

ADRIAN ROGERS

LEGACY

C O L L E C T I O N



PHILIPPIANS

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 Family of God

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: July 25, 1999

Main Scripture Text: Philippians 1:1–6; 2:1–2; 3:10

“I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel.”

PHILIPPIANS 1:3–5

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Introduction

Would you be finding in God’s precious Word Philippians chapter 1—Philippians chapter 1. Let me give you a little riddle that my children asked me. They asked this: What do John the Baptist and Winnie the Pooh have in common? Well, it’s very easy. They have the same middle name: John *the* Baptist and Winnie *the* Pooh. Well, I want to ask you another question about having things in common. What does a philosopher have in common with a traveling saleslady, and a former fortuneteller, and a jailer? What do they all have in common? Well, I’ll tell you what they all have in common: They were all members at the church of Philippi, and they had in common a fellowship.

Look, if you will, here in chapter 1, and begin in verse 1: *“Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons...”*—now *bishop* is just another way of saying “pastor”; you can call me Bishop Rogers; if you’d like to, then it would be all right—*“with the bishops and*

deacons: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.” Then Paul said of this wonderful church: *“I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, for your fellowship...”*—just underscore that—*“for your fellowship in the gospel.”* (Philippians 1:1–5)

Do you know what the word *fellowship* means? It means “to hold something in common.” This is the Greek word *koinonia*, and it means “to have in common,” just as Winnie the Pooh and John the Baptist have the same middle name in common. You’re going to find out that in a much more serious, intrinsically beautiful way, these people at Philippi had some things in common. The Apostle Paul, who was a teacher and a philosopher and a world traveler; a woman named Lydia, who was a traveling saleslady from Thyatira; a fortuneteller who got saved; and the Philippian jailer who got saved—all of them had in common what we have in common, brothers and sisters—and that is Jesus.

Why are we here today? We’re not here just to sing songs and to hear a talk. We’re here because of one person: His name is Jesus. And the Jesus in me loves the Jesus in you, and the Jesus in you loves the Jesus in me. And together, we love Jesus. And, folks, it is Jesus that makes this crowd a congregation. Did you know that? It is the fellowship—the oneness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And when we come together in this fellowship, we are the Church. We are the Church. We are the family of God.

Now I want to say without stutter, stammer, apology, hesitation, or equivocation, this: that beyond the shadow of any doubt or peradventure, the grandest organization upon the face of this earth is the Church of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Now that was a good place for a big amen. It is—it is! Don’t ever be so foolish or so ridiculous as to bad-mouth the Church. Now I’m not talking about the faults and the failures and the foibles of the Church—we have those. But you have to understand what the Church is: the Church is the bride of Jesus Christ.

I have a bride. I love her, and she’s my childhood sweetheart. I love her with all my heart. And I’m saved, and I’m a nice guy; but if you disrespect my wife, or say bad things about her, then you’re going to affect me very deeply. And if you put your hands on her—I’m not the man I used to be—but, still, I’ll put you on the ground so fast you won’t know what happened to you, if I can. She is my bride. She is my bride, and I love her. And I’m going to tell you something: The Church is the bride of Jesus Christ. Never forget that. And He loves His bride.

And we’re going to be talking today about this organization: the Church, which is really the family of God. We sing it: “I’m so glad I’m a part of the family of God.” Three things I want you to learn about the family of God as we look in these six verses. Actually, I don’t believe I read the sixth one yet. Let’s go to chapter 1 and verse 6. And

he says, *“Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”* (Philippians 1:6) Three things.

I. The Supernatural Formation of the Church

Number one: the supernatural formation of the Church—the supernatural formation of the Church. There are seminars all across America today talking about how to build a church. Friend, I am not interested in building any church—not at all! It’s not my business. I don’t build the church. You don’t build the church. Jesus said, *“I will build my church”*—*“I will build my church.”* (Matthew 16:18) The building of the church is supernatural. He didn’t say, “I want to build your church.” He didn’t say, “You will build my church.” He said, *“I will build my church.”* And that’s the reason that we must pray to see the work done here at Bellevue Baptist Church. There’s an old song we sing: *“All is vain unless the Spirit of the Holy One comes down.” Satan laughs at our schemes, and mocks at our organization; but he fears the power of the Lord Jesus Christ*, as He is the one who is building the Church.

Now I want you to put a bookmark there in Philippians chapter 1, and then I want you to turn—and, all of you, I want you to turn—to Acts chapter 16, because you will not understand how there got to be saints in Philippi unless you go back to the book of Acts. And the book of Acts tells you how this church was built. And the sixteenth chapter of the book of Acts tells us some things that we need to learn here at Bellevue Baptist Church. And those of you who are members of other churches need to learn about how Jesus Christ builds the Church.

The supernatural formation of the Church: it is supernatural, not natural. It is what Jesus does; it is not what we do. And I want you to see how the Lord Jesus Christ built this church at Philippi. And when you learn how the Lord Jesus Christ built the church in Philippi, then we can learn how He wants to build the church in Memphis, or how He wants to build a church in San Diego, or how He wants to build a church in Boston, or how He wants to build the church in Shanghai, or in any other place.

A. The Restraint of the Spirit

How does Jesus Christ build a church? Well, number one, I want you to look in chapter 16—Acts chapter 16, verses 6 and 7—and write down these words: “the restraint of the Spirit.”

Now, here’s what happened. Paul was a missionary, and he was going different places, planting churches. Now, notice in chapter 16, verses 6 and 7: *“Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia,”*—and watch this—*“and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, after they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not.”* (Acts 16:6–7) Now

they're missionaries; they're good-hearted people. They love God, and they're going. They're saying, "We're going to go here and plant a church; we're going to go to Asia and plant a church." And the Holy Spirit said, "No; nope, you can't go there." Now Asia needed the gospel; but, you see, God is a very strategic God, and God had a plan. And God said, "No, Paul, I don't want you to go to Asia," and, "Just stop, Paul."

You see, folks, listen to me very carefully. We do not choose the place of our service. I did not choose to come to Bellevue Baptist Church. I was chosen to come. I was directed to come. I was sent. A country preacher said, "The problem today is too many have went when they *ain't* been sent." Now, folks, I believe with all my heart that God has called me here. Now, you see, you have to learn God's *go*; but *in order to know God's go, you've got to know God's no*.

Paul was a good-hearted man. He wasn't out of the will of God; he was in the will of God. That's the reason the Holy Spirit could steer him. It's hard to steer a ship that's not moving. So he's wanting to know the will of God, and he's wanting to go into a certain area—Bithynia; but the Spirit says, "No, Paul, you can't go." He said, "I want to go to Asia." The Holy Spirit said, "No, you can't go." Now the Bible says, "*The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD,*" (Psalm 37:23) but you might also say, "the *stops* of a good man are ordered by the Lord."

And you want me to tell you what the problem with many people is? Their mental horsepower has outrun their moral brakes and their spiritual brakes. And so they're going all over just doing what they think that they ought to do, building their own plans, and asking God to understand them. They have a high-powered engine; but they have faulty brakes, and they're causing wrecks everywhere that they go.

It's so good to see God guide. You know why we're here in this wonderful building today? Folks, I want to tell you we moved heaven and earth to try to build downtown. We tried and tried and tried. We had the most wonderful committee—all praying people, sacrificing people; a loving church; trying to buy property; this thing and that thing. We just couldn't do it. I mean, we would run in and we'd hit the wall here; we'd hit the wall here; and we'd hit the wall here. The Holy Spirit said to me one night, "Adrian, you're just doing the wrong thing; you're going the wrong way. That is not my will. I want you to do something else." And then God opened up for us for this acreage out here. I'm so glad that God did not give me what I wanted, because God has certainly given us greater things than I ever dared dream.

And so the first thing in building a church is the restraint of the Spirit. If you're teaching your child to drive and that child is not interested in the brakes, then you're not interested in showing him the accelerator, isn't that right? And so if we cannot listen to God when God says *no* like Paul listened to God when God said *no* to him, then what right do we have to expect Him to say *go* when we can't stop when He says *no*?

