. And number three: You are to do it sympathetically. Look, if you will, in verse 2: *"Bear ye one another's burdens"* (Galatians 6:2). I can tell you from experience that a person with a broken bone is hurting, if a man is truly a believer. I'm not talking about an unsaved person. I'm talking about a child of God. I'm talking about somebody who knows Jesus Christ as his or her personal Savior. If that person has a broken bone, if that person is a child of God and has fallen into sin, that person is hurting. Now if he's not hurting, he's never been saved. Friend, if you're a child of God, and you're living in sin, you're hurting. And what you need is some sympathy.

2. What Is the Hurt That This Kind of Brother Has?

Now what is the hurt that this kind of a brother has?

a. He Is out of Fellowship with God

Well, first of all, he's out of fellowship with God. He's out of fellowship with God. The fellowship with God is broken. That's what David said. He said, *"O God...against thee, and thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight"* (Psalm 51:1, 4).

b. His Conscience Is Smitten

I'll tell you something else that burdens him: His conscience is smitten. King David said, in Psalm 32, verse 4: *"For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me"* (Psalm 32:4).

c. He Is Ashamed and Humiliated

There's another burden. It's the burden of shame and humiliation. That's the reason that some people don't come back to church. They're ashamed to come. They're afraid of what the Pharisees and the legalists there, at the church, will say about them. Broken fellowship with God; their conscience is smiting them; they're ashamed and humiliated.

d. The Devil Is Accusing Him

And then, on top of that, the devil moves in with accusations. And the devil says, "See, you're no good. See, you never were saved. See, you deserve the judgment of God. You would be better off dead." And the devil, the accuser of the brethren, moves in on this fallen brother.

e. He Is Carrying Inward Misery in His Heart

And then, there's that inward misery that he carries within his heart. I've told you before: *The most miserable man on Earth is not an unsaved man. The most miserable man on Earth is a saved man out of fellowship with God*, a person who's known the Lord; a brother, a sister, who's been overtaken by a fall, and he has a spiritually broken body. And the Bible says, *"Ye which are spiritual [are to] restore such an one in the spirit of meekness"* (Galatians 6:1).

3. What Is the Motivation for Taking Up Somebody Else's Burden?

And why do we do it? What is the motivation for taking up somebody else's burden? Let me give you some reasons.

a. He Is My Brother

First of all, he's my brother. He is my brother. That's what the Bible says: *"If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one"* (Galatians 6:1). And if he's a member of the Body of Christ, just like my brother helped me when I fell out of that coconut tree, that person is your brother, your sister.

b. We Are Members of the Same Body

Secondly, we're members of the same Body. When one member suffers, every member suffers with him.

c. We Are to Fulfill the Law of Christ

I'll tell you a third reason. Look at it here: The Bible says, *"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ"* (Galatians 6:2). What is the law of Christ? Well, just go left to chapter 5 and verse 14. Look at it: *"For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself"* (Galatians 5:14). Would you want somebody to restore you? What is the law of Christ? The law of Christ is love. And if you're spiritual, the Spirit of God will produce that love in you, for the Bible says, *"The fruit of the Spirit is love"* (Galatians 5:22).

d. We Are in the Fishing Business

I'll tell you another reason. Do you know why we need restoring? Because, this word *restore* not only means "to set a broken bone"; it also means "to mend a net." It was used for the mending of a net. Now you know what we're in? We're in the fishing business. We're in the business of bringing people to Jesus Christ. We want this community to know Jesus Christ. When a member of this church or any church professes faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and then falls into sin and is not restored, do you know what that is? That's a hole in the net. That's a hole in the net. I cannot tell you the number of times I have visited and tried to bring a person to Jesus Christ. And do you know what has kept that person from coming to Jesus Christ? They point out the sins in the life of some member of this church or some other church. There's a hole in the net, and the fish go out through that net.

Brother Dan, which is more important: to restore the saved or to win the lost? Don't try and answer it, because you can't answer it. That's like saying, "Which wing of a bird is the most important: the right wing or the left wing?" Friend, I want to tell you, a bird cannot fly with a broken wing. And if we would get those who are saved right with God, we'd get a lot of the lost saved. Sometimes, we can't reach the goal, for stumbling over our own players. So which is more important? They're both important. We want to win the lost. So why do we restore the saved? To get these people right with God. All of

these things are reasons that we ought to restore a brother. So there is the burden that we take up. There are the burdens that we share, when we go to an individual with a broken heart to win him to Jesus Christ.

II. The Burden That We Bear Up: The Burden That We Shoulder

Now there's another kind of burden. Not only is there the burden that we take up, the burden that we share; but there's the burden that we bear up, the burden that we shoulder.

Look, if you will again, in this passage of Scripture, in verse 5: *"For every man shall bear his own burden"* (Galatians 6:5). Now is that contradictory? Verse 2 says: *"Bear ye one another's burdens"* (Galatians 6:2). Verse 5 says: *"Every man shall bear his own burden."* There is no contradiction there whatsoever. Two different words are used for *burden* in the Greek language. In verse 1, the word for *burden* is used as "a burden which is a heavy load; something that is painful, something that bows you down." The word in verse 5 is the Greek word *porteon*, which has the idea of a backpack. It's something that a soldier might wear that he would keep his implements in. It's something that a woodsman might have on his back that would preserve and save his life. And there are certain burdens that God gives us, and these burdens are not meant to bow us down and break us down. They're meant to lead us on and to help us. And God, in His mercy, will lay upon us certain burdens. And God knows we're to have those kinds of burdens. And Jesus spoke of those, when He said, *"Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof"* (Matthew 6:34). And there are certain burdens that we shoulder.

Now what does he mean by this? He means by this that there are certain things you cannot shove off on someone else. There's no such thing as proxy religion. There are certain burdens that we cannot escape. There are certain personal responsibilities. For example, there is nobody who can repent for you. There's nobody who can worship for you. There's nobody who can receive Christ for you. There's nobody who can serve God on your behalf. You say, "Well, Pastor, I come to church. I put money in the offering plate. That's what I pay you to do." Well, I've got news for you: You don't pay me. You say, "Well, I thought we did." No, you don't. You give your money to God. God pays me. I am not a hireling. I am not a substitute. I am not somebody that you say, "Well, I'll pay you to do the preaching, and the praying, and the soul-winning."

Now don't misunderstand me. I'm grateful for your gifts, and I'm grateful for the way that this church takes care of its pastor. Don't misunderstand what I'm saying. But what I am saying is, I am not a hireling. The hireling flees (John 10:13). The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep (John 10:11). And you cannot pay somebody else for your responsibility. Every man must bear his own burden. And if you're a spiritual person, if you're a child of God, there are people out here, in this community, who need your love,

who need your care, who need your ministry, who need your helping hand. And there are burdens that need to be lifted. And it's your responsibility. *"Every man shall bear his own burden"* (Galatians 6:5).

III. The Burden That We Shed: The Burden That We Roll on the Lord

There are the burdens that we take up; those are the ones we share. There are the burdens that we bear up; those are the ones we shoulder. Let me quickly go on. There's a third category of burdens. There are burdens that we take up; there are burdens that we bear up; and, thank God, there are burdens that we give up. There's another category of burdens. There are certain burdens that we roll on the Lord. Now I'm going to leave our text here, and I want you to put in your margin, Psalm 55 and verse 22. Listen to this: *"Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved"* (Psalm 55:22).

I'm looking in the face of some people who are bearing some burdens, right now. I know. I know the heartache that you have, brother. I'm looking into the face of some people who have burdens. "Nobody knows the trouble I've seen. Nobody knows but Jesus." There may be somebody sitting around you. You say, "Well, boy, he doesn't have any burdens." I want to remind you, if you were to read this 55th Psalm, it was written by David, who was a king. He was wealthy. He was godly. He had the wisdom of age. But burdens come to the high as well as to the low. Burdens come to the rich as well as to the poor. Burdens come to saints as well as sinners. Burdens come to the old as well as the young. And we have burdens, and these are burdens we were never meant to carry alone. The Bible says, *"Cast thy burden upon the LORD"* (Psalm 55:22).

Peter told us in another way: *"Cast all your care upon him; for he careth for you"* (1 Peter 5:7). I love that old song we used to sing:

I must tell Jesus, I must tell Jesus
I cannot bear these burdens alone
I must tell Jesus, I must tell Jesus
Jesus can help me, Jesus alone. (Elisha Hoffman)

There are the burdens that we take up. These are the burdens we share. There are the burdens we bear up. These are the burdens we shoulder. But there are the burdens that we give up. These are the burdens we shed. We just roll them on Jesus.

Have you got a broken heart today? Have you got a burden? There's somebody who cares. I may not know. Maybe your wife, your husband, doesn't know. Maybe your mom, your dad, has no idea. Maybe you say, "My pastor can never understand." There is one who knows. There's One with the nail prints in His hand. He's the One I serve, and He's the One who sent me here to tell you, today, "Cast your burden upon Me. I'm the One who cares for you. If I'm sufficient to carry your sin, I'm sufficient to carry your

sorrows.”

I get a lot of mail. I got a letter, a while back, from a person in Nevada. I said, “Well, who do I know in Nevada?” Here’s what the letter said—and I’ll not share the name, though I don’t think the person would mind me sharing the name: “Pastor Rogers, I was at a total and complete bottom. I had just left my motel room at the Royal Oaks Motel on Summer Avenue in Memphis, Tennessee. I had been beaten and choked by someone very close to me—not a boyfriend, lover, or husband. I was lost and crying. I asked two men for change to go to McDonald’s to get a cup of coffee, I think. They both turned me down. But now, I know in my heart that that was a blessing from God. For, you see, Mr. Rogers, I saw a young man with a small child standing at the U-haul place, getting packing boxes. I hesitated, because of the fear of being rejected again. But the more I looked, I felt like I should approach this man. Mr. Rogers, I asked this man for change for coffee. He asked me what was wrong. I was crying, and I was a mess. I told him, ‘Nothing. I just needed to go and have a cup of coffee.’ Well, this man asked me did I know Jesus. I started really crying. I also started talking. He helped me so much. Right there, on Summer Avenue, at the U-haul place, I asked God into my life. He prayed with me, and I asked God to accept me as His child. He was a wonderful, caring person. He loves God so much and believes so very much that he helped this sinner find her way to her Father. He told me that he was either an assistant pastor there at your church, or that he had been a minister of something at the church. I want to let him know what an impact he had on my life that day. Mr. Rogers, I’m not going to say that it has been easy, because it has not. I have a long way to go, but I’m not rushing it, for I walk each day with God. I’m holding onto His robes, for I never want to feel alone again. I don’t know if I will ever know who that man on Summer Avenue was, but I truly am glad that he was placed in my life that day. I love him for being a Christian. Thank you very much for taking the time to read my letter.”

I don’t know who that man was either, but I’ll tell you something: He knew something about burdens. He knew something about lifting burdens. He knew something about bearing burdens. And he knew something about teaching people how to roll burdens on the Lord.

There are the burdens we share. There are the burdens we shoulder. There are the burdens we shed. Maybe today, you know somebody who is a broken brother. He needs you. Ask God to lay that soul upon your heart. They need you. They’re in misery. And then, maybe you’re here today, and you’ve got a burden.

I read about a man who had a very fine dog. He’d trained the dog quite well. And the dog was one of these dogs, like a Labrador, that loves the water. The dog was out there, in the lake, frolicking and playing in the lake, and the man wanted to go; and, he called the dog, and the dog wouldn’t come. He called him several times. He wouldn’t

come. He was a well-trained dog, but he just would not come. And the man said, “I know what I’ll do,” and he got a stick and threw it out in the water. When the dog saw it, he swam over, got the stick, and came back, and laid it at his master’s feet.

It just may be that God has given you a burden. It just may be that’s what He’s given you, because He can’t get your attention. It just may be that God has given you a burden so that you might come and lay it at your Master’s feet, that you might cast all your care upon Him, because, friend, He cares for you. And He sent me here to tell you, if you are a broken brother, there’s hope for you; a fallen sister, there’s hope.

And if you are a spiritual person, there’s a burden, a responsibility, for you. And if your poor heart is aching and breaking, there’s a Savior who loves you. Cast your burden upon the Lord. He’ll sustain you. He really will. He will.

Conclusion

Bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed; no one moving. I wonder how many here, today, would say, “Pastor Rogers, I know Jesus Christ is my personal Savior and Lord, and I have the absolute assurance by the Holy Spirit and the Word of God that, if I died today, I’d go straight to Heaven. I’m saved, and I thank God for it.” If you can give me that testimony while heads are bowed, eyes are closed, would you just lift your hand and hold it up? Thank you so much. Take it down.

Now if you cannot, in all honesty, say, “I know that I’m saved,” then let me talk to you. I believe I’m talking to someone, right now, who would say, “Pastor Rogers, I couldn’t lift my hand, but if a person can know that they’re saved, if a person can know that they’re right with God, I want to know it.” Well, if you do, if you’ll pray a prayer like this: “Dear God, I’m a sinner, and I’m lost. And I cannot save myself. But I know, Lord, that You want to save me. And Lord, I believe that Jesus paid for my sins with His blood on the cross. And I believe that He purchased my salvation with that gift of love. And now by faith—repentance and faith—Lord, I just open my heart, and I receive Christ as my Lord and Savior. Come into my life today. Forgive my sin. Save me.” Pray that, folks; mean it: “Lord Jesus, come into my life. Forgive my sin. Save me today, Lord Jesus.” Ask Him, and I promise you on the authority of the Word of God He’ll do just that. Father, I pray that many will come to Jesus today. In His wonderful name. Amen.

What to Do with Your Burdens

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: September 21, 1997

Main Scripture Text: Galatians 6:1–5

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Introduction

Be finding Galatians chapter 6. I've been praying about the message for this morning, and God laid on my heart to speak about burdens, and what to do with burdens. Everybody has burdens, sooner or later, and I've learned in my ministry that on almost every row—if not every row in the auditorium, in every section of every row—there's somebody there with a burden. Well, it almost starts the day we're born. We're born crying; and then, the doctor gives us a whack, and from there on it just goes on, and on, and on. We have burdens; we have problems. But I want to tell you today what to do

with your burdens. If you don't have burdens, really, the problem is you're probably not a thinking person, for the Bible says, "Man that is born of woman is full of trouble, as the sparks that fly upward" (Job 5:7). But thank God, we don't have to bear our burdens alone. Saved or lost, we're going to know burdens.

Look, if you will, in chapter 6 and verse 1: "*Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For every man shall bear his own burden*" (Galatians 6:1–5). Now there are three kinds of burdens I want to talk to you about today, and I want you to listen very carefully. There are burdens that we willingly take up; there are burdens that we faithfully endure; and then, there are burdens that we wisely lay down. I want you to think about those three kinds of burdens, this morning.

I. Burdens That We Willingly Take Up

First of all, there are certain burdens that you're not to try to escape. As a matter of fact, there are burdens that you are to take up.

A. The Ministry of Restoration

Now what are those burdens? Those are the burdens of another brother, another sister, when somebody is hurting. Now what Paul is writing about here is primarily the burden of the backslidden person, the man who has gotten away from God. Look, if you will, in verse 1: "*Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault...*" (Galatians 6:1). Now the word, here, is to a Christian: "*Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault...*" He is talking about somebody who is our brother, somebody who is our sister, somebody who's gotten away from God, and somebody who needs to be restored. Now notice the word *restore*. He's saying, "Here's a person who was once in fellowship; and now, that person has gotten out of fellowship"—why?—"because he's been overtaken in a fault." Now this is not the person who is not saved; it's not the person who is running to sin. Actually, here is a person who was endeavoring to get away from sin, but sin overtook him.

Somewhere, years ago, I read that in Africa, each morning, in Africa, a gazelle wakes up, and that gazelle says to himself, "If I cannot outrun the fastest lion on these plains, I will be devoured." And somewhere, that same morning, a lion wakes up, and that lion says, "If I cannot outrun the slowest gazelle, I will starve." And so both the gazelle and the lion wake up running. Now folks, every morning, you and I need to wake up running, because we are running from sin, and Satan is running for us. And

sometimes, we're overtaken. Sometimes, we stumble and fall.

You see, when you get saved, that doesn't mean that you can't sin anymore. Say *amen*; you know that to be true. When you get saved, it doesn't mean that you cannot sin anymore. Sometimes, we're overtaken in a fault. You know the difference between my life before I was saved and after I was saved? Before I got saved, I was running to sin; now, I'm running from sin. But we can sometimes stumble and fall, so he's talking about brothers. He says, "If a man be a brother... *'Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault'*—that is, run down by Satan, trapped and snared by a fault—then we are to restore him."

I want you, right now—everybody in this building—I want you to begin to think. Can you think of somebody, who was once a faithful member of Bellevue, who doesn't attend anymore? Not that they moved away. Can you think of somebody that you used to have sweet fellowship with—maybe a soul-winning partner, maybe a prayer partner, somebody that maybe you sang in the choir with, somebody that maybe you served on a committee with, and they truly, so far as you know, knew the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Savior, and know Him today—but they're out of fellowship. This church is filled with them, and so is every church. They are brothers, they are sisters, who are out of fellowship with God, and God has called upon us to restore these people, because they're living a life that the Apostle Paul calls a *burdened* life. They are brokenhearted.

Now the scripture today that I'm reading is hope for that kind of a person. If you're that kind of a person—away from God, yet, in your heart of hearts, you've been saved; you know the Lord; you're a brother; you're a sister—this message is a word of hope for you. And if you have not been overtaken in a fault, thank God for it, but this message is a word of warning for you. And it's a word, a call to action, for all of us. Now a brother can be restored—that's good news. If you've gotten away from God, our God is a God of the second chance. If you read the Bible, the Bible tells about men who got away from God and who got back to God, because the Bible does not mistake the moment for the man; and, the Bible is a picture of people who have gotten away from God and yet have gotten back to God.

There was Jonah. Now we criticize Jonah for running from the Lord, but the Bible says, "*The word of the Lord came unto Jonah...saying...*" (Jonah 1:1; Jonah 3:1). Does God speak to you that intimately? Jonah must have been a great man that he was in such contact with God he could hear the Word of the Lord. He was such an instrument that God wanted to use him; and yet, Jonah got away from the Lord—you remember—spent the night on a *foam blubber mattress*—you remember the story—swallowed by a whale. But yet, Jonah came back to God, and Jonah was used of God to bring an entire city, about the size of Memphis, Tennessee, or bigger, Nineveh, to Jesus Christ, to

repentance toward faith.

I remember reading in the Bible about Simon Peter, the big fisherman. He loved God. He was the one who said to Jesus, *“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God”* (Matthew 16:16). Yet, Simon Peter cursed, and swore, and denied the Lord Jesus. I imagine the critics that day had a field day. They said, “Oh, Reverend Simon Peter—did you hear what he did? He cursed in front of a teenage girl. I never did have much confidence in Reverend Simon Peter. I’m finished with him.” I’m glad God wasn’t finished with him, because that same Simon Peter who stumbled and crumbled, when the rock turned to sand, God made him a rock again; and, he became the flaming apostle of Pentecost.

There was a man who wrote a book in the Bible called the Gospel of Mark. You have the Gospel of Mark. That man’s name was John Mark; he was a young man. He started out with Paul and Silas on a missionary journey. He must have been a remarkable young man for the great Apostle Paul to say, “John, come and go with us on this missionary journey.” But on the missionary journey, John Mark got frightened; he got homesick; he got discouraged; and he went back home. And the Apostle Paul lost confidence in John Mark. When they got ready to go on another missionary journey, somebody said, “Let’s take Mark with us,” and Paul said, “No siree. We’re not going to take him. He’s a failure. He’s a quitter. He’s a slacker. He’s a shirker. He’s not going.” Old Barnabas said, “Well, I’ll take him with me.” And do you know what? God restored John Mark. Later on, John Mark wrote the Gospel of Mark; and, later on, the Apostle Paul said, “By the way, when you’re coming to see me, bring Mark; he’s profitable” (2 Timothy 4:11). You see, God wasn’t finished with John Mark.

David, the man after God’s own heart—what a mighty, wonderful man was David! I’ve got a son named David. David got away from God. David committed a horrible sin. You say, “He was only human.” I say, “No, he was desperately wicked.” He was overtaken with a fault; and yet, he prayed that prayer, and God brought him back. He prayed, “Lord, *‘restore unto me the joy of thy salvation’*” (Psalm 51:12), and, thank God, God did. And God gave him a second chance.

Our God is a God of the second chance. Do you know somebody who’s been overtaken with a fault? Well, the Bible says that you’re to restore him. I want you to look at that word *restore*. Look at it: *“Restore such an one”* (Galatians 6:1). Do you know what that word means? It’s a technical word. It literally means “to set a bone that has been broken,” and it literally means “to mend a net that has been torn.” It’s *restoration*: “putting back in place that which is broken, or that which is torn.”

Have you ever had a broken bone? I have. I was raised in, dare I say it, Florida. I was raised in Florida; and, back where I was raised, coconuts grow. And we didn’t have money to spend at 7–11, because we didn’t have a 7–11. But we had coconut trees,

and if you wanted some refreshment, all you had to do was be part monkey, shimmy up a coconut tree, and get a coconut. And I was up a very tall coconut tree, one time, trying to expedite a coconut, and I had one arm around a palm frond. And I'm up there, and I'm twisting that coconut; and, when I gave a yank on the coconut, I put pressure on the palm frond, which was turning yellow. The palm frond came loose. The coconut came loose. And I came loose, and we all fell together. And I fell on the ground. The palm frond fell on me. And the coconut fell on it, and my arm fell on the sidewalk; and, I had a horrible compound fracture in that elbow.