B. The Release of the Spirit

Now, here's the second thing I want you to see: not only the restraint of the Spirit, but also the release of the Spirit. Now God was not just trying to stop Paul; He was guiding Paul. So, look now, if you will, in Acts chapter 16, verse 9: *"And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; there stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them."* (Acts 16:9–10) So God is just redirecting him. Again, I want to tell you this, folks—I learned this a long time ago: *If God doesn't give you what you want, then God will give you something better than you want.*

We used to have a preacher down in Florida: he was an old man; his name was Solomon—Ed Solomon. Someone wrote a book about him called *The Wisdom of Solomon*. He always could say the most wonderful things. One time he was preaching and he said, "God never did give me anything I wanted." I thought, "Well, a preacher ought not to say that." And he said, "God didn't let me go to the school I wanted to go to." Well, he was preaching there at the university where he was educated. People looked around, and he said, "God didn't let me ever pastor the church I wanted to pastor." Well, some of his church members were there; they kind of felt kind of bad. And then he said this. He said, "God didn't even let me marry the woman I wanted to marry." His wife was sitting there. And it got real quiet; you could hear the grass growing outside. And then he said, "But God always gave me something better than I wanted."

That's the way God is. If God doesn't give you what you want, then God will give you something better than you want. And *God wants for you what you'd want for yourself, if you had enough sense to want it.* You can be sure of that.

And so here the Holy Spirit of God just redirects the Apostle Paul, and he makes a move that opens up not Asia, but all of Europe, to the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And the Bible says, *"Immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia."* (Acts 16:10)

*Oh, be swift, my soul, to answer Him! be jubilant, my feet;
Our God is marching on.
—JULIA WARD HOWE*

C. The Results of the Spirit

Now, watch: There was the restraint of the Spirit, the release of the Spirit, and then the results of the Spirit. Now, remember we're talking about the fact that it's Jesus that builds the Church when we obey Him. Go on down to Acts chapter 16. You're going to find out those who got saved.

1. Lydia Gets Saved.

For example, there was a woman named Lydia who was saved. Acts chapter 16, verse 13: *“And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither.”* So there’s a prayer meeting down by the riverside. *“And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye had judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.”* (Acts 16:13–15)

Now Paul said, “There’s going to be a prayer meeting down by the riverside. I’m going down by the riverside.” Remember now he’s moving in the stream of the Spirit. He’s known the restraint of the Spirit; he’s known the release of the Spirit; now he’s about to see the results of the Spirit. Down there, there’s a woman—a very influential woman, a businesswoman; her name was Lydia; and here’s what the Bible says—and I love this—*“whose heart the Lord opened.”* (Acts 16:14)

You may not remember it, but when I prayed this morning, I prayed, “God, open hearts”—“open hearts.” You see, folks, *preaching without the Holy Spirit is like pouring water on a rock*. Did you know that? God must open the heart. I can’t do that. That is supernatural. Soul winning and preaching take on a brand new dimension when the Holy Spirit of God opens the hearts of people. That’s the reason we must pray, we must seek God, and we must saturate every song, every solo, and every sermon in prayer—because it is God that opens the hearts.

This woman was an influential woman. And, by the way, there’s militant feminism in the land. I believe the gospel of Jesus Christ is the answer to the militant feminism. God opened her heart. Lydia was saved.

2. A Demon-Possessed Girl Gets Saved.

And not only was Lydia saved; a demon-possessed girl was liberated. Go on down and look, if you will now, in Acts chapter 16, verse 16: *“And it came to pass, as we went to prayer,”*—here they are praying again—*“a certain damsel”*—that’s a young lady—*“possessed with a spirit of divination”*—that is, she was demon-possessed with a fortunetelling demon—*“met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying:”*—there were those who were pimping her, not for prostitution, but for fortunetelling—*“the same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying...”*—now, watch: *“This girl followed us;”* and Luke is writing this, and Paul—*“and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation. And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour.”*

(Acts 16:16–18)

This girl was demon-possessed. Now she was following Paul, and she's saying, "These men are the servants of the most high God. They show to us the way of salvation." (Acts 16:17) What was wrong with that? What she said was true. And that's what was wrong with it. Paul did not want the patronage of hell. Paul did not want his ministry associated with the occult and the dark practices of demon worship. And it was the devil's way to kind of muddy the waters, to garble the waters, to make Paul look a little more demonic, and to make the demons look a little more spiritual.

And so what Paul did... She's going around; she keeps on, and she does this many days. By the way, Paul was not a "ghost-buster"—a member of "Demon Exorcism Incorporated." He didn't try to find somebody with a demon in them and try to cast it out. Don't ever do that. Don't ever get in the business of casting out demons. The devil will keep you so busy you won't have time to preach the gospel. The Bible says, "*Resist the devil*"; (James 4:7) it doesn't say chase him. But after many days, Paul had had it. He said, "Listen. You come out of her in the name of Jesus." The little girl got saved. It really got Paul in trouble. But I want to tell you, folks, that that traveling saleslady from Thyatira, whose heart God opened, and that little girl who was filled with a demon, whose heart Jesus cleansed—they all became a part of this church at Philippi. And it was a wonderful, wonderful thing that God did!

Yesterday, I was going to dinner—the Dixie Cafe, a good place to eat—with some friends, and a man met me. And he was clean-shaven, and I didn't recognize him. He said, "You don't remember me, do you?" And I said, "No, you'll have to give me your name." He said, "You prayed with me; you talked to me about Jesus." And I remembered who he was then. He said, "I've been clean now for a year and a half." He had had drugs in him, but had been clean for a year and a half. His countenance was so changed I hardly recognized him. He was the same man I had prayed with.

And the fear of the Lord Jesus had taken this girl in the same manner. In the same way, Jesus had saved her and redeemed her. These are the kinds of people that the Church is made out of.

3. The Philippian Jailer Gets Saved.

And now, look—continue. We're still in this same chapter, the sixteenth chapter. There's somebody else who gets saved. Lydia gets saved. A demon-possessed girl gets saved. And now a Philippian jailer is about to get saved. Look, if you will, in chapter 16, verses 25 and following: "*And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed.*" (Acts 16:25)

Now, where were they? I forgot to tell you they'd been thrown into prison because they cast a demon out of this little girl. And just like this bunch of gamblers down here in Mississippi and all over—many of them in Memphis and other places—they don't like you preaching against their art. They don't like you preaching against what they call it:

“gaming.” It’s not gaming; it’s gambling. And it’s the most foolish thing in the world. I saw a big billboard that said, “We make winners.” Good night! If they make winners, then they’re out of business. They’ve got to make losers to stay in business. Hey, folks, what are you thinking about? “We make winners.” No! They don’t make winners. Now I’m about to get sidetracked here. But, you know, here they’re profiteering off of somebody’s weakness, and these people are profiteering off this little demon-possessed girl. They didn’t like it, and they had Paul and Silas thrown into prison.

Paul and Silas are in prison now, and they’ve been beaten. And they’re in the stocks; they’re in the lowest prison with slimy, grimy, dirty, filthy rats and roaches or whatever down there, in the human refuse down there, at the bottom. And the Bible says, *“And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one’s bands were loosed. And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here. Then he”—the jailer—“called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat”—or “food”—“before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.”* (Acts 16:25–34)

This is an incredible thing. There’s a revival going on now in Philippi. They throw the revival leader, the evangelist, into the prison, thinking they’re going to stop the revival. They don’t stop the revival; they just change the location. I mean, the revival starts here in prison. It’s at midnight. Paul and Silas are singing and praising God with those prisoners listening. They’d heard cursing, but never praising; they had heard moaning, but never singing. And these men now at midnight, God’s men, are singing and praising God.

And God is so pleased. He’s listening. God calls an earthquake angel and says, “Go down there and shake that place.” “Jailhouse Rock” takes place right here. “Shake that place!” And then the earthquake angel shakes that place, and the stocks and the bonds fall away, and the prison doors swing open. The guard is thinking, “If these people escape, then they’re going to hold me responsible. First of all, they’re going to torture me; then, they’re going to kill me. I’ll just kill myself.” Paul says, “Hey, bud, don’t hurt yourself.”

Now, listen to this. He didn't say, "Some of us are here," but, "*we are all here.*" (Acts 16:28) Have you ever thought about that? Not a prisoner left. They were so enamored by what happened at that particular place that they all stayed there. And Paul here has got a new pulpit. He's preaching the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And the jailer gets saved, and all of his household gets saved. The church is growing and growing and growing.

Do you have an idea that there's something supernatural taking place here in this place? There's something supernatural, friend, when the Holy Spirit of God moves. God said to Paul, "Paul, no. Paul, you can't go here. Go here." So Paul says, "Okay, Lord. I'll go here." And then God just starts opening doors, and opening doors, and doing miracles and miracles and miracles, and Jesus is building His Church. Now, folks, that's what I want to see here in Memphis, Tennessee. That's what I want to see around the world. I want to see what Jesus Christ can do, for Jesus said, "*I will build my church.*" (Matthew 16:18)

And so here's a mighty intellect—the man had a triple Ph.D., or the equivalency—the Apostle Paul, fluent in many languages, world-travelled, a Jew of the highest order. He's there having fellowship with a traveling saleslady; he's there having fellowship with a former fortuneteller; and he's there having fellowship with a jailer and his family. What brought them together? The same thing that makes us one. This congregation, we've got laboring people; we've got teenagers; we have college professors who are Ph.D.'s; we have lawyers; we have homemakers; we have retirees; we have young; we have old; and we have various races and various backgrounds. Who is it that binds us together? What is His name? Jesus. Jesus. It is the fellowship in the gospel.

People don't understand this. They think we've just got a big crowd. No! We don't have a big crowd; we are a family—a family! You see, folks, this is the supernatural formation of the Church. When Jesus works, He turns the superficial to the supernatural.

II. The Sweet Fellowship of the Church

Now, here's the second thing I want you to notice: first of all, the supernatural formation of the Church; now, secondly, I want you to notice the sweet fellowship of the Church—the sweet fellowship of the family. Look, if you will, in verse 5—Philippians chapter 1, verse 5. Now, go back to our home base now—Philippians chapter 1. Leave Acts 16. Go back now to Philippians chapter 1 and look in verse 5. Paul says in verse 3 that, "I'm thanking God..."—now verse 5—"*for your fellowship in the gospel.*" (Philippians 1:5) Now he's talking not only about the formation of the Church; he's talking about the fellowship of the family.

What is *fellowship*? I've already told you. It's the Greek word *koinonia*, and it means

more than Kool-Aid and cookies. It means more, Brother Jimmy Williams, than going to a ballgame. It's actually a sharing; it is a partnership. Now I want to say again, you cannot have real fellowship unless you have something in common. That's the reason that many churches so easily fall apart: They don't have something in common. We as Christians have a common life: we've been born of the Spirit. We have a common Lord: His name is Jesus. And we have a common love: He loves us, and we love Him. And therefore we love one another.

Are you hungry for fellowship? Everybody is. Do you know what one of the deepest needs on this earth is? It is to love and to be loved, to have true oneness, and to have true fellowship. That's the reason the Bible never teaches a Lone Ranger Christianity. That's the reason the Bible has put the solitary in families on the human plane, and also why God has put us together as a Church, the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is called "*the whole family in heaven and earth.*" (Ephesians 3:15)

Now if you want a fellowship, then let me tell you three ways you can have fellowship. Are you ready? We're going to find them right here in the Word of God.

A. The Fellowship of Service

First of all, there's the fellowship of service. Look in verse 5. Do you see it? Look. He speaks here of the "*fellowship in the gospel*"— "*the fellowship of the gospel.*" (Philippians 1:5) Do you want to have some sweet fellowship? Find some servant of Jesus Christ, link up with that servant, and go out with that person to win souls. There's no sweeter fellowship than the fellowship of the gospel.

I've been out with soul winners. I'm thinking of a particular situation here that happened in the city of Memphis with a dear soul-winning friend of mine who's gone to heaven now. His name is Jim Moffatt—Jim Moffatt, one of the finest soul winners I've ever known. Jim and I were in a home and there was an old hardened sinner. And Jim had to take the babies and go outside and walk with the kids, and he had to take care of this distraction and that distraction. I'm there at the kitchen table with this old hardened sinner. And finally God broke through, and the man got gloriously saved. He started to blubber, and I ran into the bathroom to get some toilet paper to wipe his eyes with. And we just had a Holy Ghost time. I'm telling you, when Jim and I came out of that house, we just hugged each other and danced and leapt, and praised God. I was so close to Jim, and Jim so close to me.

Listen. Do you want to get close to somebody? I'll tell you—don't you say it's not true, because you're lying; you don't know what you're talking about: You go out and win somebody to Jesus Christ with somebody else, and see what that does to your fellowship. See how that binds you together in the Lord Jesus Christ. There is the fellowship of service. There's nothing like it, folks.

You know, I've used this illustration before. You go to a football game and you play football. Those of you who play football know what I'm talking about. You're down there in the trenches fighting. Boy, football is hard. I've often said, "Don't let anybody tell you football is fun. It *ain't* fun at all: it hurts! The only reason you do it is to show off to the girls. It *ain't* fun." Oh, it has a certain amount of fun; but I'm talking about the bruises, and the mouth full of cotton, and your innards hurting, and every bone aching. But you do it because of the sense of conquest. Well, up there in the stands, your dad and your buddy's dad are up there in the stands yelling, giving one another the elbow, talking about everything they know about the game. And there's the band up there playing against their band. And they're marching and strutting their stuff up on the field, and there's a battle of the bands. And then there's the crowd—their crowd and our crowd—and they're yelling back and forth and all of that. And then after the game is over, and your team has won, and the band buses load up, and they go past the other band buses, and "na-na-na-na-na-na," they're yelling at those who lost, and all of that. And the dads are out there: boy, they're hugging each other. And the moms, they don't know what's happening; but they're happy because their boy did something, and all of that. All of that is going on out there.

But I tell you, there are a couple of old guys down there in the locker rooms. Did you ever smell one of those locker rooms down there with the old cement floor? And your uniform is so wet—you go to pull your jersey off, and it's so wet you can't get it over your head, and you can't get it over those big old pads. And you take off that helmet and you throw it across the floor, and it bounces up against an old tin locker. And you're sitting there so tired that you can't unlace your shoes. And your old buddy says, "Rogers, we won, didn't we?" "Yeah, Hays, we won."

Friend, I want to tell you something. That's the kind of fellowship that none of those people in the band know anything about, and those people in the stands know nothing about. You come to church like this and people hear a sermon like that; but you take two old boys in this church; you go out there in the streets and win people to Jesus Christ; and they know something the rest of these folks don't know. Did you know that? I'm telling you, friend, that is the *koinonia*—that is the *koinonia* of service.

B. The Fellowship of the Spirit

But not only is there the fellowship of service; there's also the fellowship of the Spirit. Look, if you will, in chapter 2 now. Look in verse 1. He uses this word *fellowship* again. He says here, "*If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit,*"—not only fellowship of service, but a fellowship of the Spirit—"if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." (Philippians 2:1–2)

Now, what is the fellowship of the Spirit? Well, you want some more fellowship? Not only go out soul winning; but also, get a prayer partner. Pray with that person. You see, he's talking here about the fellowship of the Spirit: not where we're wired together by organization; not where we're rusted together by tradition; but where we're melded together by Holy Spirit of God. Here's the key: When you're in prayer, what are you doing? You're seeking God. And when you're seeking God, two people seeking God are always drawn together—two people seeking God together are always drawn together.

Now we have a piano on one side of the platform, and we have a piano on the other side of the platform. Those pianos ought to be in tune. And, Jim, I was listening this morning. They are. You'll be happy to know that. Those pianos ought to be in tune. Now I don't know a lot about tuning pianos; but I've read this, and I believe it to be true: that it is virtually impossible to tune one piano to another piano. But if you get a tuning fork and tune that piano to the tuning fork, and tune this piano to the tuning fork, do you know what happens? *Ipsa facto*, they're in tune with one another. Isn't that true? When you're in tune with Jesus, and I'm in tune with Jesus, then, friend, you're going to be in tune with me, and I'm going to be in tune with you. I mean, that's what happens when we pray: we're seeking God together.

C. The Fellowship of Suffering

There is the fellowship of service. There is the fellowship of the Spirit. I'll tell you another kind of fellowship: There is the fellowship of suffering. Go to chapter 3 now of Philippians and look, if you will now, in verse 10. Paul says, "*That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings.*" (Philippians 3:10) Again, two people who've won souls together, they're like bound together. Two people who've prayed together, they're bound together. I'll tell you something else: Two people who hurt together, they're just bound together.

Find somebody who's hurting and go hurt with them. Go to the hospital and pray for somebody. Go visit somebody who's sick. Come alongside somebody who's lost a loved one, and love that person, and show the love of Jesus Christ to that person. And, friend, there is an inseparable bond: it is a *koinonia*. You have something in common that is different from anything else in the world, and that's what makes the Church so wonderful.