1. A Broken Person Does Not Need a Lecture

Now at that moment, I needed restoration. I had a bone that was broken. And I can tell you some things I did not need, and I'm going to tell you what some people, who are out of fellowship today, do not need. At that moment, I did not need a lecture. I didn't need somebody to come and say, "That was a dangerous thing you were doing. Hey, didn't you have enough sense to see that that palm frond was turning yellow? Huh, you did a stupid thing!" I did, but that's not what I needed then, right? And your friend, right now, doesn't need a lecture.

2. A Broken Person Does Not Need to Be Ignored

I'll tell you something else I didn't need: I didn't need for them to ignore me. Thank God I had a brother who was there, saw what happened, ran, and called a neighbor. And the neighbor came and got me, and put me in his car, took me to the hospital, and they called my parents, because I had a bare bone protruding right from the skin all the way out. It wasn't pretty—a broken bone, a compound fracture, in my elbow. I did not need to be ignored. Now those folks, that person that I asked you to think about, that person who's away from God, that person who you used to have sweet fellowship with—I'll tell you what they do not need: They do not need to be ignored. Say *amen*. They don't need to be ignored.

3. A Broken Person Does Not Need to Be Reported

I'll tell you something else I didn't need: I didn't need to be reported. I'm glad my brother didn't run all over town and say, "Did you hear what happened to Adrian?" Here I am, down there, on the ground, squirming, crying—"Did you hear what happened to Adrian? Adrian fell out of the coconut tree. Adrian fell out of the coconut tree." That's what we do sometimes, isn't it? Our brother or sister falls away; and, rather than going to love that person, to restore that person, to bring that person back to sweet fellowship, what do we do? We just go around talking about them; and, sometimes, our little prayer sessions are nothing more than little gossip sessions under the guise of being prayer sessions—praying for Sister So-and-So praying for Brother So-and-So.

4. A Broken Person Does Not Need to Be Shot Down

I'll tell you another thing I'm glad they didn't do when I broke my arm: I'm glad they didn't shoot me. "Well, he's got a broken arm. Blam! We fixed it." Somebody said that "the church is the only army in the world that shoots its wounded." But sometimes, we do that. I mean, here's a person with a broken bone; they didn't shoot me.

5. A Broken Person Does Not Need to Be Cast Away

I'll tell you something else I'm glad they didn't do: I'm glad they didn't amputate that arm; because I need that arm, so I can point at you. I need that arm. God gave me that arm. They didn't just say, "Well, that's not important to the body. The body can get along without that arm." It would never be the body that it could have been without that arm that is right there.

They did not shoot me; they did not amputate the arm. What they did—they put in place a broken bone. They restored it, and that's what the Apostle Paul said that we are to do. You know, listen, folks. There was one thing I could not do when I broke that arm, and that was ignore it. Do you know why I couldn't ignore it? Why, because the rest of my body said, "Don't ignore it." You see, the Bible says, "When one member suffers, every member suffers with it" (1 Corinthians 12:26). That's the way God made us. We need to be as sensitive spiritually as we are physically.

What do we do when a brother fails? Do we say, "It's none of my business?" Folks, it is your business. He is in the Body. Do you condemn him? Then, you're condemning yourself; he's a part of you. *Christians have a way of crucifying living saints, worshipping dead saints, and shooting wounded saints.* What do we do when we have a brother who is wounded, a sister who's wounded? Do we report him to the church?

You'd be amazed how many people will say to me, "Pastor, I am so burdened about thus-and-such a person. God has laid him on my heart. Will you go see him?" Now you think about that: "I am so burdened. God has laid him on my heart. Will you please go see him?" Well, if it is so strategic, so necessary, yes—if I can, I will. But why do you think God laid him on your heart? Why do you think God put him on your heart? Because, friend, you are the one that has that relationship; you're the one that God is burdening; and you're the one that God wants to go. They don't need a lecture; they need love. If you know somebody like this, I am here to tell you today that that person is your responsibility. My job is to teach you to minister, so that you can be a minister of the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

"Well," you say, "Pastor, Pastor, that's well and good. That's just not my gift. I'm not qualified." Well, maybe you're not, because let me show you the qualifications. Look, in chapter 6 and verse 1: "*Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one*" (Galatians 6:1). Now if you say, "That's not my gift; that's not my calling; that's not what I'm inclined to do; that's not what I'm supposed to do," do you

know what you're saying about yourself? "I'm not spiritual. I'm not spiritual." If you are a spiritual person, a person who loves God, a Spirit-filled person, then you're going to have all the qualifications you need to restore such a one.

B. The Manner of Restoration

Now I've talked about the ministry of restoration. Let me talk about the manner of this restoration. If you say, "All right, Pastor. I'm going to do it. I have somebody, right now, in my heart and in my mind—some man, some woman, some boy, some girl." All right, let me tell you how you're to do it.

1. You Are to Do It Gently

First of all, you're to do it very gently. Look, if you will, in chapter 6 and verse 1: "*Restore such an one in the spirit of meekness*" (Galatians 6:1). Do you see that? Now folks, when you're setting a broken bone, what do you need? Gentleness—isn't that right? In a spirit of meekness—tender loving care. You can't restore somebody if you're harsh and overbearing. You've got to be gentle. By the way, those of you who are parents—Do you know what I've noticed about dads whose children love them most? They're gentle. Every child wants a strong dad. They want a dad that they can look up to, but they want a dad that's gentle—gentle. You can restore your children with gentleness rather than whacking at them, and screaming at them, and criticizing. Try some tenderness with your children. Try it! If you've got backslidden children, they need tenderness. Your neighbor needs tenderness. "*Restore such an one in the spirit of meekness.*" Do it gently.

2. You Are to Do It Humbly

I'll tell you what else to do: Do it humbly. Look at this passage: "*Restore such an one in the spirit of meekness;*"—now, watch this—"*considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted*" (Galatians 6:1). You say, "Not me!" Friend, there are three persons in your seat this morning: the person you are now; the person you could be for holiness and goodness in God; and the person you could be for debauchery and wickedness, if you take your eyes off of Jesus Christ.

You say, "Well, it won't happen to me!" Well, I want to ask you a question: It happened to Jonah. Are you better than Jonah? It happened to Elijah. Are you better than Elijah? It happened to Simon Peter. Are you better than Simon Peter? It happened to John Mark. Are you better than John Mark? No, the Bible says, "*Let him that thinketh he standeth*"—do what?—"*take heed lest he fall*" (1 Corinthians 10:12). And so when we are there to restore somebody else, not only should we do it gently—that is, with meekness—but we do it humbly, considering ourselves, lest we also be tempted.

3. You Are to Do It Sympathetically

I'll tell you a third way that, when you do this restoration, you need to do it: You need

to do it sympathetically—sympathetically. You see, the Bible says, in verse 2: “*Bear one another’s burdens*” (Galatians 6:2). Do you see that? Do you know, if a person is truly a child of God—now, I’m not talking about a person running to sin; I’m talking about a person who was running from sin that’s been overtaken—if he is truly a child of God—you can put it down big, plain, and straight: If that person is truly saved, truly born again, and is out of fellowship with God, I can tell you he’s carrying a big burden. Now if he’s not saved, he’s not carrying any burden at all; but, if he is truly saved and out of fellowship with God, he is carrying a big burden.

Now look up here and let me tell you something: *The most miserable man on Earth is not an unsaved man. The most miserable man on Earth is a saved man out of fellowship with God.* Is that not true? That is absolutely true. David, when he got out of fellowship with God, said to the Lord, “Lord, ‘*restore unto me the joy of thy salvation*” (Psalm 51:12). He didn’t say, “Lord, restore unto me salvation,” but, “*restore unto me the joy of thy salvation.*”

What is the burden that we ought to have sympathy for, for these people?

a. He Has a Broken Relationship with God

Well, first of all, they have a broken relationship with Almighty God. David prayed, in that penitential psalm, “*Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight*” (Psalm 51:4). This person, who once walked in sweet fellowship with God—that fellowship with God is broken. One of the most wonderful parts of my life is the fellowship that I have with God. When I awakened this morning, my first thought, when my eyes opened, was, “Good morning, Lord. I greet You, Lord. I bless You, Lord.” Just the fellowship with Him, to be able to sing and to say,

I come to the garden alone
while the dew is still on the roses,
and the voice I hear falling on my ear,
the Son of God discloses.

And He walks with me, and He talks with me,
And He tells me I am His own. (Austin Miles)

That person who’s gotten away from God, that person who’s backslidden, that person who’s been overtaken with a fault—he has a burden, because that relationship with God has been broken.

b. He Has a Guilty Conscience

I’ll tell you what else: He has a guilty conscience. David prayed, in Psalm 32, verse 4: “*For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer*” (Psalm 32:4). That is, where he used to be spiritually full of joy, now he’s dry as dust.

c. He Is Experiencing Satanic Accusation

And then, there's the satanic accusation that comes to a person. Do you know what the devil does to a person who gets away from God? The devil becomes his accuser. Before that person sins, the devil says, "Go ahead and do it. You can get away with it." After he does it, the devil says, "You'll never get away with it." And the devil points his finger and him, and he says, "Look at you. You call yourself a Christian? You call yourself a member of Bellevue? You're not fit to live. Those people will have lost all confidence in you. There is no way back for you. You'd be better off dead." That's what Satan does. That's not Holy Spirit conviction; that's satanic accusation.

d. He Is Experiencing Public Shame

Here is a man away from God, folks. I'm telling you, he's got a burden. There's a broken fellowship with God. There is a guilty conscience. There is the accusation of Satan. And many times, there's public shame. These people say, "Well, I don't dare show my face in church anymore. If I were to come down there, everybody knows what I did, where I've been. They wouldn't receive me." Friend, we'd better receive them. We'd better let them know that "you're loved; and you're welcomed; and come on home."

But there's that inward misery, so how do we restore him? Well, we restore him gently, in meekness. We restore him humbly, considering ourselves. We restore him sympathetically; he is carrying a burden.

C. Why Do We Restore?

Now why do we do it? Why do we restore such a one?

1. He Is Our Brother

Well, first of all, he's our brother. Notice how this begins: "*Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one*" (Galatians 6:1). Not only is he our brother, but we are members of the same body. When my arm was broken, what hurt—my arm? No, I hurt. When every member, when any member, suffers, every member suffers with it. So why should we restore such a one? We're brothers; we're sisters. Beyond that, we're members of the same body.

2. To Fulfill the Law of Christ

But let me show you the main reason that we do it. Look at it—look in verse 2: "*Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ*" (Galatians 6:2)—"*so fulfill the law of Christ.*" What is the law of Christ? You can find that in Galatians 5, verse 14: "*For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*" (Galatians 5:14). That's the law of Christ—it's love! Genuine, genuine, Christ-like love—loving our neighbor as we love ourselves. Look at that fallen individual, that person who's burdened, and understand that you are to love him as you would want somebody

to love you, if you were in the same situation.

And by the way, only a spiritual person can do that, for the Bible says, “*The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost*” (Romans 5:5). Yes, it may be firm love. Yes, even though it’s gentle, it may be firmness, but love says, “We’ll go to those who’ve fallen.” Love says, “We will go humbly.” Love says, “If possible, we will go privately; we will go prayerfully; and we will restore him, and we will fulfill the law of Christ.”

Why don’t you, right now, ask God to lay somebody on your heart? Why don’t you say, “God, this week, I will do that”? And if you’re that person—maybe you’re watching on television, maybe you’re in this auditorium, maybe you’ll hear later by tape—if you’re that person who’s gotten away from God, I want to tell you, you can be restored; you can come on home. And don’t let that failure make you bitter; let it make you better. You may have failed, but it’s not all over. You may have lost the game, but there’s still the season out there.

3. To Mend the Hole in the Broken Net

Now listen. There’s another motive. What are the motives we’re talking about? He’s our brother, we’re in the same Body; there’s the law of Christ. There’s another motive. Remember that I told you that the word *restore* has a twofold meaning? It has the meaning of mending a broken bone; it has, also, the meaning of mending a broken net. Do you know what God has put us together to be? A network. You know, when Jesus called His disciples, what were they doing? They were mending their nets. And He says, “You come after me. I’ll make you become fishers of men” (Mark 1:17). Do you know what a broken brother is, a broken sister? He or she is a hole in the net; they’re a hole in the net.

Did you know there are people we can’t win to Jesus here, at Bellevue, because of some brother, some sister, who’s backslidden? And maybe they live right up next to somebody that we’re witnessing to, and they’ve seen that person away from God. And because they’ve seen that person away from God, and seen their lifestyle, they have no confidence in the ministry of this church. Do you know, *if people would start living right on Monday, people would believe what I preach on Sunday*? Did you know that? But you see, *the greatest testimony for Jesus and the greatest testimony against Jesus is the life of a Christian. Isn’t that right? The greatest testimony for Jesus, the greatest testimony against Jesus, is the life of a Christian.* The Bible calls us *living epistles* (2 Corinthians 3:2). How is the gospel according to you?

Now we’ve got to patch the holes in the net. If all of our members were right with God, what an awesome net this would be to bring souls to Jesus Christ! But they—they, the fish—go through the hole in the net; and so, that’s another motive for restoring these individuals.

II. Burdens That We Faithfully Endure

I must rush on. There are the burdens, dear friend, that we willingly take up, where we bear somebody else's burden. Are you willing to do that? The Bible says, "*Bear...one another's burdens*" (Galatians 6:2). Now there's another kind of a burden. There is the burden we faithfully stay under.

Look, now, in verses 4 and 5: "*Let every man prove his own work...*"—underscore that—"*Let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For every man shall bear his own burden*" (Galatians 6:4–5). Now that's not a contradiction in terms. On the one hand, the Bible says, "*Bear...one another's burdens*" (Galatians 6:2). And then, the Bible says, "*Every man shall bear his own burden*" (Galatians 6:5). Is that contradictory? No, it's complimentary.

Now the key to this is two different words that are used for *burden*. The first time, the word for *burden*, here, means "a heavy load, something onerous, something that weighs you down, something like being out of fellowship with God." It's a heavy, heavy burden. It is a crushing load. When somebody has a load like that, we're to come, and bear that burden, and lift that burden from him. That's a burden we willingly take up, when we bear one another's burdens. But the word for *burden*, here, *phortion*, is a different word altogether. It has the idea of a soldier's weaponry, or backpack, or knapsack, strapped to your back—something that is necessary; something that is not burdensome; but something that is useful; something that will make you useful; and something that may even save your life. Now God does not want us to live lives of ease, but God wants us to lead disciplined lives; and so, God lays burdens upon us, and God expects us to bear those burdens, because these are burdens that we are to stay under.

Now what does it mean, when it says that "every man must bear his own burden?" (Galatians 6:5). That means there's something that you cannot let anybody else do for you. There's something that you cannot relegate or delegate to anybody else.

A. It Is Our Responsibility to Repent and Be Saved

What are some of those things? Well, nobody can repent for you. Isn't that right? Nobody can trust Christ for you. Nobody can trust God for you. There are parents in this building who would give their last ounce of blood in their veins, if they could repent of sin for their children; but they can't do it. "Every man must bear his own burden" (Galatians 6:5). I wish, sometimes, when I preach, I could go out there, sit in your seat, come forward, and give my heart to Jesus on your behalf; but I cannot. There are certain things that are our responsibilities and will become our blessings, if we will take them. There is no such thing as proxy religion.

B. It Is Our Responsibility to Restore a Backslidden Brother in Christ

And I'll tell you one of the blessings that we need to take up and bear is the

willingness to relieve a brother, to bear his burden. You see, a fallen, or a broken, brother is not a call to gossip; it's a call to prayer. It's a prayer burden. Nobody can take that for you.

III. Burdens That We Gladly Lay Down

I must rush on, because if I don't, I won't get finished. I want to come to the last thing, because, you see, I said there are three kinds of burdens: There are the burdens that we willingly take up, when we bear one another's burdens; there are the burdens that we faithfully stay under, when he says, "Every man must bear his own burden" (Galatians 6:5). There are certain responsibilities that are ours that nobody—nobody—can do for us. But then, listen, precious friend. There's one more burden, and that's the burden that we gladly lay down. The burden that we willingly take up; the burden that we faithfully stay under; but, there's a third burden, and that's the burden that we gladly lay down.

Put in your margin, Psalm 55 and verse 22: *"Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee..."* *"Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved"* (Psalm 55:22). Do you know who wrote that? King David, who'd had his burden lifted when he was restored to God; but he had other burdens. You see, he was a king; he was wealthy. When he wrote this, he was godly, because he was a writer of the psalms. He was aged.

What do we learn from this? That burdens come to the high as well as to the low. They come to saints as well as sinners. They come to the old as well as the young. "Adrian, do you have burdens?" Yes, I do. You have burdens. What do we do with our burdens? Well, if we have those kinds of burdens, we have to cast them upon the Lord, roll them on the Lord. Brother Jim, we sing a song,

I must tell Jesus! I must tell Jesus!

I cannot bear these burdens alone. (Elisha Hoffman)

Do you have a broken heart? Is there a child that has ripped your heart out? Is there a husband who has forsaken you? Is there a physical malady that is gnawing away at your body? Is there a problem that is perplexing you? The Bible says, "You are to cast your burden upon the Lord. He will sustain you" (Psalm 55:22).

Conclusion

I got a letter in the mail from a person I've—as far as I know—I've never met. It came all the way from Nevada. I want to share a portion of that letter. I believe it to be all right; I don't think that this person minds. I'll not call their name. Here's what this person wrote to me, this lady—quote: "I was at a total and complete bottom." What a way to start a letter! "I was at a total and complete bottom. I had just left my motel room at the Royal

Oaks Hotel on Summer Avenue in Memphis, Tennessee. I had been beaten and choked by someone very close to me—not a boyfriend, lover, or husband. I was lost and crying. I asked two men for change to go to McDonald's to get a cup of coffee. They both turned me down; but now, I know in my heart that that was a blessing from God, for, you see, Mr. Rogers, I saw a young man with a small child standing at the U-Haul place packing boxes. I hesitated because of fear of being rejected again, but the more I looked, I felt like I should approach this man. Mr. Rogers, I asked this man for change for coffee. He asked me what was wrong. I was crying, and I was a mess. I told him, 'Nothing. I just needed to go and have a cup of coffee.'

Well, this man asked me, 'Do you know Jesus?' I really started crying. I also started talking. He helped me so much. Right there, on Summer Avenue, at the U-Haul place, I asked God into my life. He prayed with me, and I asked God to accept me as His child. He was a wonderful, caring person. He loves God so much and believes so very much that he helped this sinner find her way home to her Father. He told me that he was either an assistant pastor there, at your church, or he'd been a minister of something at the church. I want to let him know what an impact he had on my life that day.

Mr. Rogers, I'm not going to say that it has been easy, because it has not. I have a long way to go, but I'm not rushing it, for I walk each day with God. I'm holding onto His robes, for I never want to feel alone again. I don't know if I will ever know who that man on Summer Avenue was, but I am truly glad that he was placed in my life that day. I love him for being a Christian. Thank you so very much for taking the time to read my letter."

Now I want you to think about that—think about that in the light of burden bearing. And remember I said there are three kinds of burdens? This man experienced all three. First of all, there was the burden he lifted from this lady as he told her about Jesus. And then, there was the burden he bore, because he realized that he had a responsibility to God; and, he bore his own burden to be a witness for the Lord Jesus Christ. And then, he taught her to roll her burden upon the Lord. You see, that's it; that's the whole thing.

Friend, we have a wonderful, wonderful Savior. You say, "Pastor, I have a burden today. Why do you think I have a burden?" It may be that God has given you that burden to bring you to Him.

Somewhere, I read about a man who had a beautiful dog. And he had that dog—it was maybe a Labrador, or some of these dogs that go in the water. The dog was swimming out in the water in a lake, and the man wanted to go home; and, he called the dog, but the dog was having such a great time, the dog would not come. You know what the man did? He picked up a stick from the shore and threw it out in the water. And when this dog saw the stick, he remembered what he'd been told. The dog swam to the stick, and got it, put it in his mouth, came back to his master, and laid it at his master's

feet. I wonder if the burden that you have has not been given to you by God to cause you to come to His feet—to cause you to come to His feet. Maybe He’s called you other ways, and you wouldn’t come. And maybe just the burden is what God is using to bring you to your Master’s feet.

Cast your burden on the Lord. He loves you. You say, “Pastor, if I got away from God, would He receive me?” Oh, yes, yes. “Pastor, if I’ve never known the Lord. Can I be saved?” Oh, yes, you can. Come to Jesus.

Father, bless the message and seal it to our hearts. And now while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, ask God, one more time, to lay on your heart a brother, a sister, who’s broken, who needs to be mended. While heads are bowed and eyes are closed, if you have a special burden, roll it on the Lord. He may not lift the burden; He may not solve the problem. But the Bible says, “Cast your burden upon the Lord. He will sustain you” (Psalm 55:22). He will—He will—see you through. He will. Cast it on Him.

And if you want to be saved, let me invite you to pray a prayer like this. Just pray it, right now, out of your heart: “Dear God...”—just pray it out of your heart—“Dear God, I know that You love me. I know that You want to save me. Right now, like a child, I open my heart. I receive Jesus Christ, who died for me, who paid for my sin with His blood on the cross. I receive Him now, this moment, as my Lord and Savior. And Lord Jesus, because I trust You to save me, I’ll not be ashamed of You. I will make it public. Give me the courage to come, this morning, and confess You as my Lord and Savior. Help me never to be ashamed of You. In your name I pray. Amen.”