That is the oneness that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. Many become one in Christ. Think of it again: the intellectual Apostle Paul; Lydia, the traveling saleslady; a former fortuneteller and a slave girl; and a hardened jailer. Think of the problems that would be solved. Militant feminism: what happened to Lydia will cure that. New Age occultism: what happened to this demon-possessed girl will cure that. The problem of crime: what happened to those prisoners and that jailer would cure that. That's the

power of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

III. The Sure Future of the Family

Now, here's the third and final thing—very quickly, I want you to see this. We're talking about the supernatural formation of the family. We're talking about the sweet fellowship of the family. Now, let's talk just a moment about the sure future of the family. And I love this. Go back to where we started and look in verse 6. He says here in Philippians chapter 1, and verse 6, *“Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”*

Do you know why we have such a wonderful future? I'll tell you why: because we have had a very wonderful start. Jesus began it, and Jesus is going to finish it. Have you ever started something you couldn't finish? I've started many things I couldn't finish. But Jesus never started anything He couldn't finish. He said, *“I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”* (Matthew 16:18) Paul, talking about the church at Philippi, said, *“Being confident of this very thing, he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it.”* (Philippians 1:6)

Now, folks, listen. We're all under construction, isn't that true? Look around—look around. We're not so hot! We don't even look so good. Only one out of three people is either handsome or beautiful. Look on either side. If it's not them, then it's you. See, you did good. It's worth coming here. All right now, folks, we are under construction: *“He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it.” I'm heaven-born; I'm heaven-bound; and all hell can't stop it! I'm predestined to glory!*

Why do some people start and fall away? Because they did it themselves. They started it, and they couldn't finish it. I've started a lot of things I couldn't finish. But, friend, when you have that born-again experience; when you've been born from heaven, heaven-born, you're going to be heaven-bound, and all hell can't stop it, because the Holy Spirit is the Convictor. Who convicted you of your sins? Did you just decide, “Oh, I'm just a sinner”? Oh, actually, you might have said, “I've done bad”; but Holy Spirit conviction is something else. He's the Convictor. Not only is He the Convictor; He's also the Converter. Remember what we read about Lydia, whose heart God opened? He's the Converter. He's the Convictor, He's the Converter, and He is the Completer. He's the One who began it, and He's the One who will see it all the way through. That's the supernatural formation of the Church.

Now I hear people say today, “The Church is on its way out.” They're right—they are right! It's been called out of the world. It's been sent out into the world. And soon Jesus is going to take it out of the world. It's on its way out, friend. And soon and very soon, Jesus is coming. We're on our way out. We're on our way out. And a lot of us have an idea that that time is getting very, very near when Jesus is going to call His bride home.

Conclusion

I'm so glad that I'm a part of the family of God. I'm sick and tired of these people bad-mouthing the church and talking about all the hypocrites in the church. Friend, you couldn't be a pastor without knowing the hypocrites in the church. Some people say, "Pastor Rogers, did you know there are hypocrites in the church?" Oh no, really? Friend, one of the twelve apostles was a hypocrite. I'm going to tell you something, folks: *The old ship of Zion is not going to sink just because there are a few bad sailors on board.*

Joyce and I bought some eggs one time: one of them was a hypocrite. One out of twelve *ain't* bad. One of the twelve apostles was a hypocrite. Some lawyers are shysters. Some doctors are quacks. And some money is counterfeit. You still go to lawyers. You still go to doctors. And you still have not thrown away your money—no! Why? Because it is the hypocrite that shows the validity of the real. Men don't counterfeit gum wrappers; they counterfeit fifty-dollar bills. And every counterfeit Christian only speaks of the worthwhileness, the validity, and the realness of the genuine.

So I'm proud to be a part of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. I'm grateful to be a member of this church. And I'm going to tell you that God's plan for every person, God's desire, is, number one, that you be saved; and, number two, that you be a member of a local, New Testament, Bible-preaching, Christ-honoring church. If not this one, then one somewhere, so that you can sing, "I'm so glad I'm a part of the family of God."

What a Fellowship!

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: April 24, 1983

Main Scripture Text: Philippians 1:1–7

“For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now.”

PHILIPPIANS 1:5

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Conclusion

Introduction

I want you to turn to Philippians the first chapter, and I want to ask you a question. See if you know the answer. What do these people have in common: a philosopher, a travelling saleslady, a former fortuneteller, and a prison guard? Anybody know? They're all members of the church at Philippi; they were all members of that church in Philippi that we're going to study tonight. And they were bonded together by the Holy Spirit. They had experienced the grace of God; and though they had come from vastly divergent backgrounds, they were one in the Lord Jesus Christ. I tell you, there's nothing like a church—a true New Testament church. The grandest organization that this world knows anything about is the church of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And friend, you are blessed—you are blessed—to be a part of a New Testament church. What a fellowship! What a joy divine!

Now, let's read together: *“Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: Grace be*

unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, Always in every prayer of mine for you all...—it's good to know he was a Southern Baptist—*“for you all making request with joy, For your fellowship in the gospel...”*—now there's our word. What a fellowship!—*“For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now. Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”* (Philippians 1:1–6)

Now there are three truths that just jump off of the page at me right here as I look at this scripture that I've just read to you as we're talking about our fellowship and thinking about the fellowship we're going to have in just a few moments around the Lord's Table.

I. The Formation of the Church

The very first thing I want you to notice is the formation of the church. Now, notice in verse 1 he talks about *“all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi.”* (Philippians 1:1) Now we're not going to be able to see it here in Philippians 1, so I want you to go to Acts 16. I want you to see how all the saints got into the church. Just kind of put a bookmark there and let's go to Acts 16, because in Acts 16 we see the formation of this church at Philippi. And it is indeed an interesting story what the Lord did. And you're going to find out that this church was not built by the hands of men—the wit, the wisdom of the cunning craft of man—but it was a supernatural work of God. And so must this church be. All is vain unless the Spirit of the Holy One comes down.

Now, let's begin reading here and see how the Lord, the Holy Spirit, built the church at Philippi, because here's the record in Acts 16.

A. The Restraint of the Spirit

Now, the very first thing I want you to see is what I want to call the restraint of the Spirit. Look, if you will, in verses 6 and 7, and the Bible says, *“Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, after they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not.”* (Acts 16:6–7) Now all that says is this—well, it says more than this, but at least it says this: that they started to go in a certain direction and the Holy Spirit said, “Nope, can't go that way.” I mean, they assayed to go—they started to go, they desired to go, they planned to go—but the Holy Spirit said *no*.

Now that tells me something very clearly and plainly: We do not choose the place of our service; the Holy Spirit must choose for us. One country preacher was talking about what was wrong with the modern-day ministry, and he said, “Too many has went when they ain't been sent.” And he's right: they have not been following the leadership of the

Spirit of God.

Now we say, *“The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD”* (Psalm 37:23)—and that is true. But I want to tell you something else: The stops of a good man are ordered by the Lord also. And a good man knows how to step, and he knows how to stop. And Paul, when he was stepping, and God said stop, Paul stopped. You know, the problem with a lot of people is they cannot—they cannot—have in their lives the restraint of the Spirit, and therefore God cannot use them.

I've told you before, when you teach a child to drive, what's the very first thing you show him? You show him not the accelerator; you show him the brakes. And if he doesn't pay any attention to the brakes, forget the accelerator, amen? Now, listen. God is not going to release His power to you until He is able to control you enough. If the Lord says, “Don't go,” you won't go. When you understand where the brakes are, then God's going to teach you where the accelerator is. Some Christians have a high-powered engine, but they have faulty brakes. And I want to tell you, the highways of Christendom are cluttered with a lot of wrecks that these people have caused.

You know what a fanatic is? A fanatic is somebody who, having lost sight of his goal, doubles his speed. There are a lot of folks like that around. But, friend, *God's “no” is just as important as God's “go.”* And so here's the way the church at Philippi got started: it was supernatural all the way. They started to go one place, and God said, “No, don't go in that direction.”

B. The Release of the Spirit

Now followed by the restraint of the Spirit was the release of the Spirit. Continue to read here and look, if you will, in verse 9: *“And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately”—*I like that word *immediately*—*“we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them. Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis; and from thence to Philippi...”*—now that's where we are—*“thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days.”* (Acts 16:9–12)

Now, how did he get there? I mean, how did Paul get to Philippi? Just as plain as the nose on your face, God the Holy Spirit led him. Here was a man who was close enough to God; here was a man walking with God enough, that he could hear God saying, “No,” and then he could hear God saying, “Go.” He could find the restraint of the Spirit, and therefore he could find the release of the Spirit. You see, God didn't let him do what he wanted to do at first; but God had something in mind. Now, learn this truth—learn this

truth: *If God doesn't give you what you want, He'll give you something better.* That's the kind of God we serve.

We used to have a preacher down in Florida, who became the editor of *The Florida Baptist Witness*, the Florida Baptist paper. One time he was speaking—he was a pastor of a college-town church, as I understand the story—and he was speaking in that college where he himself was an alumnus. And he was speaking in that college, and his wife was there. And many of the members of his church were there. And, of course, it was on the college campus of which he was an alumnus. And he said this: “God never did give me anything I wanted.” He was tongue-tied, but I’m not going to try to mimic that. But he said, “God never did give me anything I wanted.” He said, “God didn’t let me ever go to the school I wanted to go to.” I mean, that was his school he was preaching to. And he said, “God never let me pastor the church I wanted to pastor”—and his people were out there. And then, to cap it all off, he said, “God never let me marry the woman I wanted to marry”—and his wife was sitting out there. Boy, I mean, you could hear the grass growing outside. But then, with a big smile, he said, “But God always gave me something better than I wanted.” Amen? God let him go to a better school than he wanted to go to. And God let him pastor a better church than he wanted to pastor. And God let him marry a better woman than he wanted to marry.

You see, Paul thought he wanted to go in this place. He assayed to go to Bithynia, but the Spirit said, “No, no, I’ve got something better for you.” And the Lord, in His mind, in His heart, had this church at Philippi. And I’m so gloriously glad that Paul was able to hear the leadership of the Spirit, because this church in Philippi was a key church that opened all Europe to the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And Paul responded immediately. Remember what we preached this morning about procrastination? It’s a form of disobedience; it’s sin: *“To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is”*—not procrastination—*“to him it is sin.”* (James 4:17) That’s just another word for it. And so here is Paul following the Lord.

C. The Results of the Spirit

Now we’ve seen the restraint of the Spirit. We have seen the release of the Spirit. Now we’re going to see the results of the Spirit, because when a man, a woman, a preacher, a boy, a girl, or anybody starts walking in the stream of the Spirit, when God moves in and when God takes over, you’re going to see what God can do. And, friend, what God can do is something.

Now, let’s see. Let’s continue to read now. Look, if you will, in verse 13, and see what happens. All right, they got to this place, and they started to abide there certain days, verse 12 tells us. (Acts 16:12) *“And on the sabbath”—*that is, “on Saturday”—*“we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither. And a certain woman named*

Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.” (Acts 16:13–15) Isn’t that a beautiful story? I mean, here they’re just guided by the Holy Spirit. There they are down by the riverside. They find a prayer meeting down there, down by the riverside, and people are just fellowshiping, worshipping the Lord. And there’s a traveling saleslady from Thyatira. And it’s so wonderful. The Bible says that God opened her heart—God opened her heart. (Acts 16:14)

You see, listen. I believe this: that soul winning will take on a new dimension when you and I learn to obey the Holy Spirit of God, when we can hear Him saying, “No” and when we can hear Him saying, “Go.” It’s mystical. You’d better believe it. But I believe that there are people all over this city tomorrow, that if I’ll get in the stream of the Spirit, God will open their hearts—I mean, when I go to the one that God wants me to go to. I mean, you cannot read this without seeing obviously the hidden hand of God, as God, wanting to start a work here at Philippi; and there were saints at Philippi, and God the Holy Spirit led—do you think that was happenstance? No, God was there, and God opened her heart. And when God opened her heart, God also opened her home and opened her purse.

And here was a place. These missionaries, they needed a base of operation. They said, “You come on and…” And she said, “Come on over.” She was a well-to-do lady, evidently. I mean, people didn’t travel long distances in that day unless they were big shots or semi-big shots. And she was the Mary Crowley of her day. And here’s this traveling saleslady, and God just simply used her to become a part of this church.

But now not only that—not only was Lydia saved; a demon-possessed girl was liberated from the power of the devil. Continue to read now. We stopped reading here in verse 15; let’s begin reading in verse 16: *“And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel”—*boys and girls, that means “a young girl”—*“possessed with a spirit of divination met us,”*—that is, she was a fortuneteller. That’s what the *“spirit of divination”* is. And she was *“possessed with a spirit of divination.”* Now a lot of these so-called fortunetellers, palm readers and all that, they’re just as fake as a three-dollar bill. But some of them are demon-possessed—some of them are demon-possessed. And they do what they do in the power of the devil. Now here was one who was demon-possessed. The Bible says that she had a spirit of divination. She was possessed with the devil—*“which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying:”—*that is, by fortunetelling—*“the same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation.”* That sounds

pretty good, doesn't it? I mean, my goodness, going around saying, "Hey, listen to these guys. They're servants of the most high God. They're telling people how to be saved." *"And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit,"*—and, by the way, Paul knew that he wasn't wrestling with flesh and blood. Would to God that we could learn that! He didn't say to the girl; he said to the spirit—*"I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour."* (Acts 16:16–18)

Now this girl was exorcized, or delivered, by the power of Almighty God. Now what had happened was this: it was obviously an attack of the devil. Don't think for one moment just because you're moving in the stream of the Spirit and just because the Spirit says, "Go," that the devil is going to lie down and play dead. Of course not! And here the devil sees this embryonic church getting started here in Philippi; and so the devil rises up to stop it. Now he's very clever—he is very clever. Rather than having someone stand up and say, "These men are of the devil," he has a devil to stand up and say, "These men are of God"—*"more subtil than any beast of the field."* (Genesis 3:1) Now Paul did not want the patronage of hell. He did not want his ministry associated with fortunetelling. You see how the devil, if the devil can't beat us, friend, he'll join us. And he'll do more damage on the inside than he'll ever do on the outside. It's one thing to have the ship in the water; it's another thing to have the water in the ship. And Paul was discerning enough. He didn't want the patronage of hell. And so Paul came against this demon in the power of Jesus Christ: the point being that the same God that opened the heart of Lydia was the same God that repulsed the power of the devil.

And, friend, I want to tell you, when we're moving in the stream of the Spirit, iron gates will yield, and there will be miracle after miracle as our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is gaining the victory. When there is the restraint of the Spirit, and when there is the release of the Spirit, there will be the results of the Spirit. And what we're seeing here, unmistakably, beyond the shadow of any doubt or peradventure, is what God is doing. This is not what Paul is doing; this is what God is doing.

Don't you long to see that here? I do. Man, I want something to happen in our church that can't be explained by Bob Sorrell, Adrian Rogers, or Tommy Lane, or Jim Whitmire, or Mike Foster! I want something that cannot be explained by this bunch of deacons. I want something that cannot be explained by personality and propaganda and paraphernalia and promotion, and all of the rest of it. I want something, when a man sees it, when a man reads about it, when a man knows about it, he says, "This is God!"—amen?—"This is God! I can't explain it any other way." Now, what is there about us that is inexplicable, that the devil or somebody else, Madison Avenue, could not repeat? That's what I want to see.

Let's continue to read. Look, if you will, in Acts 16:25, because the whole thing just

keeps on going. Now Paul and Silas—and I'm going to shorten the story a little bit—Paul and Silas, because they had cured and healed and exorcised this demon-possessed girl, were cast into prison. They're jailbirds now, and in prison. They're not complaining. They're not carping. They're not criticizing God. They're just rejoicing. They are praising God that they're *"counted worthy to suffer shame for his name."* (Acts 5:41) And so, look, if you will, in verse 25: *"And at midnight"—that's in the jail—"Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled."* Evidently he figured, "They'll torture me and kill me. I'll just get it over with quickly. I've let these prisoners go." *"But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here."* (Acts 16:25–28)

Now I can understand Paul and Silas not jumping jail; but what about the rest of the prisoners? Why did the rest of them stay? Well, I'll tell you what: you just kind of have to read between the lines a little bit. But I just believe that they got saved. You know what they tried to do? These people tried to stop the revival meeting. All they did was change the location, amen? I mean, it went from the streets to the prison, and there Paul said, "Don't get excited. Don't get hot and bothered. We're all here. These prisoners are here. We're all staying right here. Nobody's excited. We're not trying to escape. God's in control of this whole thing." As Paul and Silas are just praising the Lord and blessing God and glorifying God, God is looking over the battlements of heaven, smiling. God sends His earthquake, and He says, "Go down there and shake that place." And that was a jailhouse rock.