The Law of Sowing and Reaping

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: September 30, 1990

Main Scripture Text: Galatians 6:6

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Law of Dissemination
- II. The Law of Identification
- III. The Law of Anticipation
- IV. The Law of Multiplication
- V. The Law of Cultivation
- VI. The Law of Participation

Conclusion

Introduction

Take God's Word and turn with me to the Book of Galatians—Galatians chapter 6—and I will begin here in just a moment, here in verse 6. Galatians chapter 6 and verse 6. Now I don't know everything about all of you, but I think I know this about most of you: and it is that you want God's best for your life. I believe, if I know human nature, and certainly God's people, you want to reap a harvest of blessing in your heart, and in your life. And, I believe you can; I believe we can give a recipe for it. And, I'll tell you why. It is because God is a God of order. Understand that, now. God works according to fixed principles, and His principles are just as fixed in the spiritual world as they are in the natural world.

For example, there are certain fixed principles in the natural world. One of the laws of the natural world is the law of gravity. The law of gravity is what is keeping you on your seat and off the ceiling right now. It's the law of gravity that just simply holds you down. Now that's just a fixed law in the universe. You don't break the law of gravity. You may step off a 10-story building. You won't break the law; you'll only demonstrate that law. You won't break it, but you'll be broken on it. There's a law of centripetal force that's in the natural realm. I transgressed that law one time riding a motorcycle, and wrapped myself around a palm tree. Now I didn't break the law of centripetal force, but I certainly did illustrate it. Now don't go around a corner too fast on a motorcycle. As a matter of fact, that was my last motorcycle ride.

Now there are certain laws in the physical universe; and, there are certain fixed laws in the spiritual universe, and they are just as fixed. One of the laws that I want to talk to you about today is, "The Law of Sowing and Reaping." Okay? "The Law of Sowing and

Reaping”: it is a fixed law in the natural realm, and it is a fixed law in the spiritual realm. To expect anything else would be to make a mockery of God.

Turn with me, please, to Galatians chapter 6 and verse 6: *“Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things”* (Galatians 6:6). That means that, if you’re receiving teaching from the Word of God, then you ought to underwrite the expenses of the church. And then, it goes on to say, in Galatians 6:7 to 10: *“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith”* (Galatians 6:7–10).

Now my dear friend, the Bible says that God cannot be mocked. You cannot make a mockery of God. The only way you might attempt to make a mockery of God would be to try to transgress, negate, nullify, or overlook the law of the harvest of sowing and reaping. I think it was Abraham Lincoln who said, “You can fool some of the people all of the time, and you can fool all of the people some of the time; but you cannot fool all of the people all of the time.” I’ll say *amen* to that. But I want to add this addendum: you can’t fool God any of the time.

Now dear friend, listen. God is not mocked. I want to give you six principles. I want you to jot them down. These six principles are the law of the harvest, and they will work for you or against you, because they’re neutral laws. It is a neutral law—neutral principles—and they can work for you, or against you. It all depends. And, they are written into the infrastructure of God’s universe.

I. The Law of Dissemination

Law number one is the law of dissemination. The law of dissemination is whatever a man sows. Now it’s simply that you must disseminate. You must put out seed, if you’re going to have a harvest. You see, we reap, because we have sowed. There is no such thing as spontaneous generation. Everything that we reap has been because someone has already sown before us. Now you say, “Well, I have reaped without sowing.” Well, if you have reaped without sowing, it is because somebody else sowed without reaping. But what I’m trying to say is, dear friend, that there is the law of sowing and reaping. There can be no reaping without sowing. God’s whole economy—physical and spiritual—is built on the law of the harvest. All right, so I’m going to skip that. It’s a very simple thing. It is the law of dissemination. You must sow, if you would reap; or you must sow, if there would be reaping.

II. The Law of Identification

Let's move to the second law, and spend a little more time. The second law is not the law of dissemination. It is the law of identification. The law of identification is that you reap the same thing that you sow. Whatever you reap is identified with what you sow. Now look again, if you will, in verse 7: *“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap”* (Galatians 6:7). To expect anything else would be to make a mockery of God.

Now I love the Book of Genesis. You understand Genesis, then you understand the rest of the Bible. And, God put a principle in the very first chapter of the Book of Genesis. It is a universal principle, and you'll find it in Genesis chapter 1, beginning in verses 11 and 12. Listen to it: *“And God said...”*—this is not some philosopher or some professor saying this—*“And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good”* (Genesis 1:11–12).

Now in Genesis chapter 1, God is saying, in the law of the harvest, you reap what you sow. There is a locked-in likeness. You don't get figs from an olive tree. You get olives from an olive tree. You get figs from a fig tree. If you plant corn, you don't get wheat; you get corn. Now dear friend, we expect it in the physical world because there's a locked-in likeness. You ought to also expect it in the spiritual world. What you sow is what you get. Now you don't reap unity from discord. You don't reap holiness from hypocrisy. You don't reap love from indifference. What you reap is what you sow. Jesus said the same thing, in Matthew chapter 7 and verse 16—He says, *“Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?”* (Matthew 7:16). The answer is obviously, “No!”

Now dear friend, you're going to reap what you sow. It is true negatively. It is true positively. It is negatively. If you sow to the flesh, your flesh is going to reap corruption. What God is saying is that every kick has a kickback. Ha! You know *there are lots of folks who sow their wild oats six days a week, and then they come to church on Sunday and pray for crop failure*. Isn't that right? I mean, they have the idea that, somehow, they're just going to break the law of the harvest. But you can't do it. Dear friend, every kick has a kickback. Whatever you sow you're going to reap, negatively.

Somebody wrote these words about raising children:

- If a child lives with criticism, he learns to condemn.
- If a child lives with hostility, he learns to fight.
- If a child lives with ridicule, he learns to be shy.
- If a child lives with shame, he learns to feel guilty.
- If a child lives with tolerance, he learns to be patient.

If he lives with encouragement, he learns confidence.
If he lives with praise, he learns appreciation.
If he lives with fairness, he learns justice.
If he lives with security, he learns to have faith.
If he lives with approval, he learns to like himself.
If a child lives with acceptance and friendship, he learns to find love in the world. (Dorothy Law Neite)

Did you know that what we're sowing in our children we're going to reap in our children? It works positively. It works negatively. So you see, in life, there's the law of identification.

You need to find out what it is that you want, and begin to plant the crop that you want. Now if you want time, then give time. If you want concern, then give concern. If you want friendship, give friendship. He who would have friends must show himself friendly (Proverbs 18:24). Jesus Christ said, in Luke chapter 6, verse 38: "*Give, and it shall be given unto you*" (Luke 6:38). Now my dear friend, listen to me. If you are not reaping in life the things that you want, don't you think that you'd better start considering the things that you've been sowing. There is a locked-in likeness.

III. The Law of Anticipation

Now the first law is the law of dissemination. The next law is the law of identification. Now here's the third law: the third law is the law of anticipation—the law of anticipation. You do not sow and reap at the same time. You see, the Bible says, in this verse, says that we reap in due season (Galatians 6:9). There's a due season for every crop. Some seeds sprout almost immediately in the spiritual life; they sprout so quickly. But some seeds are a long, long time coming. As a matter of fact, the things that count the most seem to take the longest to get here, sometimes.

I was reading recently about those giant sequoias that some of us have seen over in California in the Sequoia National Forest. Some of them are 300 feet tall. That's a 30-story building. That all began with the smallest of seeds. But that seed has been growing and maturing since before the time of Christ.

You have to anticipate the harvest. You can't rush the season. Some of us say, "Well, I'm going to serve God." And, you start out today to do something, and tomorrow you're not reaping a harvest; you get all discouraged, and you're just kind of pulling your radishes up by the roots to see how they're growing, and you jam 'em back in the ground again. Oh, no, dear friend, the Bible says that there is a due season for everything.

Now Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived, apart from the Lord Jesus Christ, who was more than a man. But Solomon said, in Ecclesiastes chapter 11 and verse 1:

“Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it”—listen—“after many days” (Ecclesiastes 11:1). Well, that’s been enigmatic to a lot of people. They say, “What does that mean—to cast your bread upon the waters?” Well, that’s a poetic way of saying, “to make an investment that sows some seed.” Now that’s what Solomon said. And, let me show you what Solomon did. Here’s the way he cast his bread upon the waters—1 Kings chapter 10, verses 22 and 23: *“For the king”—that is, Solomon—“had at sea a navy of Tharshish with the navy of Hiram: once in three years came the navy of Tharshish, bringing”—bringing to Solomon, now—“gold, and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks. So king Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom”* (1 Kings 10:22–23).

So he had a navy. And, that navy would sail out, and that navy would be laden with certain things. He was exporting and importing; that’s what he was doing. He was simply casting his bread upon the water. Now three years it would take the ships to come back. But listen. Solomon knew something of the law of the harvest. And, he was the richest man of his day, and of his time. It just simply works, friend. And, sometimes, you reap the harvest so much later.

One of the former pastors of this church was Robert G. Lee. Many of you were members of this church when Dr. Lee was the pastor here. And, we all admired Dr. Lee’s intellect, and we admired his strength. You could look at Dr. Lee, in his eighties, and he stood erect. He had complexion like a baby, piercing blue eyes, and his mind was just like a razor. I remember one time Dr. Lee was supposed to read the Scripture at the Southern Baptist Convention. Well, he didn’t read the Scripture. He just stood up and quoted chapter 5 of the Gospel of Matthew. I was sitting near Billy Graham, when Dr. Lee came down, and, after having done the Scripture; and, Billy said “Sorry to see you’re losing your memory like that, Dr. Lee.” I asked Dr. Lee, “How is it? How do you do that?” And, I never will forget what he said. He said, “I am living on the dividends of a well-spent youth.” Hmm? See, he was putting things in the bank, a long time ago. “I am living on the dividends of a well-spent youth.”

Now the same thing is true, however, about the seeds of sin. You’re sowing the seeds of sin now. Some of you young people, you’re living high, wide, and handsome. One of these days, you’ll reap a harvest. You say, “I feel fine.” Did you know there are some people who have in their body a vile disease, right now, and you don’t even know it. It’s going to take your life. Doubtless, in a congregation this big, especially with tape and television, somebody listening to me right now is infected with a disease that is incubating in you. And, sooner or later, it will take your life. And, the doctors don’t have a cure for it. Now you have sown the wind and you’re going to reap the whirlwind. You say, “I’m feeling fine right now.” That’s the problem with so many people.

The same Solomon said, in Ecclesiastes chapter 8 and verse 11: *“Because*

sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (Ecclesiastes 8:11). That means, because you don't see an immediate harvest, you think you can sin, and get away with it. But my dear friend, God is not mocked.

I want to give you an illustration of that taken from the Old Testament. You remember that Israel was carried away into captivity, and they stayed in the land of Babylon for 70 years. Why? I'll tell you why. God had given Israel a law and a principle. God said, *"But the seventh year thou shalt let it rest and lie still"* (Exodus 23:11). There was to be a rest for their fields. There was to be, every seventh year, a Sabbath, where they weren't to plant the harvest, just let the land lie fallow. But they didn't do that. They kept farming right on around, and they did not give the land its rest. Now they did that for 490 years. Now after almost 1,000 years later, they thought they'd gotten away with it. But they got carried in captivity into Babylon.

And listen to what God's Word says in 2 Chronicles chapter 36 and verse 21—the Bible says they were carried away in captivity, *"to fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years"* (2 Chronicles 36:21). You see, there was seventy years of Sabbaths. They said, "Well, we've gotten away with it." They didn't get away with it. A thousand years later, the nation Israel reaped that reward.

Now listen—don't try to hurry the harvest. James chapter 5 and verse 7: *"Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman"*—that means, the farmer—*"waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it"* (James 5:7). Now what is the law of the harvest? Law number one, dear friend: dissemination. Law number two: identification. Law number three: anticipation. In due season, you will reap—negatively or positively. In due season, you will reap.

IV. The Law of Multiplication

Now here's the fourth law: it is the law of multiplication. You always reap more than you sow. What you sow is always multiplied and intensified. Hosea the prophet said, in Hosea chapter 8 and verse 7, to the people of his day, *"They have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind"* (Hosea 8:7). Now negatively, it is true. You always reap not only what you sow, but you reap more than you sow. You sow to the flesh, and of the flesh you're going to reap corruption (Galatians 6:8).

Americans have amused themselves with a so-called sexual revolution. Back in the late fifties, the early sixties, we began a sexual revolution. And now we're seeing, in America, not the wind that we sowed, but the whirlwind. Our society is being destroyed by vile diseases. We have an epidemic of AIDS and other sexually spread diseases.

Homes are being disintegrated. Society is being torn apart. All of this is aided by the A.C.L.U., while we're trying to teach young people to have moral standards, but they say that's religious indoctrination.

Let me show you something here that I pulled out of the September edition of *The Christian Herald*. Dr. Larry Poling says this: "In mid 1988, the A.C.L.U. wrote to the California Assembly Education Committee opposing a proposed sex education bill." Now this sex education bill was to teach morality and abstinence. "It is our position," the A.C.L.U. said, "that teaching that monogamous, heterosexual intercourse within marriage as a traditional American value is an unconstitutional establishment of a religious doctrine in public schools." Plain English, if you teach boys and girls that God meant for sex to be within the bounds of matrimony, and between man and woman, then you're violating the Constitution, by teaching religion in the public schools. Now dear friend, that's the kind of sex education they want in public schools—that says, "There is no such thing as monogamous marriage, and no such thing as heterosexual morality." It's incredible. It is incredible.

Now what have we reaped in America? Dear friend, we are reaping chaos in our world, today. You see, there is intensification. And, we have sown the wind, and we're reaping the whirlwind. You see, a harvest goes on to infinity. You never stop the harvest, until you get to eternity.

I have an answer for the food problems of the world. We're starving. I should have brought my ear of corn. I said, "Joyce I want to carry an ear of corn to the pulpit tomorrow." But I didn't do it. But if I had just an ear of corn, right up here, my dear friend, that one ear of corn would solve all of the food problems in the world—if that one ear of corn were invested. In one ear of corn, we would expect to get a bushel of corn, in one year. The next year, from that one bushel of corn, we get 100 bushels. The next year, we'd get 1 million bushels, from one ear of corn. And, the next year, you don't have a calculator big enough to show how much corn would come from one ear of corn that I could hold in my hand today—enough to feed the whole world. But it's got to be invested. It's got to be planted.

You see, dear friend, there is the law of multiplication. It is an incredible law. And, therefore, you can plant, and expect to get more than you plant.

You see, the Bible says, in 2 Corinthians chapter 9, verses 6 and 7: "*But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly;*"—that is, sow a little, you reap a little—"*and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.*" And then, he talks about giving: "*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 9:6–7).

Now dear friend, can you imagine a farmer and his wife, and they're having a discussion, and the farmer says, "Well, I'm going out to the field, today." And, the wife

says, “What are you going to do?” He says, “I’m going to put this grain in the ground.” She says, “You’re what?” “I’m going to put this grain in the ground.” She says, “Husband, don’t be crazy. We need that to feed the children.” He says, “Well, we’ll feed the children with some of it; but, the rest of it I’m going to put in the ground.” She says, “Not on my life are you going to put that seed in the ground. That is good seed.” He says, “I know it’s good seed, but I’m not just giving it away. I’m not just burying it. I’m sowing it. I am investing it.”

Well you say, “Of course, every farmer knows that.” But every Christian doesn’t know that. You know that some people think, when they give their money to God, they’re wasting their money? They say—the wife says, “You’re going to carry that down and give that? What? Don’t you know we need that?” He said, “Well, I know we’ve got certain responsibilities, but I’m going to tell you something, sweetheart: I am not afraid to trust the God of the harvest.”

Now listen, friend—it’s so plain: *“Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. 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).

My friend, if you want to be rich, give. If you want to be poor, grasp. If you want abundance, scatter. If you want to be needy, hoard. There’s the law of intensification; and, dear friend, you’ll never get around it.

There was a man, though some did count him mad,

The more he cast away, the more he had. (John Bunyan)

Well, I know what some of you are saying—you’re saying, “Well, Pastor, you know, I just can’t see my way clear to make an investment. I just think I’ll play it safe. I’ll play it safe. You know, we may have a recession, or I may get sick. I may have some problems. I am going to keep what I need, and I’m going to keep a hedge, more than I need: because, who knows what might happen?” Again, Solomon said, in Ecclesiastes chapter 11, verse 4: *“He that observeth the wind shall not sow”* (Ecclesiastes 11:4).

Now if there’s a farmer, and he says, “Well, you know, we could have a drought; we could have a freeze; we could have a blight; so, I will not put anything in the ground”; well, if he considers the wind, he’ll not sow. But if he doesn’t sow, he’s not going to have a harvest. Don’t be a cloud watcher. Don’t be a wind examiner. My dear friend, be a man of faith, a woman of faith, whatever it is that you want. You need to learn how to sow. There is the law of intensification.

V. The Law of Cultivation

Now I want to move on to the fifth law. Here’s the fifth law: the fifth law is the law of cultivation—the law of cultivation. If you want a better harvest, cultivate what you plant,

or put it in the ground, and then watch over it. Now in our text, the Bible says, “Don’t be weary of well doing” (Galatians 6:9). Now you can intensify your harvest even more, if you will cultivate your harvest. You see?

Have you ever planted a garden, and you thought, “Oh, what a beautiful garden we’ve planted!” then you went on vacation, and you came back, and you saw all those weeds, and everything out there, just taking over your garden? You see, not only does a garden have to be planted; but, you can’t just plant it, and forget it. We live in a world that is cursed by sin; and, therefore, thorns, weeds, and briars always try to choke out the good harvest. That’s the reason, friend, that, when you plant, you have to cultivate.

Did you know what you’re doing in the morning, when you have a quiet time? Do you know what you’re doing? One of the things you’re doing every morning is weeding the garden—just weeding the garden of your mind, so that the good seed of the Word of God can multiply. You see, again, the law of cultivation is taught in the Word of God.

The Apostle Paul was talking about soul winning—the harvest—and he says, in 1 Corinthians chapter 3, verse 6: *“I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase”* (1 Corinthians 3:6). Now cultivate your harvest. Water your harvest. When you go out to win souls, water the crop with your tears: *“He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him”* (Psalm 126:6). Learn to cultivate your harvest. Learn to have a wise approach to what you want. I said, “Sow what you want; but don’t forget to watch over it.”

Last night, I stood here, and performed a wedding ceremony—a beautiful wedding, for a wonderful couple; and, they have such wonderful intentions. And, as they made their pledge one to another, they were sowing the seeds of happiness; but, they must cultivate that marriage. If you have a business, make an investment; but watch over it. Cultivate that business. We have a wonderful church, and wonderful doctrine, but we must cultivate the harvest, here. Thank God for the law of cultivation.

VI. The Law of Participation

Now let me give you the sixth law. The sixth law, and the final law that I will mention this morning, not only is it the law of cultivation, but also it is the law of participation—the law of participation. Look, if you will, in verse 6: *“Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things”* (Galatians 6:6). Look in verse 10: *“As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good to all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith”* (Galatians 6:10).

Now I said that there is no reaping without sowing; but, dear friend, did you know that you could reap without sowing? How can you reap without sowing? Well, you reap because somebody else sowed. Many of you are new members of this church. You’re in this beautiful building, this morning. You’re sitting on these pews. You didn’t help build

it. What you're doing, today, is reaping where somebody else sowed. Isn't that true? I mean, we're standing on the shoulders of giants. And, what we see, and what we enjoy today represents the love, the sweat, the prayers, the tears, and the faith of God's people. And, we reap where we don't sow, sometimes; but, if we reap without sowing, it is because somebody else sowed before us.

Listen to what Jesus said in John chapter 4 and verse 37 and 38: *"And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth."* And Jesus said, *"I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours"* (John 4:37–38). We can reap what we haven't sown.

It's true with the little children. Little children reap things that they have not sown. I was listening to the news the other day. Little children are now being born addicted to drugs. They're born addicted to drugs. Their parents have sown those seeds, and the little children are reaping. *"The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge"* (Jeremiah 31:29). *"The iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me"* (Exodus 20:5). We can reap where we haven't sowed. And, how terrible that is negatively! But also positively, how wonderful that is! We can sow for others. We can be a blessing for generations to come. We can reap what others have sown.

I mentioned Dr. Lee, and Dr. Pollard, and the other pastors that went before me. When I came to be the pastor of this church, how good God was to me, because I came to a congregation where the people loved one another! I came to a congregation where the people believed the Bible is the Word of God. I came to a congregation where they believed that the pastor is God's man to lead the church, and a congregation who said, "Pastor, preach it like its written. We will follow, and we'll do what God says through you, and tells us to do." What a blessing! Dear friend, I reaped where I did not sow, and I stand on the shoulders of others. Thank God for the blessings!

Adoniram Judson, a great pioneer missionary—Adoniram Judson said one of the most poignant things I've ever heard. I want you to listen to what he said. He said, "If we succeed without suffering, it is because others suffered before us. If we suffer without succeeding, it will mean that others will succeed after us. But there is no success without suffering." Isn't that a great statement? Listen to it again now: "If we succeed without suffering, it is because others suffered before us. If we suffer without succeeding, it will mean that others will succeed after us. But there is no success without suffering." And so we reap, so many times, so many blessings where we've not sowed. There are kids here today—thank God for your godly parents, your home, your church, and your nation—thank God for the freedom. This land that we have bought with the blood of patriots, don't take it for granted. There's a law of participation. We participate in what others have done.

I want to just draw this message to a close to give you the greatest example of that. We participate in Adam's sin. The Bible says, "*In Adam all die*" (1 Corinthians 15:22). You say, "Who is Adam? I didn't vote for him." Makes no difference. Dear friend, Adam sowed the seeds of disobedience there in the Garden of Eden, and we are reaping and eating the bitter fruit, in a world, today, that has the curse of sin upon it.

But let me give you the good news. Are you ready for the good news? We can have a harvest of salvation also, because God gave His Son. Jot this scripture down: John 12, verse 24—Jesus is talking about the law of the harvest, and He says, "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit*" (John 12:24).