And then, this jailer, he is so impressed—I mean, he is so impressed! Here is God doing something. He can't explain it. You know what he asked? *"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"* They gave him that great verse in Acts 16:31: *"And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."* (Acts 16:30–31) So he gets saved, and his household gets saved. It doesn't mean they're going to be saved because the jailer believed, but if they'll believe, they'll be saved: "You believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, you'll be saved. Your house believes, they'll be saved." Whoever believes: *"for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."* (Romans 10:13) Isn't it just amazing how the Lord is bringing this church together?

So I ask you a question: What does a philosopher like Paul, and a traveling saleslady, and a former fortuneteller, and a hardened jailer have in common? Jesus! Jesus! The grace of God! And look around you. Aren't we a different bunch here tonight? Some of them are kind of funny-looking, aren't they? Now, be honest. And

there are some folk from different backgrounds than you are from, and different socioeconomic backgrounds, and status, and ideas, and philosophies; and probably all of us would agree to disagree on a lot of subjects. There's one thing we're sold on—and that's Jesus Christ. One thing we're one in—and that is the grace of God.

Now, how did this happen? The grace of God did it. The formation of the church, it was supernatural. Friend, there are only two kinds of churches: the supernatural and the superficial. And anything that's not the grace of God is superficial. Anything that is the grace of God is supernatural. Jesus said, *"I will build my church."* (Matthew 16:18)

II. The Fellowship of the Church

Now, the second thing I want you to notice: I want you to notice not only the formation of this church—go right back, if you will, to Philippians 1—but I want you to notice the fellowship of this church. Notice what Paul says here in verse 3: *"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,"*—this was a church that made his heart sing with joy—*"always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now."* (Philippians 1:3–5) Now this word that is translated in our English King James Version of the Bible "fellowship" is a Greek word, *koinonia*. Have you ever heard that word before? *Koinonia*: it's a very special word for "fellowship," and it literally means "sharing"; it literally means "partnership." Now what he is saying is, "I thank my God for your partnership in the gospel." Now that's what real fellowship is. It is partnership, fellowship—partnership! Somebody said that *fellowship* is "two fellows in the same ship." That's not a bad definition.

One time when I was down in Florida, I stayed in the home of a very wealthy man. He had a chain of dime stores and just made a potful of money, and he had a lovely home on the waterfront. And, you know, I like that. I tell you, if I never get to heaven, I hope to go as far as a waterfront lot. A he had a beautiful home there on the waterfront, and he had a boat. He said, "Adrian, would you like to go out in this boat?" I said, "Sure, Mr. Emory." And so we went out in this boat. He had this little cruiser, you know, a little boat, and we went out there. And we were puttering around, just talking and so forth, and the engine stopped. And we were out there. Now he was an old man. At that time, I was a young buck. And I was as poor as was Joe Turkey, and he was rich as Midas. It didn't make any difference: we were both in the same boat. And it's kind of funny to me, because when the engine didn't run, all his money couldn't start it.

And so we tied our shirts to the oar, you know, and waved, trying to get somebody's attention. And here we were marooned out there. And it was so funny, because we were trying to get people's attention on the shore, and we were both yelling. And he was an older man. He was yelling, "Help!" And I said, "Help!" And we were yelling and waving our hands. And finally somebody came out there and got us. But, you know, we

had a barrelful of fun that day. And it was our predicament together: two fellows in the same boat. And it wasn't really the boat. And we were so different: he, an old man; I, a young man; he, a rich man; I, a poor man. But I tell you, we were both in the same predicament together, and we just had a lot of fun. I mean, when it was all over, we laughed about it and talked about it. And I just believe we were closer after that experience than we ever would have been before.

Now, you see, listen. This word *fellowship*, this word *koinonia*, means again "sharing." You see, you cannot—listen to me—you cannot have this kind of fellowship unless you have something in common. Now, what did these people at Philippi have when Paul was talking about their fellowship in the gospel? Let me tell you what they had: They had a common life. They had a common Lord. They had a common love.

Now that's what will bring this church into the sweetest fellowship it can ever know: that we share a life. The same Holy Spirit that is in you is in me: a common life. And a common Lord: you may be so far different than I in many ways, but don't you agree that Jesus is Lord? Don't you agree that Jesus is Lord? Doesn't that sound good? I mean, all of us: Jesus is Lord! And, friend, because of that life, and that Lord, we have a common love. I love you, and you love me, and you love those round about. That's the fellowship of the gospel. How wonderful it is!

Now, let me tell you how it really works out. Let's just get it down into the nitty-gritty.

A. A Fellowship of Service

First of all, there's a fellowship of service. Look as he says, "*Being confident of this very thing*"—verse 6—"*that he which hath begun a good work in you.*" (Philippians 1:6) You see, these people were working together, and the One who had begun that work was the Holy Spirit. But they were serving the Lord together. Now fellowship is not just huddling around some table reading the minutes of the last meeting and having Kool-Aid and cookies. Fellowship—there is a fellowship of service.

Let me give you a clue here. You want to have some friends, somebody you really know, somebody that you have *koinonia* with? Let me tell you what to do. And every one of you who's ever done this will say, "Amen—Adrian Rogers, you've told the truth." Two of you get together, go out together, and win a third person to Jesus Christ, and see if the two of you from there on are not just that close the rest of your life. Say *amen* those of you who've done it. Isn't that true? And if you don't say, "It's true," you've never done it. You let two men, two women, two anybodies, go out serving the Lord together, bring a soul to Jesus Christ, do it together; and, friend, I'll tell you, you'll be one in the bond of love like you've never been before. It's having something in common—that is, winning somebody to Jesus.

B. A Fellowship of Supplication

But not only is there a *koinonia* of service; there's a *koinonia* of supplication. Look what Paul says here in verse 3: *"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you"*—he's talking about prayer—*"always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy."* (Philippians 1:3–4) And look in verse 7: *"Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart."* (Philippians 1:7) Friend, when you begin to pray for somebody—or, better yet, when you pray together with somebody—that's fellowship.

Now if you're just a Sunday-morning benchwarmer—I mean, if you just come here and listen to Adrian Rogers preach and then you go home—you don't know anything about the fellowship of Bellevue Baptist Church. No. Find some people in this church, and get down on your knees with them, and pray with them, and seek the face of Jesus with them. Listen. Two people who are getting in tune with God on their knees will find themselves in tune with one another when they get up. I'll tell you, just as certain as I'm standing in this place, you cannot pray with a person without loving them. And if there's somebody you want to get close to, there's no way like just saying, "Hey, man, let's pray together." And when you get down, and the two of you get right with God, you're going to get up right with one another just as surely as night follows day: it cannot fail.

C. A Fellowship of Suffering

There is a fellowship of service. There is a fellowship of supplication. I'm going to tell you something else: There is a fellowship of suffering. Look, if you will, in verse 7: *"Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye are"*—here's that word again, *sharers*—*"partakers of my grace."* (Philippians 1:7) Now they said, "Paul, when you hurt, we hurt. When you're in prison, we're in prison. We're in this thing together." There's a lot of suffering going on today. You want to know what real fellowship is? Find somebody that hurts, and hurt with them. And I'll tell you, when you suffer with somebody, when you know the meaning of compassion, when you share somebody's hurt and somebody's problem, two people who suffer together are never quite the same thereafter. There is a bond of love. There's a fellowship.

Now that, dear friend, is the kind of fellowship that I want Bellevue Baptist Church to have, and I believe we are having. This is the fellowship of the church: a fellowship of service; a fellowship of supplication; a fellowship of suffering. That's what they knew there at Philippi. Now the marvel of the New Testament church is this: that these kinds of people from all of the different backgrounds could become one in the Lord Jesus Christ; the intellectual Apostle Paul; Lydia, the traveling saleslady; this fortunetelling girl; the hardened jailer, were fused together to the sweetest fellowship this side of heaven

in this thing called the church of Jesus Christ.

III. The Future of the Church

Now, the last thing, and then we're going to have our Lord's Supper together. I want you to think not only of the formation of this church, and the fellowship of this church; but I want you to think about the future of this church. Here's the exciting part. Look again in verse 6. Paul says, "*Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.*" (Philippians 1:6) He's talking there about the future of the church, and what he's saying is, "What God starts, God will finish," amen?

You see, listen. Do you know why Paul was so confident of that? Man, Paul knew that God had begun it. I mean, he started here, and God said, "No, don't do that; do this." He saw God open Lydia's heart. He saw God open Lydia's home. He saw God cast the demon out of that demon-possessed girl. He saw God shake that jail. He saw God bring that jailer and his family. I mean, Paul saw God do it. And so he said, "Listen. We didn't think this up. This is a work of God. And whatever God starts, God finishes."

Don't you see how important it is that we have the mind of God therefore in what we do—I mean, that we don't just ask God to rubberstamp our plans? Because "*being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.*" Now he's talking primarily about the good work in them, which was their salvation.

Do you know what the Holy Spirit is, concerning your salvation? He's the One who did it. Let me tell you what He was.

A. The Holy Spirit Is the Convictor

First of all, He was the convictor. I can never convict you of sin. Boy, when I give an invitation, I pray, "O God, Holy Spirit of God, do it." Friend, I wouldn't want to talk you into being a Christian—I mean, if that's what it is—because anything I can talk you into, somebody else can talk you out of. The Holy Spirit must convict you. Jesus said, "*When he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.*" (John 16:8)

B. The Holy Spirit Is the Converter

But not only is He the convictor; He's also the converter. You are born again of the Spirit.

C. The Holy Spirit Is the Completer

Now the One who is the convictor, and the One who is the converter, is also the completer: "*He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it.*" You know, whether

a thing ever gets finished or not, a lot of it depends on who starts it, right? Now if we start it, it may not get finished. But if our Lord is in it, what God starts, God finishes. *“Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it.”* (Philippians 1:6) We see people who join a church and fall away. You know why? They had a do-it-yourself religion. They didn’t cast themselves upon Jesus Christ. They did not have a supernatural encounter with God. *“They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.”* (1 John 2:19) That’s what John said in 1 John. We around here like that little phrase: “The faith that fizzles before the finish had a flaw from the first.” That is, they never really were born again. But when a man meets Christ, he has a supernatural encounter with God. *“He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it.”*

Conclusion

Now I want to ask you a question: Don’t you agree that the grandest organization this world knows anything about is the church of Jesus Christ? Because of the formation of the church—He begins it; because of the fellowship of the church; and because of the future of the church, I, for one, am so glad I’m a part of the family of God. Now when we take the Lord’s Supper tonight, what we’re doing as we break bread together, and as we feed on this bread and drink this cup, all we’re doing is demonstrating our fellowship with Him and our fellowship with one another.

God's Forever Family

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: May 20, 1990

Main Scripture Text: Philippians 1:1–7; 2:1; 3:10

“Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

PHILIPPIANS 1:6

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Introduction

You know, the early church lived in the anticipation of the soon coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ—not only the soon coming, but also the imminent coming; that means the any-moment coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Take God's Word and open it up to the book of Philippians. Do you get Philippians and Galatians and Ephesians and Colossians all mixed up and don't know which is which? General Electric Power Company, okay? Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, all right? That will help you.

All right now, find the book of Philippians chapter 1, and when you get it open, just look up here: I want to ask you a question. What would you say that these people have in common: a Jewish philosopher who hates Christ and the very mention of Christ; a New Ager, who has been deep into the occult; a prison guard, whose heart is filled with malignity and hate against all humankind; and let's see who else we'll mix in—a feminist, who is a perhaps is a widow, perhaps a divorcee, perhaps never married, who has her own business? I'd say that's a pretty broad spectrum of people, wouldn't you? What would you say all of those people had in common? I'll tell you what they all had in

common: they were all members of the church at Philippi. I'm going to show you. The Jewish philosopher who got saved was the Apostle Paul. And the little New Ager was a demon-possessed girl who was saved by the gospel of Christ. The jailer, the prison guard, was the jailer who was saved in a Philippian revival. And the businesswoman was a woman named Lydia from Thyatira who had a business selling purple dye.

The incredible thing is that the grace of God took people from this divergent background and made them one in the Lord Jesus Christ. That's what a church is, dear friend. A church is a family of people who have come from all kinds of backgrounds, all kinds of beliefs, all kinds of ideas and ideals, and have found a unity in the family of God. And that's what makes Bellevue Baptist Church the church it is, dear friend. The common denominator in our church is Jesus—Jesus! Because we have one Lord, we have one life. And because we have one Lord, and one life, we have one love: the Lord Jesus Christ. And we are the family of God.

Now I want you to think about "God's Forever Family," because, you see, a church is but an extended family. There are so many people who don't have families. The Apostle Paul really didn't have a family. He had a wife at one time; but whatever happened? Did she die? I don't know. But the Apostle Paul, scholars tell us, at one time had been a married man. I don't know about Lydia, the seller of purple, whether she was divorced, widowed, or never married. But I know that she needed a family. I think about that little demon-possessed girl that we're going to read about who was delivered, a little fortune-telling girl. She had become the slave, the dirty plaything, of dirtier men. She needed a family. That old brutal jailer, he needed a family. You know, there are lots of folks who need a family. All over our city—and your city, if you're listening by television—there are lonely people. And do you know what a church is? It's an extended family. This is our family for many other people who don't have a family.

You see, I'm bringing a series of messages on the family, and I said to myself, "Well, if I'm bringing a series of messages on the family, and then we come to dedicate our facilities, how can I make that work?" And the Lord said, "Adrian, that's what it's all about—that's what it's all about." Not only is the church a place to help people to build their family at home, but the church itself is a family for many other people who don't have the joy and the privilege of having a home family like some do.

Now I want you to look at this church in Philippi. I want it to be the model; I want it to be the pattern; and I want it to be the encouragement for us here at Bellevue.

I. The Supernatural Formation of God's Forever Family

First of all, I want you to see how this church got started. I want you to see what I'm going to call the formation of God's forever family—the formation of it. Look, if you will, in chapter 1, verse 1: *"Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints*

in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi" (Philippians 1:1)—all the saints in Christ at Philippi.

Now, how did these saints get to be saints? And may I tell you *there are only two categories of people in the world: the saints and the ain'ts*. Now you're one or the other. The saints are those that are saved. How did they get to be saints? Well, just put your bookmark there in Philippians chapter 1, and let's go back to Acts chapter 16 and see the founding of this church. It's so wonderful, and what lessons there are for us here! I want you to see now we're talking about the supernatural formation of the church. The only thing we have any right to ask anybody to believe about Bellevue Baptist church is that which is supernatural.

A. **The Restraint of the Holy Spirit**

The people of the world can build buildings. The people of the world can have organizations. There needs to be a dimension about this church that cannot be explained by program, personality, propaganda, or planning, right? Say *amen*. If it's not supernatural, it will be superficial.

Now I want you to see how this church at Philippi had a supernatural dimension as it got started. And then I want to make the application our church. Now, look at it very carefully here in Acts chapter 16, and I begin to read in verse 6. Now this is talking about God's missionary, Paul, and his sidekick, Silas. The Bible says, "*Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia,*"—watch it—"and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, after they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not." (Acts 16:6–7) The Holy Spirit said, "You can't go that way. You are forbidden to go this way."

Now I have written down in my notebook "the restraint of the Spirit." Here are men. They're wanting to serve the Lord. Their motive is right: to preach the gospel of Jesus. They're going into Asia; they're going into Bithynia, so they think. The Holy Spirit says, "No, I don't want you to go that way." That, my dear friend, is the restraint of the Spirit.

Have you ever taught a child how to drive? How many of you have ever tried to teach somebody to drive a car? What's the first thing you show them: the accelerator or the brake? You show them the brake. And if they said, "I'm not interested in the brake," you said, "Just give me the keys back," isn't that right? Of course!

You see, dear friend, *before God will ever show you the accelerator, He must always show you the brake. If you're not interested in the restraint of the Spirit, you'll never know the release of the Spirit.*

Now here was Paul. Listen. *The path of life is strewn with the wrecks of people who have high-powered engines and faulty brakes. They don't know how to listen to God's no. God's no is as important as God's go.* Somebody said, "A fanatic is somebody who, having lost sight of his goal, increases his speed." Do you know the restraint of the Spirit? Can God say *no* to you, and you listen? Well, dear friend, you can't choose the

place of your service.

God gave us the restraint of the Spirit when we built these buildings. Brother Sorrell, you know, and those of you on the building committee know, that we moved heaven and earth trying to build downtown. We got plans. We hired planners from out of town—from Dallas, and other places. We got real estate people. We tried to buy property to expand. Every place we went, we hit just a brick wall: “Can’t do it”—“Can’t do it”—“Can’t do it.” “Well,” we said, “God, we know that you want us to have a bigger house of worship. You don’t want us to stop growing. You want us to continue to reach people.” But the Holy Spirit just kept saying *no*. That, my dear friend, was the hand of God. We finally had to admit that God wasn’t against us; God was for us. The reason that God didn’t want us downtown is very simple: He wanted us right here. Say *amen*. He wanted us right here.