Now Jesus said that Calvary illustrates the law of the harvest. Jesus Christ said, "I am like a corn of wheat. I am like a grain of wheat. I am going into the ground. I will die; but yet, out of that death, will come life. Not just my resurrection life, but much fruit." And, the tomb that we heard sung about just a few moments ago, where Jesus lay, was much like a seed laid down in the cold earth; and out of the seed, of the crucified body of the Lord Jesus Christ, there exploded life for all of us—for you, and for me. And, today, I have eternal life, because of the law of participation. I once participated in the harvest of Adam, but now, I am participating in the harvest of Jesus Christ, who died for me.

Billy Sunday was an evangelist who was the Billy Graham of his day, and when Billy Sunday started out, he started out putting up his own tent, and taking it down, and so forth. And, one day, after a great crusade, and many souls were saved, Billy Sunday was there helping the workers take down the tent. And, a young man came running into the tent. I mean, the crusade was over, and this young man said, "Are you Billy Sunday?" He said, "Yes, I am." He said, "Could you please help me?" He said, "Well, I'll help you, if I can." He said, "I wanted to come to the crusade, but," he said, "I missed it." He said, "I want to be saved." He said, "Can you please tell me what to do? What must I do?"

And, Sunday said, "You're too late," and just kept on taking down the tent. He said, "No! Listen! I need to be saved! I know I missed the meeting, but please tell me. What must I do to be saved?" Sunday just kept on taking down the tent, and he said, "You're too late! You're too late!" He said, "You mean, just because I missed the meeting, you're not going to tell me how to be saved?" He said, "No," said, "you're too late to do anything to be saved, because Jesus did it all 2,000 years ago." He was a rascal, wasn't he, Billy Sunday? But he said, "You're too late to do anything. Jesus has already done it!"

Conclusion

And now you receive the finished work of Jesus Christ. Jesus was that corn of wheat that went into the ground, and died, and rose again to bring much fruit. Friend, I'm telling you, there is a law. It's the law of the harvest. "He that sows to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; he that sows of the Spirit shall reap life everlasting" (Galatians 6:8).

I want heads bowed. Eyes are closed. No one is stirring. I wonder how many in this congregation today would say, "Pastor Rogers, Pastor Rogers, I know that if I were to die today, I'd go straight to Heaven—not because of what I've done, but because of what Jesus Christ did for me; because I've repented of my sin, I've trusted Christ, and God's Spirit bears witness with my spirit that I am a child of God; I know that I'm saved; and I'm so grateful that Jesus has saved me; and I have the assurance that He saved me; and, I know, if I died right now, I'd go to Heaven." May I see your hand? Would you hold it up? Thank God for this testimony. Take them down. Now not everyone could lift his or her hand this morning; but I know that you're interested in God. I know that you're interested in spiritual things, or you wouldn't be here.

Dear friend, let me tell you, just like Billy Sunday told that youngster so long ago, Jesus has already purchased your salvation. He died for you, and you can reap, today, where you haven't sown, if you'll trust Christ as your personal Savior. 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, You died to save me, and promised to save me, if I would trust You. I do trust You, Jesus, right now, with all of my heart. Come into my heart, Lord Jesus. Forgive my sin. Save me, Jesus." Say it and pray it, and He'll save you.

Father, I pray that many in this place, today, will receive Christ as Lord and Savior. In His wonderful name. Amen.

What You Sow Is What You Get

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: November 16, 2003

Main Scripture Text: Galatians 6:6–10

Outline

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- I. The Law of Dissemination
- II. The Law of Identification
- III. The Law of Incubation
- IV. The Law of Multiplication
- V. The Law of Cultivation
- VI. The Law of Participation
- VII. The Law of Activation

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Introduction

Take your Bibles—take your Bibles, please. Gentlemen, ladies, take your Bibles and turn, please, to Galatians—the Book of Galatians chapter 6. And I want to set the tone for the Love Offering this morning with a message from the Word of God—Galatians chapter 6.

Now we often hear this phrase: “What you see is what you get.” Well, normally, that is not true anyway. A lot of times, what is beneath the surface has been disguised, and what we see is not necessarily what we get. But I’m going to change that, this morning. And here’s the title of the message: “What You Sow...”—s-o-w—“What You Sow is What You Get.”

Galatians chapter 6, verses 6 through 10—the Bible says, “*Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.*” That is, if you have been taught the Word of God, then you are to give. The word *communicate* literally means, “give in all good things.” “*Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith*” (Galatians 6:6–10).

Now look up here, and let me tell you something. I know, I know, I know, I know that, if you’re wise, you want God’s best for your life. And God’s best for your life is found in something that I have called *the law of the harvest*. From time immemorial, preachers

have preached messages on the law of the harvest, and they have boiled the law of the harvest down to three things: We reap what we sow; we reap more than we sow; and we reap later than we sow. That's obvious, and it is certainly true. But I have expanded that not to simply three laws, but to seven wonderful laws. And in a few short minutes, I want to give to you seven laws of the harvest. Now these laws are God's laws. God is a God of law, in the natural world and in the spiritual world.

In the natural world, there are certain laws. The law of gravity—it's just a universal law; it operates for all people, saved or lost. You step out of a 20-storey building—you don't break the law of gravity; you demonstrate the law of gravity. You don't break it; you're broken on it. The law of centrifugal force, in physics—you know that law. I learned that law as a youngster, when I put a motorcycle—wrapped it around a palm tree, trying to go around a corner too fast. That's the law of centrifugal force. I didn't break that law, but that law took over, and put me up against that palm tree, and put some sense into my head. These are laws, in the natural realm.

But let me tell you, there are laws in the spiritual realm just as true. The Bible says, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatever a man sows, that shall he reap" (Galatians 6:7). Now notice it says that, "God is not mocked." If sowing and reaping did not work, it would be a mockery to the God of the universe. Wise, honest Abraham Lincoln said, "You can fool all of the people some of the time; you can fool some of the people all of the time. But you can't fool all of the people all of the time." And I think that is true. May I just put an addendum to that? You can't fool God any of the time. "God is not mocked...whatever a man sows, that shall that man reap" (Galatians 6:7).

What are the seven laws of the harvest? I want you to jot them down, and I want you to learn them.

I. The Law of Dissemination

Number one is the law of dissemination. And what does that law say? It says that we reap only what has been sown. If you don't sow, obviously, you're not going to reap. Look in verse 6: "*Let him that is taught in the word communicate*"—and that word literally means, "give"—"*unto him that teacheth in all good things*" (Galatians 6:6). In plain English, "You've got to plant, if you want a harvest." In the nature realm, there's no such thing as spontaneous generation. Life does not come from inanimate matter. And in the spiritual realm, there can be no life without seed that has life in it that germinates.

Now you may reap something you didn't sow. But if you reap something you did not sow, it just simply means that somebody sowed before you reaped. John 4, verse 37: "*And herein is that saying true,*"—these are the words of Jesus—"*One soweth, and another reapeth*" (John 4:37). So if you have blessings today, and you didn't plant the seed, it is because somebody planted a seed before you. But there is no reaping

without sowing. That is the law of implantation. Got it? Got it. Now let's move to the second law.

II. The Law of Identification

The second law is the law of identification. That is, we reap the same as we sow. Look in verse 7: *“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap”* (Galatians 6:7). To expect anything different would be to make a mockery of God.

Go back to Genesis chapter 1 and verse 11: *“And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so”* (Genesis 1:11). God said, “In all of the natural world, there is a locked-in likeness. You get what you sow.” Now we expect it in the cornfield; you might as well expect it in life. You don't gather figs from olive trees. You don't get corn from wheat. There is a locked-in likeness. There is the law of identification.

And even if you sowed sinfully, you're going to reap sinfully. Let me give you a verse—Job 4, verse 8: *“Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same”* (Job 4:8). You live a life of sin—you're planting a crop. Now friend, if you sow negatively, you're going to reap negatively. *Some people think that they can go out all six days of the week, and sow their wild oats, and come to church on Sunday, and pray for crop failure.* It doesn't work that way. If you sow iniquity, you're going to reap iniquity.

You need to learn to plant what you want to reap. What do you want? Do you want love? Then, plant love. You want people to give you time? Give them time. You want people to be concerned with you? Be concerned with other people. You want friendship? Then, be a friend. I hear people all the time, complaining, “Well, that's not a friendly church,” or, “I don't have any friends.” Well, you're telling on yourself—you're telling on yourself. He who would have friends must show himself friendly. There are plenty of people just like you who need somebody to love them and care for them. So now, listen to me. If you are not reaping what you desire to reap, you'd better check up and see, “What on earth have I been sowing?”—if your life is not what you think your life ought to be.

Let me tell you something: *Your life is nothing but the harvest of your habits.* That was a good place for an *amen*, but I didn't get one. So I'm going to run it all the way back again. *Your life is nothing but the harvest of your habits.* Now see, look, you are what you've planted; you are what you've sown. There is locked-in likeness. It is the law of identification. Got it? Got it. All right.

III. The Law of Incubation

Third law: There's the law of incubation—the law of incubation. We reap later than we sow. Now look in verse 9: *“And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season”*—in due season—*“we shall reap, if we faint not”* (Galatians 6:9). Every crop has its due season.

When I was a little boy, back in World War II, we had, in our backyard, a garden called a *victory garden*. We couldn't grow a whole lot, but one thing we did learn how to grow was radishes. But you know, I was about the only one in the family who really liked radishes. I like things hot and spicy. And sometimes, I would go out and dig around our radishes and pull them up a little bit to see how they were growing, trying to put them back in the ground. You just can't do that; you can't do that. You've got to wait. Everything has a due season. You cannot rush the harvest. You wait on God.

Now if you live in sin, you may say, “I'm getting away with my sin.” You're not getting away with your sin anymore than Magic Johnson got away with his. Whatever you sow you're going to reap. There are some people, right now, who, perhaps, have been living lives of immorality and have the seeds of disease in their body and don't even know it yet. But the harvest time comes. Sometimes, it comes slowly; sometimes, it comes quickly—for good or for bad.

Let me give you a verse—James chapter 5, verse 7: *“Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord.”* And then, he gives an illustration: *“Behold, the husbandman”*—that's just another word, fancy word, for *farmer*—*“waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and the latter rain”* (James 5:7). That means, if you're a farmer, you just can't make your seeds sprout overnight, but you can be sure there is the law of incubation. You are going to reap. You reap later than you sow. And that's the reason that many of us don't do good and, sometimes, we are quick to do evil—because we don't reap right away. We do good, and we don't see the fruit; we reap evil, and we think we're getting away with it.

There is the law of implantation—you must plant. There is the law of identification—you're going to reap what you sow. There is the law of incubation—you're going to reap later than you sow.

IV. The Law of Multiplication

You ready for the fourth law? Here it is: It is the law of multiplication—we reap more than we sow. What you sow will be multiplied. Again, look, if you will, in verse 9: *“And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not”* (Galatians 6:9).

And what shall we reap? Well, let me give you an additional verse here, back in the Old Testament—Hosea: *“For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the*

whirlwind” (Hosea 8:7). They sow the wind; they reap the whirlwind. That is, there is intensification. Now “If you sow to the flesh, you, of the flesh, are going to reap corruption” (Galatians 6:8).

Now in America, about 25 years ago, we had something called the *sexual revolution*. And Americans laughed and titillated themselves with something called the *sexual revolution*. And now we have an incredible epidemic of AIDS, and venereal disease, and broken homes, and unwed mothers, and crime in the streets, because of children who do not know who their father is, and so forth. We sowed the wind; we’re reaping the whirlwind. We always reap more than we sow.

It’s true in the negative side. Friend, it is true in the positive side. If you make a gift, today, to the Love Offering—and I trust you will—note: only God knows—only God knows what your gift will do, as God multiplies it.

Last Sunday, I told you, “Any fool can count the seeds in an apple, but only God can count the apples in a seed.” You see, if there were not the law of multiplication, it would make no sense whatsoever to be a farmer. The farmer knows what he puts in the ground is going to be multiplied. If he takes an ear of corn and puts it in the ground, in that ear of corn is a bushel of corn. If he takes that bushel of corn and puts it in the ground, there are a hundred bushels. If he takes a hundred bushels and puts it in the ground, there are 10,000 bushels. If he takes 10,000 bushels and puts them in the ground, there are millions of bushels—starting with an ear of corn; really, starting with a grain of corn. What is that? That is an incredible thing that God has put into the universe, for good or for evil, called *the law of multiplication*.

Now God wants to enrich you, and therefore, the Bible says, if you sow sparingly, you’re going to reap sparingly. Put this scripture down—I mentioned it last Sunday, in the message, but I want you to hear it again—2 Corinthians 9, verses 6 and 7: “*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;*”—as he purposes, what? “What kind of a crop you want, so let him give”—“*not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver*” (2 Corinthians 9:6–7). Do you think a farmer going out and putting his seed in the ground is just crying, and weeping, and begrudging the fact that he puts his seed in the ground? No. He’s saying, “Hallelujah! Thank God for the law of the harvest.”

Now maybe his wife at home says, “John, don’t go out there and put that good seed in the ground. John, we need that seed. I’m going to make bread out of it. We’re going to take it down and sell it.” John says, “No, I’m going to plant it.” She says, “I don’t want you making a donation to that ground.” He says, “Sweetheart, I’m not making a donation; I’m making an investment.”

Well, what about the man on Sunday morning who comes to church and says, “I’m

going to give to the Love Offering.” His wife says, “Now don’t put that in the offering plate.” “Well, why not?” “Well, honey, we need that money. Don’t make a donation to the church.” He says, “Honey, I’m not making a donation to the church; I am making an investment in the Kingdom of God.”

Now you have to understand that. Friend, that is a law. It’s a law, as plain as I’m standing here. *“But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully”* (2 Corinthians 9:6). If you want to be rich, give. If you want to be poor, grasp. If you want abundance, scatter. If you want to be needy, hoard.

V. The Law of Cultivation

Now here’s the fifth law. Are you ready for the fifth law? It’s the law of cultivation—we reap more, if we cultivate what we sow. Now look at chapter 6, verse 9: *“And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not”* (Galatians 6:9). Don’t faint. Don’t be weary. Keep cultivating the crop.

Have you ever planted a garden and then walked away and left it alone? What happened to it? Well, the weeds took over. Our world has been cursed with weeds, and thorns, and thistles. You know, it seems that the devil tends the weeds. You don’t have to cultivate the weeds. Do you remember the first dirty joke you ever heard? You see, but you remember. How easy is it to remember that, and how difficult to remember the Scripture? You see, you have to cultivate your mind. Your mind is like a garden of weeds. The weeds will grow; but, if you want a good crop, you have to cultivate that good crop.

Now we have to plant and water. Listen to 1 Corinthians chapter 3, verse 6: *“I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase”* (1 Corinthians 3:6). Cultivate. Do you have a business? Cultivate your business. You have a marriage? Cultivate your marriage. You have a church life? Cultivate your church life. You have a personal life? Cultivate your personal life. You have a friendship? Cultivate that friendship. Mister, the girl that you’re married to—are you cultivating your marriage? Love *is not like a diamond that you find and treasure* forever; *love is like a flower that has to be* watered, nurtured, *and* cared for. And your own personal life—wake up in the morning, and weed the garden of your mind; wake up in the morning, and water your faith with the Word of God; wake up in the morning, and cultivate the soil, and break up the hard heart, so that your faith will grow. You will reap more if you cultivate. It’s the law of cultivation.

VI. The Law of Participation

Now here’s number six—and we’re hurrying, and thank you for listening in a hurry. It is the law of participation—the law of participation. We may reap what others have sown.

Now notice what Paul says, in verse 10: *“As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith”* (Galatians 6:10). What is Paul saying? Paul is saying, “You give for others. They can reap what you have sown.”

Jesus taught the same truth. Listen, in John chapter 4, verses 37 and 38: *“And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours”* (John 4:37–38). Every one of us in this building—we are the recipients of what somebody else has planted. I’m telling you—listen to me: Before you got to this earth, you were in debt. You owed for nine months of room and board. Before you ever got here, somebody else planted, and you reaped. We are in debt to God for His blessing. We are reaping what Jesus has done. We are in debt to the last generation. Think what the last generation has done for us here at Bellevue Baptist Church. We are in debt to the next generation, those who are going to follow us. Friend, there is no blessing without sowing; and, if we reap without sowing, somebody else has sown without reaping.

Adoniram Judson, who was the missionary to Burma, said this: “There is no reaping without sowing. If you suffer without reaping, it only means that somebody else will reap without suffering. And if you reap without suffering, it only means that somebody suffered before you.”

Folks, in this church, look around. Those of you who are new members, do you think this just happened? Do you think this just floated out of Heaven? I’m telling you, in 1903, some people got together, who loved God and believed God, and began to give deeply out of their poverty. And we sit here today. We, today, in this building, in this ministry, in this service, are reaping what others have planted. Amen? Now I want some people who come behind me to reap what I have planted.

In our salvation—do you know why we are saved? Let me tell you why we are saved. Let me give it to you in terms of harvest reaping. John 12, verse 24—Jesus said, *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit”* (John 12:24). Jesus was speaking of Himself as that corn of wheat. Jesus gave up His life for us. He shed His life’s blood on Calvary’s cross. He died in unmentionable agony, torture, and horror; and, His body was put in the grave like a grain of wheat. And that grain of wheat burst forth into life. And that life is in me today, because Jesus made an investment. And I’m reaping what He sowed, and I’m grateful—and so should you be. Friend, I’m telling you, we are in debt to those who’ve gone before us; we’re in debt to those who come after us. We can reap where others have sown.

VII. The Law of Activation

Now here's the seventh and the last principle of this law of the harvest, and it is the law of activation—we must seize the opportunity for the harvest. Look again, if you will, in Galatians chapter 6, verse 10: *“As we have therefore opportunity...”*—and oh, if there were ever a group with an opportunity, it's sitting in this building now—*“As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith”* (Galatians 6:10). When is the best day to plant? Today—the day of opportunity.

Don't let Satan fill you with fear. Some of you say, “Well, you know, if I were to give something to the Love Offering, I might need it later.” That's of the devil—that kind of talk. Listen to Ecclesiastes 11, verse 4: *“He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap”* (Ecclesiastes 11:4). If you're a farmer and you say, “Well, I don't know; hey, we may have a drought; we may have a flood; we may have this; I don't think I'll sow,” God says, “All right, you're not going to reap.” Don't be a wind watcher. Don't be a cloud examiner. By faith, give to God. God has given us a golden opportunity.

In a nursery, where they sell plants, there was a sign on the wall: “What is the best time to plant a fruit tree?” The answer: “Twenty-five years ago, and today”—“Twenty-five years ago, and today.” Listen, folks. We can plant for a future harvest, and we also need to reap a present harvest. There's a harvest to be reaped in this building. There are souls that need Jesus Christ today, and some of us need to be soul-winners. John 4, verse 35—Jesus said, *“Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest”* (John 4:35). There is a harvest for us to reach. There are souls that need Jesus. And our Love Offering is a way, not only to plant for our harvest, but to help us to reap a harvest immediately.

Now I don't know what you're going to do today, but let me give you one last verse; and then, we're going to begin the Love Offering. Here it is—Proverbs 10, verse 5: *“He that gathereth in summer is a wise son: but he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame”* (Proverbs 10:5). Now it's harvest time. And a son that gives his father glory—he says, “Father, it's your harvest field.”

Conclusion

Now folks, those are the seven laws of the harvest. I want to say that, because what we're going to do today is not to make a donation; what we're going to do today is to plant a crop—a crop of faith—believing God. Now if what I've said is not true, then nothing in this book is true. I have talked to you out of the Word of God. I have given you spiritual principles. Now the question is simply this: Are you going to believe those

principles?

Now let me tell you what we're going to do with the Love Offering. At a certain time, we're going to come by these receptacles, and we're going to put our gifts in these receptacles. And we will come by, row-by-row, rank-by-rank, from all over the building. If you're here, you'll just be caught up in it. You don't have to worry about what you're going to do, because it'll be very obvious. Brother Paul Williams, with his wonderful mind, has worked all of that out. And so we will come to make our gift.

Now if you're a guest, again, I want to tell you, just take the blank envelope. You don't have to put a thing in it, but walk by. And when you put the envelope in, you're saying, as a guest, "I thank God for Bellevue. I rejoice in what you people are doing, and I am just, symbolically—my heart, my love, my prayers are in this envelope." If you want to put something in, obviously we would not stop you from doing that; but you are not expected to. I want anybody to be relieved of that.

Number two: I don't want you to make a token offering. If you are not really prepared and haven't prayed about your offering, I'd rather you put a blank envelope in, and come back tonight, and put your offering in. This is not a casual offering. This is not an offering that you give by mere happenstance.

What we have said is, God knows what the need is. God knows what part of that need He wants you to meet. What part of that need He wants you to meet He's able to communicate to you. What He communicates to you, you're able to do. But you must depend upon Him. When you obey Him, therefore, He gets the glory, and you get the joy.

So we need to come to Him. If you've prayed over your envelope and prayed over your gift today, I want you to do it. Again, give something that will affect your lifestyle. What do you do that really affects your lifestyle? Give something that counts. But remember this: that you are not throwing money away. You are investing—not in a cause; you're investing in the Lord Himself. That is a cause, but it is a cause above some mundane cause that we might have. Now we will take the offering, and you'll come by, plant your offering, plant your seed, in one of these receptacles; and then, we'll tell you what the symbolism of all of that is, in a moment.

Is my beloved here? Sweet Joyce, are you here at all? Is she way over there? Joyce—there she is. Here she comes. All right now, isn't she pretty? Give her a hand. This is my grade school sweetheart. And I tell you what, from the time we got married to this present time, we've tried to honor the Lord with our substance; and, we have given beyond the tithe all of our lives. And we didn't have a lot, when we started. We spent what—50 dollars—on our honeymoon? That's it. Kids, you couldn't buy a big meal for 50 dollars today, but we did. God has blessed us, and He continues to bless. And the offering—I'm going to let you put it in, sweetheart—the offering that we give today is not

a token offering, and we believe in practicing what we preach. And so Joyce came out of her Children's New Members Class to do this. Thank you, honey. Let's put our offering in. And amen. God bless you. Okay, now you can go back. By the way, she handles the money. I haven't got enough sense to do that—she really does, and does a great job.

Now have I left anything out? Let me say this: that there is a part of the offering that, if you give as much cash as you can, we like that—we like that. But if you cannot give all of your offering in cash, try to spread it out. Don't give in lieu of your regular offering. That's just robbing Peter to pay Paul. Figure out what you hope to give through the year. Now you say, "Pastor, I'm not really certain of the future. This is what I think I can do. This is what I want to do." Put it on the envelope. You may be blessed and want to give more than you put on the envelope. Or, something may happen; you might have to alter. We understand this. No lawyer is going to call you. Nobody's going to ask you for it and say, "Hey, it's due. When are you going to pay up, or we'll send the mafia after you?" That's not... no, no. This helps us to understand, to a point, what we're going to do. So understand that you may adjust the pledge, if God's providence so works. This is what you ought to do, right now.

With all of that said, now, folks, I want everybody here—everybody here who's a guest—to think we are different than anybody else they've ever seen, because we get so excited about giving. So just before the Love Offering begins, let's just praise the Lord for the opportunity. Praise God! Amen! Amen, and amen, and amen! And so choir, orchestra, people of God, let the Love Offering begin.

Thank you, and be seated, for just a moment. Friend, yesterday's foundations—thank God for them. Today's frontiers: We're not finished—we're not finished. Forty Days of Purpose—we're only 40 days, but they point us to far more than that: worship, fellowship, discipleship, ministry, evangelism. You weren't giving a gift; you were making an investment. We're building on the foundations of those who've gone before us.

Have you ever received Christ as your personal Savior and Lord? He died. He invested His life like a seed in the ground, that you might reap everlasting life. Believe on Him, and He'll save you.

We're going to sing an invitational hymn. And if, today, you're willing to surrender your life to the One who loved you enough to die for you—the only One who has the power and the knowledge to make you what you ought to be—and, if you only understood, what you would want to be is like Jesus Christ. And I'm asking you now to give yourself to Jesus, because He has given Himself for you. It's the wisest thing you could possibly do. If you'll trust Him, believe on Him, He'll forgive every sin. He will inhabit your life. I'm not talking about emotionalism; I'm talking about His real presence.

He will inhabit your life and one day take you to Heaven. If I could give my heart to Jesus for you on your behalf, I would, but I cannot. But in His name, as His ambassador, I invite you today, when we stand and sing, in a moment, to leave your seat and make your way down any of these aisles. And let your coming be your way of saying, openly and publicly, unashamedly, “Today, I’m surrendering my life to Jesus Christ.” And I’m asking you to do what most of these people have already done and something you’ll be so glad you did.

Others of you need a church home. Maybe you’re a guest here today, and you’ve never been in a giving service like this. But as I said last Sunday, if you want to be a part of a church during a giving service, I think you’ll make a good member. So I want to invite you to come and say—if you know that you’re saved—I want to invite you to come forward and say, “I want to place my membership here.” Now if you’re in the balcony, there’ll be someone waiting to receive you under the banner to my right that says, “Redeemer,” or, the one to my left up there, in the corner, that says, “Messiah.” If you’re down here on the ground floor, there will be ministers waiting to receive all of those of you who’ll be coming forward. Don’t look around to see what anyone else is going to do. You be the first one down here, if you can. Let me pray for you.

Lord God, I pray now, in the name of Jesus, that You’ll give freedom and joy to do what we ought to do. And Lord, together, as a congregation, we pray for precious friends, we trust, who will be coming to say an everlasting yes to Jesus and to His Church.

Let’s stand together as we sing. You step out and come.

What You Sow Is What You Get

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: November 16, 2003

Main Scripture Text: Galatians 6:6–10

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Law of Dissemination
- II. The Law of Identification
- III. The Law of Incubation
- IV. The Law of Multiplication
- V. The Law of Cultivation
- VI. The Law of Participation
- VII. The Law of Activation

Conclusion

Introduction

Take God's precious Word and be finding the Book of Galatians—the Book of Galatians—chapter 6 in the Book of Galatians. In a moment, we're going to begin reading in Galatians chapter 6, and in verse 6.

Now from time immemorial, preachers have brought messages called, "The Law of the Harvest"; and, they remind us that the law of the harvest is a three-fold law. According to them, first of all is, we reap what we sow; second law is, we reap more than we sow; the third law is that we reap later than we sow. And all of those things are wonderfully true. But I've looked at the law of the harvest, and I have expanded the law of the harvest a little bit—not only to three, but seven principles, that are part of the law of the harvest. And you'll find out what that has to do with our Love Offering here, in just a moment.

Now often—often—we hear this saying: "What you see is what you get." That's not always true. Sometimes, people put deceptive labels on things. Sometimes, things are camouflaged. So I'm going to change that a little bit today and not use the phrase, "What you see is what you get," but, "What you sow"—s-o-w—"is what you get." And that's the title of the message today: "What You Sow is What You Get."

Now let's look in Galatians chapter 6, beginning in verse 6: *"Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we*

shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:6–10).

Now I don’t know all about you, but I know this about you: If you are saved, you want God’s best. And if you want God’s best, it is imperative that you understand the law of the harvest, because God is a God of order, and God operates everything according to laws.

In the natural world, everything operates according to laws. For example, there’s the law of gravity. That works universally for the saved and the lost, the young and the old, the rich and the poor. It’s just a natural law. If you jump out of a window of a 20-storey building, you don’t break the law of gravity; you demonstrate it. You’re broken on the law. The law is not revoked. It’s just the law of gravity. There’s the law of centrifugal force. I discovered that law when I was a teen, riding a motorcycle, trying to take a corner too fast; and, I ended up wrapping that motorcycle around a palm tree. Now I did not break the law of centrifugal force; I demonstrated that law. Got a little wiser, also.

There are laws—there are laws—in the physical universe that are inevitable; and, so in the spiritual universe. The law of sowing and reaping is a natural law in the natural world; and, it is in the spiritual world. And the Bible says, if the law of sowing and reaping did not work, God would be mocked. *“God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Galatians 6:7).*

It was said of wise, honest Abraham Lincoln that he said, “You can fool all of the people some of the time, and you can fool some of the people all of the time. But you can’t fool all of the people all of the time.” And I’d say that’s a good statement. But I would add an addendum to that and say, “You can’t fool God any of the time”—amen?—“none of the time.” “God is not mocked: whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap” (Galatians 6:7).

Now we expect it in the cornfield. You might as well expect it in life. So I want to give you the seven laws of the harvest. And I’m going to give them to you very quickly, so I want you to listen as quickly as you can; and I want you to write them down.

I. The Law of Dissemination

The first law is the law of dissemination: We reap only what has been sown. Now in verse 6: *“Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things” (Galatians 6:6).* The word *communicate* here, in the *King James*, means, “to give liberally.” If you want to reap, you must plant. There is a harvest that comes after you plant. There is no such thing, in the natural world or in the spiritual world, as spontaneous generation.

Now if you reap without planting, all that means is that somebody has planted for you, and before you. John 4, verses 37 and 38: *“And herein is that saying true, One*

soweth, and another reapeth” (John 4:37). So if you’re reaping things today, it is because either you or somebody else has planted. There is the law of implantation. Got it? Got it. All right.

II. The Law of Identification

Number two, there is the law of identification: We reap the same as we sow. Galatians chapter 6, verse 7: “*Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap*” (Galatians 6:7). Now to expect anything else would make a mockery of God.

God, way back there, in the Book of Genesis, said that a seed is to bring forth after its kind (Genesis 1:11). You wouldn’t plant an olive tree and expect to pick figs off of it. You wouldn’t put corn in the ground and expect to get wheat from it. Whatever you sow—that’s what you’re going to reap. There is a locked-in likeness.

Now you cannot, therefore, reap unity from discord. You can’t reap holiness from hypocrisy. You can’t reap love from indifference. Sometimes, we sow negatively; and, we think that we can get away with it, but we cannot. Job 4, verse 8: “*They that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same*” (Job 4:8).

Do you know what many people do, in America? They spend six days a week sowing wild oats, and come to church on Sunday, and pray for crop failure. It doesn’t work that way. Whatever you sow—that, you’re going to reap. Now of course, God forgives, but even there, the law of the harvest seems to work. You can pull a nail out of a board, but the nail hole is still there. Every kick has a kickback.

So if you want something, then you need to plant something. Sow what you want to reap. If you want love, give love. If you want people to share time with you, share time with them. If you want people to be concerned about you, be concerned about them. If you want friends, then be friendly. Sometimes, people come to church, and they say, “I don’t have any friends there at the church.” Well, you’re telling on yourself—you’re telling on yourself. He who would have friends must show himself friendly. What kind of a friend are you? There’s somebody else out there that needs a friend just like you. The Bible says, “*Give, and it shall be given unto you*” (Luke 6:38).

And if you are not reaping what you want to reap, you ought to ask yourself this question: Am I sowing what I ought to sow? Look at your own personal life. Are you the kind of a person you think God wants you to be? Friend, character *is the harvest of your* habits. That was a good place for an *amen*, so I’ll start all over again. Now listen to me. You’ve got to teach these folks when to say *amen*. Character *is the harvest of your* habits. Amen? I mean, you are what you’ve planted. You are reaping what you’ve sown. That’s the law of identification.

III. The Law of Incubation

Here's the third law, and that's the law of incubation: You reap later than you sow. Look in verse 9: *“And...be not be weary in well doing: for in due season”—in due season—“we shall reap, if we faint not”* (Galatians 6:9). Every crop has a due season. Some things sprout very quickly, and some take, it seems, almost an interminable time. But we will reap, if we faint not. Now there is a due season.

When I was a kid, back in World War II, fresh vegetables and fruit were scarce. And actually, we were coming out of the Great Depression. We planted, in our backyard, a garden. They called them, in those days, *victory gardens*. And we didn't have much luck growing, or much blessing—I don't believe in luck—in growing things. Well, let's put it real bluntly: We weren't very good at it. But anyway, we planted some things like collard greens, and so forth—did okay with that. But one thing that we were particularly good at was radishes. We could grow radishes. Now there's not a great demand for radishes, but radishes we could grow pretty good. I like radishes. I like things hot and spicy. And I would go out there in the garden, as a little boy, and dig around, and look to see how the radishes were growing, you know, and sometimes kind of slip them out of the ground and try to stuff them back in. That doesn't work; you can't do that. You have to let your blessings ripen. You have to wait upon God. In due season, you will reap, if you faint not.

Now some people think they're getting away with sin, because they are living a vile life and they think they have escaped the judgment of God. There are people right now listening to me—especially, perhaps, by radio and television—who have a vile disease incubating in their body, and they feel perfectly good. Magic Johnson, the great basketball player, sowed to the flesh. Of the flesh he reaped corruption. And he may feel good, look good, but, you see, that incubation time is there. The same thing is true about blessings. Maybe you give, maybe you love, maybe you prayed, maybe you served, and you say, “I don't see any fruit.” “Be not weary in well doing: in due season you will reap, if you faint not” (Galatians 6:9). Sooner or later, the harvest will come.

Let me give you a verse of Scripture—James chapter 5, verse 7: *“Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman”—*that means, “the farmer”—*“waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it”* (James 5:7). And so sometimes you just have to wait till your blessings are ripe. Sometimes, you have to wait until the judgment comes.

IV. The Law of Multiplication

Now the number four law—this is the law of multiplication: We reap more than we sow—we reap more than we sow. You see, the Bible says, “Be not weary in well doing: in due season we shall reap” (Galatians 6:9).

And what do we reap? We reap, not merely what we sow, but more than we sow. An ancillary verse would be Hosea 8, verse 7: *“For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind”* (Hosea 8:7).

There was a time—about 30 years ago—in the United States, where we had something called a *sexual revolution*. We bought into the Playboy philosophy, and they called something *free love*. Well, if it’s love, it’s not free. It takes commitment—that’s what love is all about. *“God so loved, that He gave...”* (John 3:16). He didn’t just collect. But we had this sexual revolution, and everybody was laughing about it, and so forth. But now, look—look—at what we’re reaping: so much more than what we sowed. We sowed the wind; we’re reaping the whirlwind. Think of the AIDS epidemic; think of the sexually transmitted diseases; think of the broken homes; think of the blasted lives; think of the unwed mothers; think of the children who don’t know who their own father is. America is reaping a harvest. We sowed the wind, but we were not smarter than God. God said, *“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap. He that sows to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption”* (Galatians 6:7–8).

But also, it is true in the positive side. Your Love Offering, today, will count for so much more than the actual amount that you put in the offering, if you give it in love and in faith.

I told you last week, *“Any fool can count the seeds in an apple, but only God can count the apples in a seed,”* because there is the principle of multiplication. If there were not the principle of multiplication, it would make no sense—none whatsoever—to be a farmer. You see, the farmer knows that his seed is going to be multiplied.

Now let me give you a verse—I mentioned it last week, but I want to mention it again—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”* (2 Corinthians 9:6–7). What does he mean, *“as he purposeth in his heart”*? What kind of harvest do you want? Make up your mind. You want a small harvest? Then, plant sparingly. You want a large harvest? Then, plant liberally. *“As you purpose in your heart”*—that is, you measure out your own blessing.

Now I can imagine a farmer taking the seed corn out of the barn, and his wife comes out and says, *“What are you doing?”* *“Well, I’m going to plant this seed.”* *“Wait a minute. You’re going out to put that in the ground?”* *“Yes, I am.”* *“Look, we can make bread out of that. We could take that seed down to the store and sell it, and I could turn it into clothes for the kids. We could help pay off the mortgage with that. Why are you making a donation to the earth?”* He said, *“I’m not making a donation to the earth. I am making an investment. I am planting a crop. I want a harvest. It’s not a donation, as such. It is an investment.”*

Well, let's turn that around. Here's a man, this morning, coming to Bellevue Baptist Church, and he's writing out a check. His wife says, "What are you doing?" He says, "Well, this is our Love Offering." She says, "Don't you know that we could help pay off the mortgage with that? Don't you know that we could buy Christmas presents with that? Don't you know that we could take a vacation with that? Why are you making a donation to that church?" He says, "I'm not making a donation to that church. I'm giving to the Lord. I'm making an investment in the Kingdom of God, and I expect God to give the harvest." If you want to be rich, give. If you want to be poor, grasp. If you want abundance, then scatter. If you want to be needy, just hoard. There is the law of multiplication. God takes what we give, and He multiplies it.

V. The Law of Cultivation

Then, the fifth law is the law of cultivation: We reap more, if we cultivate what we sow. Now again, look in verse 9: "*Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not*" (Galatians 6:9). That means that you have to cultivate your garden. You can't quit. You can't just put seed in the ground and walk away from it, necessarily. You can with weeds, but you can't do it with flowers. It doesn't work that way.

You see, when man sinned, thorns and thistles came into the world. Thorns and thistles the devil seems to cultivate. Have you ever planted a garden and then just left it alone? You come back after a while, and you find out that the weeds have taken over. The devil tends to tend the weeds.

The things that really count you have to cultivate. Your marriage has to be cultivated. *Your marriage is not like a diamond that you just stumble upon, that you find, that you have, that you treasure forever. Your marriage is like a flower that has to be cultivated.* You have a business? You'd better cultivate it. You have a church life? You better cultivate it. You have a personal life? You cultivate that personal life. Every morning, you need a quiet time, where you weed your garden. Every morning, you need a quiet time, where you water your faith with the Word of God. Every morning, you need a time where you break up the hard soil of your life and say, "God, forgive my stubbornness. Let there be brokenness in my life," because, if we want a harvest of that which is good, we have to cultivate it; if we want a harvest of that which is bad, the devil will cultivate it.

You remember the first dirty joke you ever heard as a kid? Probably still sticks in your mind. Memorizing verses is more difficult, right? You have to cultivate your mind. Cultivate the Word of God. There is the law of cultivation. If you want a harvest, you have to cultivate what you sow.

VI. The Law of Participation

Now number six of these seven laws is the law of participation, and it says this: We may reap what others have sown. Look in verse 10: *“As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them that are of the household of faith”* (Galatians 6:10). Now that means that others can be blessed by what we give.

Jesus Himself taught this truth, and He said, in John 4, verse 37: *“And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours”* (John 4:37–38).

Now all of us have reaped blessings that have been planted by other people. The blessings we enjoy are so much. Friend, if we only realized what we’ve reaped that others have done—I mean, in the good way. You are in debt to your parents. When you were born, you owed for nine months of room and board. Think about what your parents have done for you. You’re in debt to a God that has blessed you. You say, “Well, God might take my life.” Friend, God doesn’t have to take your life. All God has to do is stop giving you your life. *“It is of the LORD’s mercies that we are not consumed”* (Lamentations 3:22). Every day is a gift from God.

We are in debt to that generation who went before us. Bellevue Baptist Church—you think it just happened? Those of you who are new members, you just walk in here. How do you think this happened? I’ll tell you how it happened: A handful of people, in 1903, got a burden from God and began to pray, and weep, and give, and sacrifice. For 100 blessed years, they’ve done that. And you come in, plop down in the seat, and look, and say, “Isn’t this nice?” Yes, it is nice. But I’ll tell you, we are in debt to those who have gone before us. And you say *amen*.

I’m going to tell you something else: We are in debt to those who come after us. We are in debt to those—when we’re dead and gone, if Jesus carries—who will come after us. And the blessings that we have received—we want to pass those blessings on. Think of the blessings in America—the freedom that we have today, in America. Thank God for those soldiers who died for us. Friend, Adoniram Judson said, “If we succeed without suffering, it is because others suffered before us. If we suffer without succeeding, it will mean others will succeed after us. But there can be no success without suffering.”

Even the salvation that you have in the Lord Jesus Christ—you participate in His death. Jesus said there, in John 12: *“Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit”* (John 12:24). Jesus said, “I am like that seed planted in the ground.” And as it were, for three days, that seed lay in the tomb; and then, it began to fructify with life, and bloom, and blossom. And we’re the fruit. We have received the blessing of what Jesus Christ did so long ago.

VII. The Law of Activation

Now here's the seventh and final law, and it is law number seven, the law of activation: We must seize the opportunity for the harvest. Look again in verse 10: *"As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith"* (Galatians 6:10). This is our opportunity.

How many more days will we have? How many more years will we have? How much more freedom will we have? How long will our life last? Today is the day to plant. Some are thinking, "You know, if I gave my offering today, then some emergency may come up, and I may need this money. Maybe I'd better hold it." There's a verse in the Bible that deals with you—Ecclesiastes 11 and verse 4: *"He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap"* (Ecclesiastes 11:4). A farmer who says, "Well, we might have a drought; we might have a flood; we might have a heat wave—I don't think I'll plant," well, that man takes counsel with his fears, and he doesn't have a harvest. God is the Lord of the harvest. Don't be a wind watcher. Don't be a cloud examiner. God has given us an opportunity.

There was a sign in a garden nursery where they sell plants, and it asked this question: "When is the best time to plant a fruit tree?" The answer: "Twenty-five years ago, and today"—today. Twenty-five years ago, and today. You can eat the fruit of a tree that somebody else planted today, but somebody else can eat of the fruit of your tree.

Now friend, not only is there a harvest to be prepared for; there's a harvest to reap, right now. Jesus said to His generation—John chapter 4, verse 35: *"Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest"* (John 4:35). Beloved Believers, listen to me. Few churches—if any, in the world—have the opportunity that we have. God has given us the manpower. God has given us the theology. God has given us the anointing. God has given us the mandate. Do you know what the Bible says? The Bible says, in the Book of Proverbs, "A son that sleeps in harvest is a shame to his father" (Proverbs 10:5).

This is the opportunity. This is our time. You think I'm begging you? I'm not begging you. I'm just simply saying there is a principle in the Word of God—it is the law of the harvest. And we're coming, now, to make a love gift to the Lord Jesus Christ, and it's going to be an act of happy worship.

Conclusion

Is my beloved wife here, somewhere? Joycie, present yourself. Joyce and I did this in the first service; and so, we're doing this today. Remember what I said to begin with: "What you see is not always what you get"? This envelope is empty. I already put one

that had something in it in the early service, so all I'm doing right now is just showing you what we're all going to do. Here she is. Isn't she pretty? Give her a hand. This is my grade school sweetheart. And since we've been married—and before we were married—we learned to give a tithe, and over and above the tithe, to the Lord. And we have, for year after year after year, given, cheerfully and liberally, considerably beyond the tithe, because we have learned that it's more blessed to give than to receive. And we've also learned that we can't out-give God.

And so what we're asking you to do is something we do. And I don't want to boast, but I want to say that we're not making a token offering this morning. We're making an offering that represents to us a form of sacrifice. But who can talk about sacrifice to the Lord Jesus Christ? So thank you, darling. We're the only ones that get to kiss up here—nobody else kiss. All right now, so don't—no kissing in the rest of the Love Offering.

Now here's what we're going to do: We're going to come by, rank-by-rank, row-by-row, and put our offerings in these receptacles. Don't worry about how it's going to be done; it's figured out for you. If you'll just keep your eyes open, you will be swept up in this. Now on your envelope, there's a place for you—you make as much of a cash gift as you can. Please do that. Then, you make a faith promise over and above that. You say, "Pastor Rogers, if I put on here that I'm going to give "x" dollars before the year ends, and I'm not able to do it, what's going to happen?" Nothing. You see, this is what you expect to give and hope to give. We're not going to send the bill collector after you. As a matter of fact, your circumstances may change, where you want to up what you put on the envelope and say, "I can now give more, thank God." Or, something may happen, where you may have to say, "My plans did not work out as I had hoped." We understand that. There's no arm-twisting; there's no badgering.

This is a joyful occasion. We're giving as unto the Lord. It is an act of joy. And I hope that our guests will understand this. And as a matter of fact, just before we get started now with the Love Offering, let's just rejoice that we have an opportunity to do it. Praise God! Amen. And our guests are going to go away, saying, "Good night! Those people there, at Bellevue, were cheering about giving." Well, we really are. And so we are about to begin the Love Offering. Are you ready? Let the Love Offering begin.

The Law of the Harvest

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: August 6, 2000

Main Scripture Text: Galatians 6:7–9

Outline

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- II. The Law of Identification
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Introduction

Well, take God's Word and find, if you would, Galatians chapter 6, a somewhat familiar passage of Scripture, but we're going to take a fresh look at it, this morning. I know that you want God's best for your life. And if you want God's best for your life, it will not be accidental; it will be because you have put a principle into practice, and that principle is the principle of sowing and reaping. In the spiritual life, nothing happens by accident. In the spiritual realm, as well as in the physical realm, God operates according to fixed laws. God is a God of order. He is not a God of chaos; He's not a God of happenstance. And so God operates according to principle. And one of those principles is the law of the harvest. And you cannot be ignorant about that law, and you dare not be apathetic about that law—nor arrogant—and try to override that law, because you cannot mock God. There are laws.

For example, gravity—there's a law of gravity. You step out of a 20-storey building—you don't break that law; you demonstrate it. Amen? You may say, "Well, God's law has not caught up with me yet." You'd be like that man as he passed each window going down. You might say, "It's all right so far." But there is a law. You don't break that law; you're broken on it. There's a law of centrifugal force. As a young man, one day, riding a motorcycle, I tried to defy the law of centrifugal force. I found myself and the motorcycle wrapped around a palm tree in South Florida. That is a law of centrifugal force.

And there's also the law of sowing and reaping. Let's read about it. Galatians 6, verse 7: *"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he*

that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Galatians 6:7–9). And so there is the law of the harvest, and that law is never broken. To try to break the law of the harvest would be a mockery. It would mock Almighty God. *"God is not mocked."*

Abraham Lincoln—wise old Abraham Lincoln—is reported to have said, "You can fool all of the people some of the time, and you can fool some of the people all of the time, but you cannot fool all of the people all of the time." And to this bit of wisdom I would add, "You cannot fool God any of the time." "God is not mocked: whatever a man sows, that shall a man also reap."

And the whole Kingdom of Heaven is based on sowing and reaping. Put down in your margin, Mark chapter 4 and verse 26: *"And he said"*—that is, Jesus said—*"So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground"* (Mark 4:26). Now think about that: *"So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground."* What is He saying? The entire Kingdom of God—the entire Kingdom of God—is like sowing and reaping. *"So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground."* And so I want to give you the seven laws of the harvest—one, two, three, four, five, six, seven—so we're going to have to hurry, and I want you to count them.

I. The Law of Dissemination

Law number one is the law of dissemination: We reap only what has been sown. If there's no sowing, there can be no reaping. In life, we reap because of what we have sown, or else, what somebody else has sown. There is no spontaneous generation. Nothing happens apart from the law of the harvest, which is the law of dissemination. We reap only what has been sown. Now if you reap without sowing, it's because somebody else has sown, and, therefore, you can reap. John chapter 4—listen to it. John chapter 4, verses 37 and 38—Jesus, again, is speaking: *"And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours"* (John 4:37–38).

But I want you to know that all of God's economy in the physical realm, in the spiritual realm—all of it is based upon sowing and reaping. It's one of the laws of the harvest. It's the law of dissemination. There must be sowing if there would be reaping. You will reap what you've sown, or you will reap what somebody else has sown. But the first law of the harvest is the law of dissemination.

II. The Law of Identification

The second law of the harvest is the law of identification—that is, we reap the same as we sow. "Whatever a man sows, that shall he reap." Notice what he says in verse 7: *"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap"*

(Galatians 6:7). To expect anything else would be a mockery of God.

When God created the universe in the beginning, God put a locked-in law, and it is that we reap what we sow. Genesis 1, verse 11—listen to it: *“And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so”* (Genesis 1:11). What is God saying? God is saying, “If you plant corn, you’ll get corn. If you plant tomatoes, you’ll get tomatoes. If you plant cucumbers, you’ll get cucumbers. If you plant wheat, you’ll get wheat.” That is a locked-in likeness. You’ll never gather figs from an olive tree. You’ll never get corn from wheat. You expect it in the cornfield; you need to expect it in life. It is the law of identification.

For example, you cannot get unity from discord. You can’t get love from indifference. It’s the law of identification. Matthew chapter 7, verse 16—Jesus said, *“Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?”* (Matthew 7:16). Obviously not. Job said, in Job chapter 4 and verse 8: *“Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same”* (Job 4:8).

Now it’s true negatively. *So many people want to sow wild oats and then come to church on Sunday and pray for crop failure.* No, it’s true negatively. *Every kick has a kickback.* You’re going to reap what you’ve sown. You can see this principle in families, in children. Actually, what we plant in the lives of our kids, we reap.

Dorothy Law Nolte wrote these words: “Children learn what they live. If a child lives with criticism, he learns to condemn. If a child lives with hostility, he learns to fight. If a child lives with ridicule, he learns to be shy. If a child lives with shame, he learns to feel guilty. If a child lives with tolerance, he learns to be patient. If a child lives with encouragement, he learns to live with confidence. If a child lives with praise, he learns to appreciate. If a child lives with fairness, he learns justice. If a child lives with security, he learns to have faith. If a child lives with approval, he learns to like himself. If a child lives with acceptance and friendship, he learns to find love in the world.”

Now what? It’s just the law of identification. We sow, and then we reap. And we reap identically what we sowed.

Now friend, if you don’t like what you’re reaping, maybe you need to consider what you’re sowing. Do you want love? Then sow love. If you want people to share time with you, share time with people. If you want people to be concerned about you, be concerned about people. If you want friends, then show yourself friendly. Luke 6, verse 38, says, *“Give, and it shall be given unto you”* (Luke 6:38). Now listen. If you don’t like what you’re reaping, don’t complain about what you’re reaping; consider what you are sowing. Whatever you sow is what you’re going to reap. Look at your character, right now. Right now, you have a particular character. Do you like your character? Do you like what you find in yourself? Your character is the harvest of your habits. That’s all it

is.

III. The Law of Anticipation

Now the first law is the law of dissemination. There's not going to be any reaping unless you sow. And if you reap without sowing, somebody else has already sown, and you've reaped. Number two: There's the law of identification. You're going to reap what you sow, or what somebody else has sown. Number three is the law of anticipation—the law of anticipation: You're going to reap later than you sow. There's never really an incident harvest. The Bible says, "In due season we will reap, if we faint not" (Galatians 6:9). Now granted, there are some seeds that sprout quickly, and they grow up almost overnight. And you can see in some things almost an immediate reaction. But some seeds don't sprout until many, many years. And some we'll have to wait for until eternity. And you can't rush the season. Every seed has its season. "In due season we'll reap, if we faint not."

Solomon was a wise man. He was the wisest man—when he was walking with God—that ever lived, apart from the Lord Jesus Christ. And here's what Solomon said, in Ecclesiastes chapter 11 and verse 1: "*Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days*" (Ecclesiastes 11:1). Now what does that mean, "Cast your bread upon the waters?" He's not talking about soggy bread here; he's not talking about feeding ducks. "Casting your bread upon the waters" was his way of saying, "Invest in commerce and wait; and you'll reap a harvest."

First Kings chapter 10, verses 22 and 23: "*For the king had at sea a navy of Tharshish with the navy of Hiram: once in three years came the navy of Tharshish, bringing gold, and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks. So king Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom*" (1 Kings 10:22–23). Now what King Solomon would do with the navy of Tharshish and the navy of Hiram, who was his partner in business—they would go down there, and they would send these ships out, laden with all of these things to trade. And then, those ships would come back after three years. Ivory, gold, silver, exotic things like apes and peacocks would come back. That's what Solomon was talking about, when he said, "Cast your bread upon the waters; and, after many years, in due season, it will come back to you" (Ecclesiastes 11:1). You reap later than you sow.

One of our former pastors here, a man that was a legend in his own time, was Dr. Robert G. Lee. Dr. Robert Lee had a fine mind, but he also had a strong body. And I would often talk with Dr. Lee. He was a friend and a confidant. And I would say to Dr. Lee, "Dr. Lee, what is the secret of your longevity? What is the secret of your strength and your vitality?"—because all of those of you who were members of this church when Dr. Lee was pastor know that he was that kind of a man. Dr. Dale Palmer, sitting here

on the front row, worked with and admired Dr. Lee. Dr. Lee would say—and I've heard him say it many times, "I'm living on the dividends of a well-spent youth." Young people, listen to me now: "I'm living on the dividends of a well-spent youth." He didn't dissipate his body with cigarettes, and with alcohol, and with debauchery. He was a man who lived a life of character; and, therefore, he was reaping later than he sowed.

It's also true in the negative sense—the law of anticipation. You sow the seeds of dissipation now; you'll reap later on. Some people, right now, have a sexually transmitted disease in your body that's going to bring you down to the grave, because you sowed to the flesh; and, of the flesh you will reap corruption. You may be feeling fine now, but there is the law of anticipation. Those seeds will sprout. God is not mocked. You can laugh at God's laws. You can live high, wide, and handsome, but, sooner or later, those seeds will sprout, and they will come to fruition.

Now sometimes, people live as if there is no God. An interesting passage of Scripture is over in Ecclesiastes chapter 8 and verse 11, and here's what it says—listen to it carefully: *"Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil"* (Ecclesiastes 8:11). *"Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily,"*—that is, because, when you do something wrong, you don't see the immediate result—*"therefore the heart of the sons of men is set in them to do evil"* continually.

You know, by the way, one of the things we need in society is to shorten the gap between the crime and the sentence and execution, because young people today might see a man on the corner dealing drugs—see him arrested, and then released, and then he's back on the street again, awaiting some sort of a sentencing or whatever. And that may come late, or it may come very late; and, people don't see a connection between the crime and the punishment.

It's even true in our own lives. Most of us are trying to lose weight, some way, somehow. We sit down there, and there's that piece of key lime pie. Don't you love key lime pie? Oh, good night! So wonderful! And you can eat the key lime pie—you don't feel one bit fatter, do you? I want to ask you a question: How can a four-ounce piece of key lime pie make you gain a pound? What is that? You doctors here, I don't understand that. That doesn't make sense, but it's there. Now if you just ate something—"Oops!" It jumped out just like that. You say, "Oops! Look what I did." It doesn't work that way; it doesn't work that way. You have to wait a while. You sow the seeds; you're going to reap the harvest.

Now let me give you an illustration of how that works with the Jewish nation. It works with nations. You know, God had a principle that He taught people about—how to deal with the land. They were to let the land rest every seventh year. You were not to have continual crops upon the land, because you took all of the nutrient out of the soil. And

so the land, every seventh year, was to have a sabbath year. But the Jews, in their greed, failed to do that for 490 years. It seemed like they were getting away with it. But then, one thousand years later came the Babylonian captivity, and here's what God said about it; listen to it—2 Chronicles 36:21: God said He did this *“to fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years.”* God said, “All right, pay Me now, or pay Me later, but you are going to pay.”

Sooner or later the harvest will come. James 5, verse 7: *“Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain”* (James 5:7). What? It's the law, friend, of anticipation. We do not reap immediately; we reap in due season.

IV. The Law of Multiplication

Now here's the fourth law of the harvest, and it's the law of multiplication—the law of multiplication: We reap more than we sow. What we sow is always multiplied; it is intensified. Our scripture—Hosea chapter 8 and verse 7: *“For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind”* (Hosea 8:7). When we sow to the flesh, as we've already mentioned, then of the flesh we reap corruption, but we reap more than we sow.

I can remember in the early 60s where we had something called a *sexual revolution*. And people laughed, and the young people said, “Well, having a sexual liaison is no different than shaking hands,” but they were planting the seeds of destruction. They were sowing the wind. And now we have reaped the whirlwind. I've already mentioned sexually transmitted diseases of all kinds. Homes are broken and disintegrated. Society is unraveling, and we've lost a sense of decency in America. I could never have believed—never, never, never—that we would be at the stage that we're at in entertainment and such things happening in high places that would soil your mouth and your mind even to think about. It's the law of intensification.

A wise man once said, “Any fool can count the seeds in an apple, but only God can count the apples in a seed.” What does that mean? That God has put a law into this world; it's the law of multiplication, intensification. If there were not the law of multiplication and intensification, there'd be no sense in being a farmer. A farmer takes his seed out of the barn, and he puts his seed in the ground. Now when a farmer puts his seed in the ground, he's not making a donation to the earth. What he is making is an investment, because he knows when he puts seed in the ground that he's going to get back more than he puts in the ground. And that's why the Bible says very clearly here, in 2 Corinthians 9, verses 6 and 7: “And if you sow sparingly, you're going to reap sparingly” (2 Corinthians 9:6).

And here's a farmer. He's about to plant, and his wife says, "What are you going to do with that wheat?" And he says, "I'm going to put it in the ground." And she says, "No, don't do that. We need that for bread. We need that for food." He said, "Well, I'll keep some of it for bread. I'll keep some of it for food, but I'm going to invest it."

Are you investing? Listen. If you want to be rich, give. If you want to be poor, then grasp. If you want abundance, then scatter. If you want to be needy, then hoard. You need to sow, because you're going to reap if you sow.

I want to say to some of you younger people, stop giving all that money to those banks on that credit card. Just stop it. You're foolish. Why let them reap, rather than you reaping? Get out of debt. Stay out of debt. Begin to put some money in the bank, and let the law of the harvest begin to work for you. You may be far richer than you ever dreamed that you could be, if you will begin to invest, rather than dissipate. There's the law of the harvest. It works in life.

V. The Law of Cultivation

Now here's the next law—and it's the law of cultivation. You're going to reap more, if you cultivate what you sow.

You see, have you ever planted a garden? Well, you don't just plant a garden and walk off from it. You have to weed the garden. You have to care for the garden. Now you don't have to care for weeds. Weeds will take care of themselves—isn't that right? Because, you see, there's a harvest that the devil cultivates. Even the weeds are cultivated. You just... Somebody else is cultivating the weeds. I'm talking about the spiritual weeds now. The devil takes care of those. But you need to take care of... The very laws of the harvest tell you that you need to take care of your garden, if it's going to be any good, because we live in a world that is cursed by sin. And the crabgrass and the weeds are going to take over, if you don't cultivate the things that you call a garden.

Everything worthwhile needs cultivation—even the ministry. The Apostle Paul said, in 1 Corinthians 3, verse 6: "*I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase*" (1 Corinthians 3:6). Now the idea is, it's not enough to plant; you have to water.

This is true in marriage. In marriage, you have to cultivate your marriage. This morning, early, I did a marriage recommittal service for a couple who stood before me, and said, "We've been married for 25 years, but we want to recommit our love." It was so sweet and so precious, as I saw that lady, married for a quarter of a century, have a precious tear trickle down her eye, as she renewed her vow to her husband. And I knew they had something that was very real.

It's true in business. You have to cultivate your business. It's true in the church. It's true in your personal life. It's true in everything. Every morning, what you need to do is

to wake up, and weed the garden of your soul, and water your faith with the Word of God, and break up the soil of a hard heart. Do that every morning. There's no lazy way to be a Christian. It's the law of cultivation. The things that you want to work—cultivate those things.

VI. The Law of Participation

Now here's the sixth law—and it's the law of participation. We often reap what others have sown. Others participate and eat from our garden, and we eat from theirs. I gave you the scripture before, but I want to give it to you again. It's John 4, verses 37 and 38—listen to it—Jesus is speaking: *“And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon you bestowed no labour”* (John 4:37–38).

Now look up here. Let me tell you something: Every one of us is reaping what somebody else has sown; and, therefore, we are in debt to other people. When you were born, you were in debt for nine month's rent. We are in debt to other people. We are reaping what others have sown. We're in debt to the last generation, the generation that has gone before us. And in a way, we have an obligation to the next generation.

Now sometimes, we reap what others have sown in a bad way. Think of precious little children who are born to mothers who are crack cocaine addicts, or into homes that are blighted by alcohol, and pornography, and all of these things. But think of the great blessings that we are reaping from other people who have sown for us. Think of the blessings that we have in America. What really bothers me... Of course, you see, I was a child during World War II. I can remember those days. And I can remember succeeding times when our boys went off and reddened the soil with their own blood, that we might have the freedom that we have here today. And even those of you who fought in Vietnam remember those words that were written on the walls of that prison that some called *Hanoi Hotel*, and here's what it said: “Freedom has a taste of sweetness that those who have never suffered for it can never understand.”

I see a generation of young people today who think it's smart to wear the American flag sewn on the seat of their jeans, or to burn the flag. They don't understand the price that is paid to give them the very privilege to have such freedom. But it is so sad, today, that people would dissipate what others have suffered, bled, and died for.

Those of you sitting in this building today, isn't this a beautiful building? Thank God for it. When I drove up this morning, I saw these grounds so beautiful, and the parking lot, and all of that. If you're here as a new member of this church, how did this happen? Do you think it just kind of floated down out of Heaven? Who is putting the light over your head, this morning? Who is managing the sound system so you can hear? Who put the carpet under your feet? Who prepared that seat that you're sitting on? Do you think that just happened? Listen to me. Somebody did that for you. Somebody did that

for you—especially if you’re a new member, somebody did that for you.

What we have here represents the prayers, the vision, the blood, the sweat, the tears, the voluntary gifts of so many people, and we’re just reaping where we haven’t sown. We just come in, and somebody says, “We would love to have you be a part of Bellevue Baptist Church.” And you say, “Well, I want to be a part.” Well, you couldn’t join General Motors that way, or Federal Express that way. But when you come into a church and become a member of a church, you come in as an equal. You come in as a full participant, lovingly received. Why? Because, that’s the very nature of the thing that we reap where we’ve not sowed. And friend, I want to sow, that somebody else will reap after I’ve gone. Thank God for what He’s done here, for us, in this church. It’s a wonderful thing. Adoniram Judson said, “If we succeed without suffering, it’s because others suffered before us. And if we suffer without succeeding, it will mean that others will succeed after us. But there is no success without suffering.”

I’m here. I’m saved by the precious blood of Jesus. You know why? Because of what He sowed. Listen to John 12, verse 24—Jesus said, “*Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit*” (John 12:24). Do you know what Jesus was talking about? The law of sowing and reaping. Jesus was that corn of wheat. He fell into the ground. He died for us. But out of His death has come life abundant and free. And I have entered into that life.

VII. The Law of Activation

Now here’s the seventh law of the harvest, and we must get to it right away. And it’s the law of activation—the law of activation: We must seize the opportunity for the harvest. There are some things that we will not reap, if we do not put into action certain things. You see, some of us are afraid to sow. Again, I want to go back to that passage of Scripture in Ecclesiastes chapter 11 and verse 4. The Bible says, “*He that observeth the wind shall not sow, and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap. He that observeth the wind shall now sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap*” (Ecclesiastes 11:4). What does that mean?

Well, here’s a farmer, and he goes out, and he looks up. “Ah,” he says, “there’s a south wind. We may have a drought.” Or, he looks up, and he sees the clouds; and, he says, “There are black clouds. We may have a flood, so I don’t think I’ll sow. I don’t think I’ll take a chance.” No, friend. Listen. Don’t be a cloud watcher. Don’t be a wind observer. Enter into life. Life is passing you by. Get active and sow.

There’s a nursery—a plant nursery—and a sign in front of that plant nursery, and it said, “When is the best time to plant a tree,” or, “What are the two best times to plant a tree?” The answer: 25 years ago, and today—25 years ago. Well, you didn’t do it 25

years ago; then, plant today.

There's the law of activation, if we want to get the best out of life. I just want to remind you that God is not mocked. Whatever a man sows, that is he going to reap (Galatians 6:7).

Now here's what Paul says, as he sums this passage up. And listen to it. He says this: "If a man sows to the flesh, he will of the flesh reap corruption. But if a man sows to the Spirit, he will of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Galatians 6:8). There's a young lady sitting up here near the front, Mary McCombs. Mary's husband recently went to Heaven—one of the dearest men I've ever known. You know what Gene McCombs is doing up in Heaven, right now? Leaping, dancing, shouting, praising God all over Heaven, because he spent his life not sowing to the flesh, but sowing to the Spirit. You see, we don't do all of our reaping here.

An old missionary came home, got off the ship. There was a brass band there. The old missionary said, "Look, they've recognized me. I'm coming home. There's a brass band." He put his head up and started down the gangplank. Not one eye was on him. The eye was on the President of the United States, who was also on that ship. He had been oversees on a big game safari, and the band was for him. While the missionary had been over there, pleading for souls, this man had been over there, shooting animals; and, the brass band was for him. His head went down, and his shoulders slumped. There was nobody there to greet him. Coming home—nobody there to greet him. And he began to feel sorry for himself, and he said, "Lord. What is this, Lord? I've served You all these years, over there. And now I'm coming home, and there's nobody to even greet me." And God's Spirit spoke to him, and said, "My son, you're not home yet. You're not home yet."

Oh, "He that sows to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Galatians 6:8). It sounds like a cliché, but it is so true. "Only one life, it'll soon be passed. Only what's done for Christ will last" (C. T. Studd). One of these days, you're going to close your eyes in death, and you're going to reap a harvest, as surely as I'm standing here. You listen to me: "God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap. He that sows to the flesh"—you live for yourself—"shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that sows to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Galatians 6:7–8).

Conclusion

Do you absolutely know, if you died today, you'd go to Heaven? Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed, no one looking around. While heads are bowed and eyes are closed, let me ask you this question again—it's between you, and me, and the Lord: How many in this building could say, "Pastor Rogers, I absolutely know, by the Word of God, and the witness of the Spirit, that, if I died today, I'd go to Heaven, because I have repented

of my sin; I have trusted Jesus Christ as my personal Savior; I know that I've trusted Him, because I've not been ashamed of Him; I've made it public; and, God's Spirit whispers to my spirit that I'm a child of God; I'm Heaven-born and Heaven-bound, and I give God thanks for it"? If you can give me that testimony, would you lift your hand, right now? Thank God. Now take it down.

How many would say, "Pastor Rogers, I couldn't lift my hand a moment ago, but I wish I could. I want to be saved. And if a person can know that they're saved, I want to know it. I want that assurance. I want to know that, when I die, I'm going to Heaven. And I want the power of God in my life, even today. And in the prayer that you're about to pray, would you remember me in prayer?" I'm not going to embarrass you in any way. I'm not going to point you out in any way, but I will pray sincerely for each one who will lift his or her hand right now. You'll be saying, "I'm not saved," or, "I'm not certain that I'm saved. I don't have that assurance, but I want to know, beyond a shadow of any doubt, that I'm saved, that I'm Heaven-born, that I'm Heaven-bound, and I want you to pray for me." Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed.

And right now, if you would say, "Pastor Rogers, include me in the prayer that you're about to pray," would you just slip up your hand, and hold it up? I see that hand. Are there others? Slip it up high, where I may see it. You're saying, "Pray for me. I need Jesus Christ; I want to be certain that I'm saved." Up in the balcony—I can see up there. Just slip up your hand, and say, "Pray for me." Are there others? "Pray for me." All right.

Now how many would say, "Pastor Rogers. I am saved, and I know I'm saved, but I'm not a member of Bellevue. Would you pray with me that, as a believer, I might know and do God's will about my church membership. I want God's will in my life. Pray with me about it"? Would you slip up your hand? Hold it up. Are there others? Yes. Yes. All right, take them down.

How many would say, "Pastor Rogers, I, as a believer, this morning, know that I've allowed my heart to get cold. I'm away from God. And to be absolutely honest with you and with God, I know I need a personal revival in my heart. Would you just pray for me"? Would you slip up your hand? Hold it up for a moment. Yes. Others? Slip it up. Okay.

Father God, I want to pray now in the name of Jesus, first of all, for these who are not certain that they saved or certain that they're not saved, Lord, that You would open their hearts and help them to receive Christ as their personal Savior and Lord. And then, Heavenly Father, I want to pray for these who need a church home, that, if it can be Your will, that You would give them to us, this morning, and fellowship, and service. And for these, dear Lord, whose hearts have grown cold and need a spiritual revival, Lord, may they be broken at the feet of Jesus today, and may they renew their love to Him in a richer, sweeter way than ever before. In His dear name I pray. Amen.

The Law of the Harvest

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: November 5, 1995

Main Scripture Text: Galatians 6:7–10

Outline

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- I. The Law of Dissemination
- II. The Law of Identification
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Introduction

Find, if you will, please, Galatians chapter 6, and I begin to read in verse 7—
Galatians chapter 6 and verse 7: *“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith”* (Galatians 6:7–10).

Now look up here, and let me tell you something: God is a God of order, and God has built order into the universe. And this physical universe works according to fixed laws, and so does the spiritual universe. There are certain fixed laws that we’re used to, every day. One is the law of gravity. Thank God for the law of gravity. That’s what holds you, right now, in your chair and keeps you from bouncing on the ceiling. That’s the law of gravity, and that law is just built in; and, it’ll never change.

I heard about a man who stepped out of a 20-story building, and as he was passing each floor, he said to the people who were watching, “It’s okay so far; it’s okay so far.” But of course, you know that, ultimately, he hit the ground. And so when a man steps out of a building like that, he doesn’t break the law of gravity; he just demonstrates it.

There’s another law that’s built into the universe, and it’s the law of centrifugal force. And centrifugal force—I demonstrated that law, one time, on a motorcycle, when I tried to break that law and found myself wrapped around a palm tree. That law is built into the universe.

And there's also another law; it is the law of the harvest that we have seen so beautifully and graphically displayed. Now very briefly, we might say that the law of the harvest is "we reap what we sow," but it goes far beyond that. And you'll never change the law of the harvest.

Our scripture says, "Don't be deceived; God is not mocked" (Galatians 6:7). You see, to change the law of the harvest, or to attempt to change it, would be mockery in the face of God. You can't mock God by somehow transgressing the law of the harvest. Wise and good and honest Abe Lincoln said this—he said, "You can fool all of the people some of the time, and you can fool some of the people all of the time; but," he said, "you can't fool all of the people all of the time." I would add to that: You can't fool God any of the time. God is the God of the harvest. He says, "I'm not mocked: whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7).

Now very briefly, I want to mention six laws of the harvest, and I pray God that He will write them upon your heart, because you need these in business; you need these in child rearing; you need these in service to the Lord; or, if you are a farmer, you'll need these on the farm. Wherever you go, these laws are operating. They are the laws of the harvest.

I. The Law of Dissemination

The first law is what I want to call the law of dissemination. The law of dissemination says this: You must sow, if you would reap. There can be no reaping unless you put seed in the ground.

Now in the laws of biology, we know there's no such thing as spontaneous generation. There can be no life without, first of all, sowing to produce that life. God's entire economy, in the physical realm, and in the spiritual realm, is based upon this principle: There can be no reaping unless we first disseminate—unless we first scatter, unless we first sow. As a matter of fact, the Lord Jesus said the entire Kingdom of Heaven is based on the principle of sowing and reaping. You might want to put in your margin, Mark chapter 4, verse 26. Jesus said, "*So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground*" (Mark 4:26). He said this: "The whole Kingdom of Heaven is based on this, as if a man should cast seed into the ground." And so what is the first law? It's the law of dissemination. What does it say? You can't reap unless you sow. Got it? Got it! Move to the second law of the harvest.

II. The Law of Identification

Not only is there the law of dissemination, but there is the law of identification: You reap what you sow. "God is not mocked: whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7).

Now it's very clear; it's very plain. That goes all the way back to the way that God made the universe, in Genesis chapter 1, verse 11: *"And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit"*—now listen to this next phrase—*"after his kind"* (Genesis 1:11). What does that mean? It means that seed brings forth after its own kind. There's a locked-in likeness. You don't get figs from an olive tree. You don't plant corn and harvest wheat.

Now that's true in the physical harvest field; it's also true in the spiritual harvest field. It's true spiritually. You don't sow disunity, for example, and reap harmony. You don't sow hypocrisy and reap holiness. You don't sow indifference and then reap love. You reap according to what you sow. And Jesus made it very clear, in Matthew chapter 7 and verse 16. He said, *"Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?"* (Matthew 7:16). There is a locked-in likeness.

There can be no reaping unless we first sow; that's dissemination. But we will reap as we sow; that is identification. "It's true negatively," as the little fellow said in the film. "It's true positively." And our text says, "If you sow to the flesh, you will of the flesh reap corruption" (Galatians 6:8). Every kick has a kickback. *There are a lot of people who want to sow wild oats six days a week and then come to church on Sunday and pray for crop failure. That doesn't work. Whatever you sow, you're going to reap.*

Dorothy Law Nolte wrote these words: "If a child lives with criticism, he learns to condemn. If a child lives with hostility, he learns to fight. If a child lives with ridicule, he learns to be shy. If a child lives with shame, he learns to feel guilty. If a child lives with tolerance, he learns to be patient. If a child lives with encouragement, he learns, and he lives with confidence. If a child lives with praise, he learns to appreciate. If a child lives with fairness, he learns justice. If a child lives with security, he learns to have faith. If a child lives with approval, he learns to like himself. If a child lives with acceptance and friendship, he learns to find love in the world."

We are sowing in our children what we will reap in our children. So if you don't like what you're reaping, you ought to change what you're sowing. Now if you want love, sow love; if you want time, give time; if you want concern, sow concern; if you want friendship, be a friend. There is a locked-in likeness. And if you will look at yourself, right now, whether you like yourself or whether you don't, whether you're satisfied with yourself or whether you're not, may I tell you you're the sum total of what you've been reaping? Do you know what your character is? Your character is your harvest of your habits. That's what your character is: It is the harvest of your habits. We reap what we sow.

III. The Law of Anticipation

Now here's the third law of the harvest: First one: dissemination—you can't reap unless

you sow. There's no spontaneous generation. Secondly, identification—we reap as we sow. “God is not mocked: whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap” (Galatians 6:7). Now here's the third principle, and it is the principle of anticipation: We reap later than we sow. Verse 9 says: *“Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not”* (Galatians 6:9). Every harvest has its due season.

Sometimes, we reap almost immediately; sometimes, it may be years before we reap.

I know that those folks back in 1903, more than 90 years ago, who began Bellevue Baptist Church, there, in the little stone church on Bellevue Avenue—they had no idea of what we would be doing today, 90 years later. But we're reaping a harvest today, later, and what a wonderful harvest it is! This is the law of anticipation. And you have to learn, sometimes, to wait on the harvest, and not to be weary in well doing.

Now who was the wisest man, other than the Lord Jesus, who ever lived? Well, it was Solomon. And Solomon said, in Ecclesiastes chapter 11 and verse 1: *“Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days”* (Ecclesiastes 11:1). Now what does that mean, “cast your bread upon the waters”? (Ecclesiastes 11:1). Well, Solomon would send out his ships; he would trade. He was a trader, and he would send out his ships. That was what he called “casting his bread upon the water.” Rather than consuming it for himself and eating that bread, he sent forth those ships. And then, the Bible says, in 1 Kings chapter 10, verses 22 and 23: *“For the king had at sea a navy of Tharshish with the navy of Hiram: once in three years came the navy of Tharshish, bringing gold, and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks. So king Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom”* (1 Kings 10:22–23). That is, Solomon knew that he could afford to wait for the harvest.

One of our former pastors, whose picture you saw up there, on the film, was Dr. Robert G. Lee. We all admired Dr. Lee, because Dr. Lee preached right on up into his nineties. He stood tall and straight. He had such a keen mind, like a laser. And I would ask Dr. Lee, “Dr. Lee, what is the secret?” And he said, “I am enjoying the harvest of a well-spent youth. I am enjoying the harvest of a well-spent youth.” That is, he is now reaping what he had sowed as a child. And so we have to understand that the harvest comes later.

Do you know there are some people who may be listening to me who have a disease in their body that they don't even know about, right now? They have lived in sin. They have broken God's law. God says, “You sow to the flesh; you will of the flesh reap corruption” (Galatians 6:8). And there could be, incubating in you, right now, a terrible, horrible malady that will take your life. That's the law of the harvest. And sometimes, people think that they are mocking the law of the harvest, because they don't see the result right away. You reap in due season. Obviously, not all sickness is because of someone's personal sin. I'd be a fool to say that; but, sometimes, it is. And sometimes,

people think they have broken God's law of the harvest; they think that they have sown wild oats—and God has overlooked it. Ecclesiastes chapter 8 and verse 11 says this: *“Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil”* (Ecclesiastes 8:11). Sometimes, because we don't see it right away, we think that the law of the harvest is not working. Friend, it works against us, or it works for us. It all depends upon what we have sown, but it always works.

IV. The Law of Multiplication

Now here's another principle in the harvest; here's the fourth one: Not only do we reap later than we sow—that is anticipation; but here's something else: We reap more than we sow—that's the law of multiplication, because it wouldn't make any sense to be a farmer unless the law of multiplication is there. What we sow is multiplied and intensified. Now it can work negatively, or it can work positively.

Let me show you how it works negatively. God warned His people, through the prophet Hosea, in Hosea chapter 8 and verse 7; and, this is what it says: *“For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind”* (Hosea 8:7). What does that mean? It means there is a law of multiplication and intensification. Now negatively, if you sow to the flesh, if you play with sin, again, that's going to destroy you.

I can remember back in the late 50s and 60s, when something happened in America called the *sexual revolution*—the *sexual revolution*. It was led, primarily, by Hugh Hefner, and *Playboy Magazine*. And the generation of that day began to smirk and to laugh. They thought that they could break God's law of sowing and reaping. They thought they could transgress God's commandment, where God says, *“Thou shalt not commit adultery,”* where God says, *“Flee fornication,”* where God warned about all of these things (Exodus 20:14; 1 Corinthians 6:18). But we had a generation that was amused with all of these things. That was the sexual revolution.

Now see what is happening in America today. We've sown the wind; we're reaping the whirlwind. We have a society that's being destroyed by vile diseases that we can't cure. We have homes that are in disintegration. We have a society that's being torn apart. We have little children who do not know, many times, who their parents are. We are... It seems as though a sewer pipe has broken on America. You cannot even turn the television on, on any evening, and hope to see something without having your sensibilities insulted, and hearing God blasphemed, and hearing wickedness flaunted in America. What has happened to us? In the 60s, we sowed the wind. Friend, in the 90s, we're reaping the whirlwind. That is true. *“God is not mocked: whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap”* (Galatians 6:7).

But on the positive side, how powerful is a life lived for Jesus! How wonderful what

our forbearers did 93 years ago, when they founded this church! How we thank God for the blessings that have multiplied and multiplied and multiplied.

Remember that little stock of corn, that little ear of corn? Think about that ear of corn that you saw in the film today. In one ear of corn, if it is planted, there is a bushel of corn. And in that bushel of corn, if that bushel of corn is planted, there are 100 bushels of corn. And if you plant 100 bushels of corn, there will be 10,000 bushels of corn. And if you did that, in three years, there would be millions of bushels of corn. That is the law of multiplication.

Let me show you how God gives it to the Church. Listen to it. Now this has a lot to do with our love offering. Put this verse down: 2 Corinthians 9—begin in verse 6. Here's what Paul says—now listen; listen very carefully: *“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”* (2 Corinthians 9:6–7). Now is sowing God's way to rob you or enrich you? It's God's way to enrich you. God says, “You're to learn to sow—not to hoard, but to sow.” If you want to be rich, give. If you want to be poor, grasp. If you want abundance, scatter. If you want to be needy, hoard.

Can you imagine a farmer getting the seed, and, when he's about to go out, his wife says, “What are you going to do with that corn?” He said, “I'm going to put it in the ground.” She said, “You stop right where you are. You're crazy. We need that to eat. We're going to eat that corn.” He said, “But wait a minute, sweetheart. We'll eat some of it, but we're going to plant the rest of it.” She said, “No, I don't want you to do that. That would be wasting it.” He said, “Darling, that's not wasting it. We're putting it in the ground. We want a harvest.” And that is true with our lives. If you want a harvest, friend, you must plant. There can be no harvest unless you plant; that's dissemination.

You're going to reap what you sow—that is identification. You're going to reap more than you sow—that is multiplication. Thank God for that.

Now I know what some of you are thinking, because the farmer has to think this, every time, when it comes time to plant—he has to think this: What if I put that seed in the ground, and we have a drought? What if I put that seed in the ground, and we have a flood? What if I put that seed in the ground, and it does not sprout, and I don't have a harvest? Well, folks, there's where the faith factor comes in, because the Bible says, in Ecclesiastes chapter 11 and verse 4: *“He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap”* (Ecclesiastes 11:4).

Here's a farmer. It's time to plant. He says, “Well, let me see. Nah, it looks like... I don't know. I just think I'll play it safe.” And he keeps his seed in the barn. You can't do that in life. If you regardeth the wind, you're not going to sow; and, if you regard the clouds, you will not reap (Ecclesiastes 11:4). Oh, friend, we must—we must, if we want

a harvest—believe in the principle of multiplication.

V. The Law of Cultivation

Now here's another principle I want to give you, and this is number five; and, it is this: You're going to reap more, if you cultivate what you sow. You're going to reap more, if you cultivate what you sow. This is the law of cultivation.

Have you ever planted a garden? You just can't just plant it and forget it. Now you can forget the weeds. The thorns, and the briars, and the weeds are going to grow without cultivation, but if you want a good harvest, you're going to have to cultivate the harvest. That's the reason the Apostle Paul said, in 1 Corinthians chapter 3, verse 6: *"I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase"* (1 Corinthians 3:6). If you want a good harvest, not only must you plant the right seeds, but you have to cultivate those seeds. That's true in marriage. You plant the seeds of commitment. That's fine when you get married, but you have to continually cultivate your marriage. That's true in business. You can't fail to cultivate your business and expect your business to prosper. It won't do it. It's true in a church. What those folks planted so long ago, it is incumbent upon us to cultivate. It's true in your own spiritual life. Folks, you have to cultivate the garden of your heart. That's the reason you need a quiet time, every morning. Every morning, you need to weed the garden of your mind. Every morning, you need to water the seed of God's Word. Every morning, you need to plow that hardened heart of yours, so that you will have the right kind of a harvest. You'll reap more, if you cultivate what you sow. That's the law of cultivation.

VI. The Law of Participation

Now here's the last one I want to mention, and what a blessing this one is to me: It's the law of participation. Here it is—now listen to it very carefully. We reap, often, what others have sown; we reap what others have sown.

Jesus taught this truth. Listen to it—John chapter 4, verses 37 and 38: *"Herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth."* One soweth, and another reapeth. And then, Jesus said, *"I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours"* (John 4:37–38).

Now some of you, this morning, are sitting in this building. Isn't it beautiful? Thank God for it. You heard this choir. You enjoy this air conditioning and all of this, but you had no part in building this building. You didn't give any money to this building. You made no sacrifice. You just came in here and sat down. Do you know what you're doing? You're reaping where somebody else sowed. Isn't that true? I mean, we're being blessed, because somebody... This is not an HUD project. It just didn't float down out of Heaven. All that we have here, all that is here, where did it come from? It represents the

vision, the faith, the prayers, the tears, the sacrifice of God's people, and we reap where others have sown. We all stand on the shoulders of other people.

I am so blessed. I came to this church in 1972 to be the pastor. Do you know what I found when I came here? I found a congregation where the people loved one another. I'll tell you what else I found when I came here: I found a congregation where the people believed the Bible was the Word of God. I'll tell you what else I found here, when I came here: I found a congregation that believed that the pastor is God's appointed and God's anointed leader to lead a church. No man ever had a sweeter congregation. No man ever had more cooperation from his people than you have given me.

Why is that? I didn't make that congregation that way. I followed Dr. Ramsey Pollard, a man of love, a man of vision, a man who brought this congregation to that oneness of spirit. And he followed Dr. Robert G. Lee and others, and each one of us stands upon the shoulders of other people. And when I came to this church, I dived into an ocean of love, and I'm still wet. And I'll tell you something else: When I leave, I want someone to come behind me and stand on my shoulders, because we reap where we did not sow. Is that not true?

Now folks, there are others who are going to come along behind us, and they're going to have to reap what we sow. Listen to that scripture again—John 4, verse 37: *“And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour; other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours”* (John 4:37–38).

Think about it negatively. Little children, today, are suffering—not because of their sins, but because of the sins of others. Little babies will be born from mothers who are addicted with crack cocaine, and they will come reaping, in their bodies, disease, and bodies that are racked with pain and addiction, because of the mothers. Some little babies are born with the disease of AIDS—not because of anything that they have done, but maybe, perhaps, because of the promiscuity of their parents. Not always, but many times, that's the reason for this. Think of the tragedy that happens, when it happens. You see, folks, we all, because of Adam's sin, are reaping what Adam did. And children today, many times, reap things that they did not sow. *“The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge”* (Ezekiel 18:2).

But it's true in the positive thing, also: the freedoms that we reap in America, today, that our young people don't know anything about. You kids who are here for the Dawson McAlister thing, I want you to listen up to me. And all the kids, young people, in this building, you sit in here, and you listen to a man who can preach the Word of God, and doesn't have to worry about the Gestapo, or the jack-booted people, coming in and saying, “You can't do that.” Oh no, we have freedom in America. You know why we have freedom in America? Because, maybe, your granddaddy died on a battlefield

somewhere; your great uncle died somewhere on a battlefield; or your brother, or your father. We reap, in America, the fruits of freedom that others have sown. We reap blessings that others have sown. There is no blessing without sowing.

VII. The Love Offering

Adoniram Judson said this—listen to it very carefully: “If we succeed without suffering, it is because others suffered before us. If we suffer without succeeding, it will mean that others will succeed after us. But there is no success without suffering.” We enter into the blessings of other people. What others have done blesses us.

Now I don’t know about you, but I want this church to be a blessing to those who come behind us. That’s the reason we’re having the Love Offering. Do you know what the Love Offering is going to be used for? Do you know what the Hearts and Hands for the Harvest is? Folks, God is blessing us with the ability to reach young, married adults, and those young, married adults are having babies. And when we built, as I said the other night, our children’s wing over here, we thought that we were building for eternity. But as I told you before, maternity has outdone eternity, and we’re having these little babies—and, thank God for them! And we want them to be taught of the Lord. We want these children to learn

Jesus loves me! This I know,
For the Bible tells me so. (Anna Bartlett Warner)

And we want to put their moms and dads in Sunday School, and we want to have a place for them. And we need to build a building, and we’re going to do it, by God’s grace. And we’re going to bring, lovingly, victoriously, a love offering. And we’re not talking about a minimal offering; we’re talking about a big offering, because we want a big blessing. We want to be a big blessing. We don’t want to reap sparingly. We want to reap bountifully. And so we are going to come with that offering, because we believe, if we sow to the Spirit, we will of the spirit reap life everlasting (Galatians 6:8).

Conclusion

Now I close by saying this: There’s one harvest that you need to enter into, that somebody else sowed, that you can reap. The Lord Jesus said this, in John 12, verse 24: “*Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit*” (John 12:24). Do you know what He was talking about? He was talking about His death, burial, and resurrection. He was that corn of wheat. And Jesus Christ suffered, and bled, and died, that we might have eternal life. His body, like a seed, was laid in the tomb. He was dead. He died for our transgressions. But on that third day, He arose. And I’m here to tell you, this morning, that if you will repent of your sin, receive Christ as your personal Savior and Lord, I

promise you, on the authority of the Word of God, He'll forgive every sin. He will come into you, and give you a new nature. He did me, and He will you. And thirdly, when you die—not *if* you die, but *when* you die; or, when He comes—He'll take you home to Heaven.

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed; no one stirring, no one looking around. I wonder how many in this building could say, "Pastor Rogers, I know that I know if I died today, I'd go straight to Heaven, because I've been saved by the grace of God; I've repented of my sin; I've trusted Christ as my personal Savior; God has transformed my life; and, God's Spirit bears witness with my spirit that I am a child of God"? If you can give me that testimony, would you just lift your hand for a moment? Thank you. Now take it down. If you couldn't lift your hand, let me pray for you.

Father God, I pray for these precious ones here, today, who could not say, "I know that I'm saved," Lord, that today they might say *yes* to Jesus Christ. And friend, while your head is bowed, you might be saying, "Pastor, I don't know for certain that I'm saved; but, if I can know it, I want to know it." Then, let me help you. Would you pray a prayer like this? "O God, I know that You love me. I know that You want to save me. Jesus, You died to save me. You promised to save me, if I would trust You. I do trust You, right now, like a little child. I open my heart. I receive You now, by faith, as my Lord and as my Savior. Come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Save me, Lord Jesus. I'm turning my life over to You, Lord Jesus. Begin now, Lord Jesus, to make me the person You want me to be. And Lord Jesus, help me to make this public. Don't let me be ashamed of You, Lord Jesus, because You died for me. In Your name I pray. Amen."

Branded for Christ

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: July 13, 1986

Main Scripture Text: Galatians 6:17

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Introduction

Would you take God's Word, please, tonight, and turn to Galatians, chapter 6. Thank you, Ken, for that music, and thank you for leading us. I don't think that you could have sung a song that would have been more apropos for the message tonight than the one that you just sang. Galatians, chapter 6, and verse 17: *"From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus"* (Galatians 6:17). *"I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus."* I want to speak to you, tonight, on this subject: "Branded for Christ"—"Branded for Christ," or perhaps I might say, "The Marks of the Master."

Some years ago, somebody came up with this question: "If you were arrested for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?" That's a good question, isn't it? Let me ask you, again: If you were arrested for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?

Now the Apostle Paul was being accused. He was not being accused of being a Christian; he was really being accused of not being a Christian, or at least they were accusing him of not being an apostle, not being a God-called man, and not being worthy of apostleship and leadership. And he was being accused by some people that we will call *Judaizers*, and they were saying that Paul was not really a true preacher, and not really an apostle. They were saying that if Paul were truly an apostle, then he would

have everybody follow the Jewish laws of circumcision, and all of these other things. And so they were criticizing Paul, and they were persecuting Paul.

Now the verse that I've just read to you is Paul's answer to them—these people who were bothering him, these people who were pestering him. And I want you to listen to his answer again: *"From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus."* Now what did Paul mean by that? Paul had scars on his body; he had literal disfigurements. He had been wounded; he had been bruised; he had been broken; he had been bloodied; he had been stoned; and he had been mutilated, and his body literally had scars on it. And he said, "These scars are my defense"—*'Let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.'* There are three things I want you to notice tonight about the marks of the Master.

I. The Making of Those Marks

First of all, I want you to notice what I'm going to call the making of those marks. How did Paul get these scars? I remind you now that Paul is not using figurative language; he's using literal language. Paul suffered. You know, in Romans, chapter 8, he talks about the things that cannot separate us from the love of God, and he says that famine, and peril, and nakedness, and sword, and tribulation, and distress, and persecution—he says that these things can't separate us from the love of God (Romans 8:35). Now friend, Paul was not talking in the abstract. The way that Paul knew that those things could not separate him from the love of God is that he had endured all of those things. Paul had endured famine, and peril, and nakedness, and sword, and tribulation, and distress, and persecution. He knew first-hand that those things that had happened to him could not separate him from the love of God.

If you don't mind turning in your Bible, then I want you to turn—just put your bookmark there, in Galatians, chapter 6—and turn to an astounding passage in 2 Corinthians. You just have to turn left a little place, and you'll find it—2 Corinthians, chapter 11, and verse 24. I tell you, folks, I didn't want to preach this sermon tonight. I'm going to tell you a secret: I prepared it for this morning, but I wasn't ready to preach it this morning. And I had to pray about it to preach it tonight, because what I'm going to say to you tonight just humiliates me; it makes me ashamed to even say that I'm a Christian, when I think about this little man named Paul.

Notice what he said of what he endured for Christ. Now here are others who were saying they were ministers of Christ. Let's go back to verse 23. There were people who were troubling Paul at Corinth, the same as there were in Galatia. He said: *"Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure,"*—he was talking about stripes on his back—*"in prisons more frequent, in deaths off"* (2 Corinthians 11:23). As a matter of fact, there's some good evidence

that Paul may have been stoned to death—that he may have died, and that God raised him from the dead. The next chapter speaks of that when Paul said, “I knew a man in Christ who went into the third Heaven.” He said, “Whether I was in the body or out of the body, I don’t know. Whether I died and had gone to Heaven, or whether I was just in a trance or a vision, I really don’t know” (2 Corinthians 12:2). Paul may have died, and God brought him back to life—I don’t know. But he mentions: *“in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one.”* That is, he had 39 stripes laid on his back. Now often, men would die from this kind of a scourging. *“Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned,”*—I mean, they took huge boulders. This was the capital punishment that the Jews used. He was stoned; he was left for dead. As far as they were concerned, they said, “We finished this guy;” but God brought him back—*“thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;”*—that is, for 24 hours he was floating around out there in the ocean, not knowing whether or not he would ever reach shore—*“in journeys often, in perils of waters,”*—the word *perils* means “dangers”—*“in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness”* (2 Corinthians 11:23–27). Now you understand what Paul meant when he said, *“I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus”* (Galatians 6:17).

Leonard Ravenhill wrote about the Apostle Paul, and this is what he said: He said, “Look closely at Paul—at that cadaverous countenance, that scarred body, that stooped figure of a man chastened by hunger, kept down by fasting, and ploughed with the lictor’s lash; that little body, brutally stoned at Lystra and starved in many places; that skin, pickled for thirty-six hours in the Mediterranean Sea! And add to this list danger upon danger, and then multiply it with loneliness; finally, count in the 199 stripes, 3 shipwrecks, 3 beatings with rods, a stoning, a prison record, and deaths so many that count is lost.”

When I think about that, and I think how little I’ve suffered for Jesus, folks, it shames me. And when I remember that Paul said that all who *“live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution”* (2 Timothy 3:12), I wonder why some of us seem to get off so easy. I wonder why some of us are so slick and well fed, and why we have it so easy, and why we mumble and complain, sometimes, when we do. Oh, we sing these songs, folks, if we could ever think about the lies we tell in our song service: “Faith of our fathers, holy faith,” in prison dark, and in dungeon; “Faith of our fathers, living still...we will be true”—O God—“to thee till death;” and some folks don’t even get back Sunday night.

I heard of a boy who was talking to his girlfriend on the phone, and he told her, “I love you more than life itself.” He said, “You are so precious to me.” He said, “I worship

the ground you walk on.” He said, “I would fight wild beasts to be at your side.” He said, “I would walk barefoot on hot coals to be near you.” He said, “I would wade through a swamp of crocodiles to hold your hand.” And then, later on, he said, “And sweetheart, if it’s not raining, then I am coming over to see you Saturday night.” And so many of us are that way, you know—we talk, but talk is so cheap.

And these people who were criticizing Paul, they talked, but they did not suffer for Christ. The making of those marks—they were literal, physical disfigurements upon the body of this man. He had been beaten, brutalized, and mutilated for Jesus Christ.

II. The Meaning of Those Marks

Now the second thing I want you to notice—not only the making of those marks, but I want you to notice with me the meaning of these marks. Because, the Apostle Paul, when he said, “I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus Christ,” could have chosen one word to mean *marks*, which is a normal word for *scars* or *disfigurement*. But he chose a special word; he chose the Greek word *stigmata*. “I bear in my body the *stigmata* of Jesus Christ.” And when he used that word, he showed us that he was making a play on words. Not only was he talking about a literal mark, but now, he’s also using the word figuratively. And the word *stigmata* is the plural for the word for “a brand”—very much as if one would brand cattle like they do out west, and here in Tennessee, and other places. And he’s talking about some sort of a brand-mark that was put in the flesh of some animal or, sometimes, a person. Now in Paul’s day *stigmata* were used for several things.

A. A Mark of Ownership

First of all, it was a mark of ownership. A slave would be branded by his master. Slaves were like cattle—just like cattle and other things. And so the master would say that “this is my slave,” and he would take a branding iron, and he would burn his name into the slave. “This is my piece of property; he will not be able to get this mark off of his body.” And when Paul said, “I bear the *stigmata* of the Lord Jesus Christ,” what he was saying is, “I am His slave. I have been branded for Christ. I’m not my own. I am bought with a price.” And Paul spoke of himself over and over again as the bondsman of Jesus Christ.

Now I had to ask myself this question as I prepared this sermon; and, since I’ve asked myself this question, and had to deal with God about it, I’m going to do something to you—not *for* you—to you: I’m going to ask you the same question: Are you a bondsman to Jesus Christ? Have you been branded for Christ? Now talk is cheap, folks. Are you His slave? You know, there are folks who waltz down to church on Sunday morning, and join a church like they’re doing God a wild favor—like we are a prize package, and He’s so lucky to get us. Are you a slave of Jesus Christ? The Apostle

Paul said, “I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. I am branded for Christ. I am a slave of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

B. A Mark of Allegiance

But not only was it used as a sign of ownership; it was also used as a mark of allegiance. Back in this day, *stigmata* were also used by soldiers. Soldiers would tattoo themselves—brand themselves—with the name of their general. For example, Alexander the Great, who conquered the known world and wept because there were no more worlds to conquer, had his soldiers that wore his *stigmata*, that wore his mark, and they had the alpha for Alexander—the A tattooed upon their hand—which said, “I belong to Alexander. I owe my allegiance to my captain. I am in his army.”

The Apostle Paul surely must have had that in mind also, when he chose this special word *stigmata* to say, “I bear in my body the brand mark of the Lord Jesus, because not only am I His slave; I’m also His soldier. I know how to endure hardness. I know how to bear hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.” And the Apostle Paul said, in 2 Timothy 4, verse 7: “*I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith*” (2 Timothy 4:7). And Paul, as I’ve said, was faithful to the faith, to the fight, and to the finish.

C. A Mark of Religious Belief

But now, again, the word *stigmata* was used, not only for slaves, and not only for soldiers, but it was also used as a mark for people who were followers of a particular religion. Now today, to show that we’re followers of a particular religion, we may wear a gold cross around our neck, or we may wear a *Jesus first* lapel pin. I’m not opposed to any of that; I think that’s fine. But in Paul’s day, the different religions would often have themselves branded in the temple to show that they were devoted to that particular God. They would use the mark, the sign, the symbol, the crest, or whatever it was, of that religion. Now what Paul was saying, I believe, is this: “that I am the slave of Jesus Christ. I am a soldier of Jesus Christ, and I am devoted to Jesus Christ. I love Him. I am a deputy of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

D. A Mark of Shame

But I want to tell you a fourth way that the *stigmata* were used in this day: They were also used as a mark of shame. Criminals were often branded with *stigmata*. Have you ever heard the word *stigma*? We get the word *stigma* from the word *stigmata*. That is, a person has a stigma upon them; he has a mark on him. He has a mark of shame. If a person was a criminal, for example, if a person were like some of the well-known criminals in our day, one of the ways they would identify him—if they ever did release him out of prison— was that they would brand him. He would wear that brand

everywhere he went. And it would be a mark of shame, and it would be a warning to other people: “This man wears the brand.” It was a mark of warning, and a mark of shame.

Do you remember back in the Old Testament when Cain slew Abel? Well, you don't remember; you weren't there. Do you remember reading about it? A little boy asked his grandma—he said, “Grandma, were you on the ark?” She said, “Why, no.” He said, “Why didn't you drown?” When Cain slew Abel, the Bible says that God put a mark upon him; it was a mark of shame. And what Paul is saying is this: “Look,” he said, “I bear these marks. I bear this stigma. I don't mind you knowing that I'm a slave of Jesus Christ. I don't mind you knowing that I'm a soldier for Jesus Christ. I don't mind you knowing that my love belongs to Jesus Christ. And I don't mind you knowing that, whatever shame Jesus bears, I am willing to bear that shame.” Today, we're interested in medals. Paul was interested in scars.

III. The Message of Those Marks

Now the third and final thing I want to talk to you about, after the making of the mark, the making of those scars—they were literal; and the meaning—Paul used a special word to attach a special meaning; now, thirdly and finally, think with me about the message of those marks. What does that mean to me? Well, I'll tell you what it meant to me, as I thought on this and pondered.

A. An Encouragement to Faithfulness

First of all, it was an encouragement unto me to be faithful, to never be ashamed to suffer for Jesus, to never to be ashamed to stand for the Lord Jesus Christ, and not to whimper if I do have to suffer for the Lord Jesus Christ. Notice what the Apostle Paul said in verse 14: *“But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world”* (Galatians 6:14). Now Paul gloried in those marks. He wasn't ashamed to be branded for Christ. He gloried in the fact that he could suffer for the Lord Jesus Christ. Everybody glories in something. You glory in your grandchildren or your musical ability; you glory in your possessions, your gun collection, your automobile, or your flower garden—everybody has something that he wants to glory in.

Paul had so much that he could glory in. He could have gloried in his education. He had an equivalency of a double PhD. He sat at the feet of one of the greatest teachers in the world at that time: the learned Dr. Gamaliel. Paul could have gloried in his aristocracy, his religion, or his background, for he was a royal blueblood; he was a Hebrew of the Hebrews. Paul could have gloried in his preaching. I don't suppose that there's ever been a greater preacher than the Apostle Paul. The Apostle Paul was

known in Hell for his preaching; the demons mentioned his name in the same sentence with Jesus: “*Jesus I know, and Paul I know*” (Acts 19:15). The demons in Hell knew of the power that this Apostle Paul had. He could have gloried in his achievements, being a great missionary and a great church planter. Did you know that the Apostle Paul wrote at least half of the books of the New Testament? If you count the Book of Hebrews, it’s more than half of the books in the New Testament. He had so much to glory in; but, he never mentions any of that. He doesn’t brag about any of that. He says, “God forbid that I should glory in anything except the cross of Jesus Christ, by which I’m crucified to this world, and this world is crucified to me” (Galatians 6:14). And when I read that, I said, “O God, help me so that those marks might mean to me—as Adrian—as they meant to Paul, who was faithful.” You need to be faithful, and don’t worry if you suffer for Jesus.

Let me give a verse; put it in your margin—John 15, beginning in verse 18. Jesus Christ said: “*If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before he hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name’s sake, because they know not him that sent me*” (John 15:18–21).

You know, I used to wonder when the persecution for Jesus would begin. When I was a younger preacher, I used to preach about how we ought bear persecution for Jesus; but I always felt a little sheepish about it, because I didn’t have much of it. I’m getting some, I know what it is; and I’m still ashamed to even talk about persecution, because, as the writer of Hebrews says: “*Ye have not yet resisted unto blood*” (Hebrews 12:4). I don’t know that I’ve ever really shed a drop of blood for Jesus.

You know, I’ve been cussed and discussed a little, and I’ve been ridiculed a little. And frankly, folks, it makes me feel a whole lot better, because I got to thinking about what the Bible means when it says, “Beware when all men speak well of you” (Luke 6:26), and, I got to thinking about what Jesus meant when He said, “The world hates Me, and it’s going to hate you” (John 15:18). “The servant is not better than its master” (John 15:20). And I think what Paul is saying is this: “I bear these marks as *stigmata*. I have been branded for the Lord Jesus.”

Back in medieval times—as they say, “when knights were bold”—they had warrior kings—kings, like the romanticized stories of King Arthur. And those warrior kings would lead the knights into battle, and those knights would want to stand by the king, number one, to protect the king, and, number two, to show their allegiance to the king. And of course, the king was the center of the battle. And so the hottest part of the battle would center around the king, and the arrows would fly the thickest around the king—where

the king would be. And then, if the battle was a victory, they would come back to the castle, and there would be a sumptuous feast with the smoking meats and the delicacies.

And then, at a particular time, they would discuss the battle. And the king, who would certainly, surely, be wounded somewhere in the battle, would show his wounds, and would show his scars. And others who had fought by him and stood by him would also show their scars out of their love for their king—that they had received because they stood by the king, and fought with the king. And at that time, other warriors who had no scars did not count themselves lucky that they had no scars—they hung their heads in humiliation and shame. Could it be that they were not brave enough? Could it be that they were not near enough to the king?

I found these words by Amy Carmichael. Amy Carmichael spent half a century as a missionary for Jesus in India, and here's what she wrote:

No wound? No scar?
Yet, as the Master shall the servant be,
And pierced are the feet that follow Me.
But thine are whole; can he have followed far
Who hast no wound or scar? (Amy Carmichael)

You see, as the master is, so shall the servant be. And she also wrote these words:

Captain beloved, battle wounds were Thine,
Let me not wonder if some hurt be mine.
Rather, O Lord, let my deep wonder be
That I may share a battle wound with Thee. (Amy Carmichael)

B. An Encouragement to Fearlessness

The Apostle Paul said, *“I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus”* (Galatians 6:17). What is the meaning of those marks? Number one: an encouragement to faithfulness. Number two: an encouragement to fearlessness. Let's not be afraid to suffer for the Lord Jesus Christ. It is better to be scarred than be scared—than to be scared.

And let's make up our minds that this world is not going to love us. We are twice-born people in a world of once-born people. We're going to find ourselves going against the tide most of the time, and we must remember that Jesus Christ described us as salt. And salt, when it finds a wound, irritates. And number two: Jesus described us as light, and light discloses. Salt irritates, and light reveals. And you can understand, therefore, that people are going to be against salt and light in a world of disease and darkness. But let us not be afraid.

Again, somebody has written these words, and we sing these words:

Am I a soldier of the cross,
A follower of the Lamb,
And shall I fear to own His cause
Or blush to speak His name?

...

Sure I must fight if I would reign;
Increase my courage, Lord
I'll bear the toil, endure the pain,
Supported by Thy word. (Isaac Watts)

C. An Encouragement to Fruitfulness

I want to call upon you, as the members of this church, not to be intimidated by the devil, and to let the marks that the Apostle Paul bore in his body—this man, branded for Christ—let it encourage you, number one, to faithfulness; let it encourage you, number two, to fearlessness, and to say, “I will not be ashamed nor afraid of what man can do to me.”

Finally, the message of the Maker is, to me, not only an encouragement to faithfulness and fearlessness, but also to fruitfulness. Do you know why Paul was used of God so mightily? He wasn't trying to save his life. He said: *“I die daily”* (1 Corinthians 15:31). He remembers the words of the Lord Jesus—Jesus said: *“Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it”* (Mark 8:35). Jesus said: *“Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit”* (John 12:24).

Do you know something, folks? We don't have to go around baiting persecution, and, if possible, I don't want to be wounded and scarred physically; but, I have to be willing to be, and so do you. We have such a cheap faith—so easy, so air-conditioned, so upholstered, and so streamlined. Do you know what one of our big problems is in the Baptist church, folks? It's to get men to give a dime out of a dollar. Oh, what sacrifice for Jesus! Paul said, *“I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus”*—beaten, shamed, mutilated, and vilified. When we begin to live as Paul lived, we'll see revival, and we'll see fruitfulness in our lives.

There was a man who didn't know whether he wanted to believe in Jesus or not. He wanted to, but he needed some proof—his name was Thomas. Do you know what Thomas said? Thomas said, “Except I see the scars in His hand and in His side, I'll not believe” (John 20:25). Now he believed that Jesus died, all right; he just wasn't convinced that Jesus arose, and it was those scars that convinced Thomas.

I am wondering if there are not some people who are looking for some scars in our lives to be convinced. Now they don't have to be literal scars. There's more than one

way to bear a scar. But you can suffer for Jesus. You don't have to go out and bait suffering. Don't anybody get a martyr complex, and try to get people to persecute you for Jesus Christ. But I'm saying, dear friend, that, when we get serious about suffering for the Lord Jesus Christ, and we say, "Pentecost at any cost," and when we say with the Apostle Paul, "I'm going for God, no matter what it costs," I believe there shall be in our lives that fruitfulness that Paul had.

Conclusion

"Well," you say, "my goodness, Preacher, I thought this thing of being a Christian was supposed to be wonderful." Hey folks, don't feel sorry for Paul. Don't feel sorry for Paul. Paul looks down on you, feeling sorry for you. One of these days, you're going to meet Jesus. One of my favorite songs is this:

It will be worth it all when we see Jesus,
Life's trials will seem so small when we see Christ;
One glimpse of His dear face all sorrow will erase,
So bravely run the race till we see Christ. (Esther Kerr Rusthoi)

I bear in my body little marks of the Lord Jesus—branded for Christ. Let's pray.