B. The Release of the Spirit

Now, watch this. First of all, there was the restraint of the Spirit. And then, my dear friend, there was the release of the Spirit. Look, if you will, in chapter 16, verse 9, now: *“And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately...”*—“Oh, be swift, my soul, to answer Him! Be jubilant, my feet!”—*“immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.”* (Acts 16:9–10) Now, first of all, God said, “No”; and then, God said, “Go”—the restraint of the Spirit; and then, the release of the Spirit.

I have told you before—not that I think I had a vision in the classic sense of the word like the Apostle Paul did—but I was down in Orlando, Florida. Now I was with Bill Mills and Al Childress and Bob Sorrell. We had gone down to look at some church buildings. And I’m a sound sleeper. But on that particular night, I tossed and turned, and it seemed like I didn’t sleep an hour out of the seven or eight hours that I was supposed to sleep. I just couldn’t sleep. God kept saying to me, “Adrian, you’re trying to do the wrong thing. You’re trying to build in the wrong place. What about, Adrian, going out on the I-40 corridor?” The next morning, I told those men, “Gentlemen, I want to ask you a question. Please don’t think I’m crazy, but just hear me. What do you think about the possibility of our moving everything out on the I-40 corridor?” And those men immediately picked up on that thing. We began to talk to others and pray about it. And the result, my dear friend, is not only the restraint of the Spirit, but the result is the release of the Spirit.

And, dear friend, we saw things happen in a direct reverse proportion to the difficulty we were having trying to do that to the wide-open door that God gave us here. And everything just seemed to gel, just like that. And when we presented it to you as a

congregation, the very first thing, you looked at us and you said, “Oh no!” But the more we explained, you began to say, “Mmm hmm.” And before it was over, you were on your feet, saying, “Praise the Lord! God is in it!” Only God could do that. I don’t believe there has been a church that has ever moved with the Spirit of unanimity that this church has moved with—certainly, not one this size. There may be, and I hope there have been many; but I don’t know of any. Never has there been a more cohesive, loving, fellowship doing so much together with so many. And I believe it is the hand of God that has been upon us.

There used to be an old preacher down in Florida. He was a great man of God. His name was Ed Solomon. And he had the wisdom of Solomon. Someone wrote a book about him called *The Wisdom of Solomon*. He was a great preacher and a great man. He always had something funny to say. One day he was preaching at his college, in convocation there on the college campus. And his wife was out there. And he stood up and he said, “You know, God never did give me anything I ever wanted.” Well, right away, that sounded kind of strange, because here’s a man that served God all of his life and had a fruitful ministry, to say such a thing. He said, “God never did give me anything I wanted.” He said, “God didn’t let me go to the college I wanted to go to.” Well, that was his *alma mater* that he was speaking at. People looked around. He said, “God never let me pastor the church I wanted to pastor.” A lot of his church members were out there.

And then the *coup-de-grâce*: he said, “God didn’t even let me marry the woman I wanted to marry.” There was his wife sitting right out there. I mean, you talk about a guy who was sinking deeper and deeper! And then he gave a big smile, and he said, “God never did give me anything I ever wanted; but He always gave me something better than I ever wanted.” Isn’t that beautiful?

Oh, my dear friend, listen. God didn’t give us what we wanted. God gave us something better than we wanted. And when we were trying to build downtown, we never could even dream that God would give us something so wonderful. Paul assayed to go in Bithynia, and into Asia; but the Holy Spirit said, “I want you to go over to Greece; I want you to go over to Macedonia.” (Acts 16:7–10) And God opened up all Europe for the preaching of the gospel, because God was supernaturally building His Church.

C. **The Results of the Spirit**

There was the restraint of the Spirit. There was the release of the Spirit. And then, my dear friend, there were the results of the Spirit. You read the last part of Acts chapter 16—and I’m spending too much time, so I’m just going to hurry through this so I can get the message finished—but you’ll find there in that story, when they got there, they went down to the riverside, and there was Lydia, that traveling saleslady from Thyatira, the

seller of purple. And she'd come down there to a prayer meeting. God touched her heart. She said, "Paul, you all come over to my house. We'll have a prayer meeting there. You can start your Bible studies there." And that was the beginning of that church. And the Bible says that God opened her heart. Soul winning takes on a new dimension when we know the restraint and the release of the Spirit. God opened her heart.

And then there was a little demon-possessed girl. You read it in that sixteenth chapter of Acts. She was following Paul around there in the city of Philippi, and she was saying, "*These men are the servants of the most high God.*" (Acts 16:17) Now she was in the New Age; only the New Age is not new, it's the mustiest thing around. It started way back in the Garden of Eden with Satan's doubts in the Word of God. But anyway, she was an old New Ager. But she was a demon-possessed girl. Now Paul had tried to avoid her. You know, we're to resist the devil, not to chase him. Paul had tried to avoid her. Finally, Paul had enough. And he turned around and he rebuked her in the name of Jesus, and ran the devil out of her. And the little girl got saved.

Paul ended up in jail because she was making a lot of money for those men who were profiteering off of her. The little girl got saved. Paul and Silas were in jail at midnight. They beat them. They were in the innermost jail. They were down there. There was moaning and groaning and filth. Paul and Silas are praising God and giving God glory. Boy, those prisoners that heard moaning, they'd never heard praising. They'd heard cursing; they'd never heard praying. Paul and Silas are praying. God is so pleased He looks down there and begins to shake that whole jail, and there's an earthquake. You remember the story: "Jailhouse Rock." My dear friend, that thing began to shake, and the bonds fell off. That jailer, that hardened prison guard, is ready to commit suicide, and Paul and Silas say, "Don't hurt yourself: we're all here." "Excuse me." "Yes, don't hurt yourself. We're all here. Don't kill yourself. Don't commit suicide. We want to tell you about Jesus." The jailer got saved. And I believe a lot of those jailbirds got saved too, because Paul and Silas said, "We're all here." None of them had run off; they all wanted to stay and see what was going to happen.

Listen. When a church gets right with God, no matter how much persecution comes along, the devil can't stop the revival; all he does is just move the location. I mean, it went right into that jail. And there was a revival in that jail.

Now, listen. Paul was a philosopher. What is the answer to the intellectual sophistication of our age? Jesus. Lydia was a businesswoman. What is the answer to the deepest needs of a woman's heart and militant feminism? Jesus. That demon-possessed girl was in the grip of the occult. What is the answer to the occult? Jesus. That jailer, surrounded by all those prisoners and criminals—what is the answer to the crime problem? Jesus—Jesus! And Jesus took all of those people together.

My dear friend, you see the restraint of the Spirit, the release of the Spirit; and then, you see the results of the Spirit. That's the way God put people together in what I call a forever family.

II. The Sweet Fellowship of God's Forever Family

Now, let's move on quickly. I want you to see not only the supernatural formation of God's forever family—I mean, God did it; but I want you to see, secondly, the sweet fellowship of God's forever family—the sweet fellowship. Look in verse 5. Go right back to Philippians now. I told you to put your bookmark there. All right, in Philippians chapter 1, now let's continue to read here: *“Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.”* Now, notice how Paul has these people in his heart. He said, *“I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,”*—this was such a sweet church—*“always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy,”*—now he couldn't say that for the Corinthian church; but he sure could for the Philippian church. Notice what it is—*“for your fellowship in the gospel.”* (Philippians 1:1–5) Do you see it? Do you see it? *“Your fellowship in the gospel.”* There is, my dear friend, the supernatural formation. And a supernatural formation always leads to sweet fellowship: *“your fellowship in the gospel.”*

What is our fellowship? Our fellowship, my friend, is not in Kool-Aid and cookies. Our fellowship is in the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I daresay many of you here today don't know a lot of people sitting right around you. But you know Jesus, and they know Jesus, and that's enough. Isn't that right? Say *amen*. You know Jesus, and they know Jesus. What is the bond that holds us together? What is it? It's the word *fellowship*. And that word *fellowship* is the Greek word *koinonia*—*koinonia*. Listen to that word *koinonia*, and it really means “to have something in common.” We have a common Lord, a common life, a common love; and that's what makes the fellowship of this church what it is. My dear friend, it would make the fellowship of any church what it is.

Now I want to mention this word *koinonia* and I want to show you three times where it's used right here in this book. And if you're hungry, you say, “Well, look, pastor. I'm in Bellevue Baptist church; but, very frankly, I kind of feel like an outsider. I come here on Sunday morning and I sit out there like a spectator. And you're talking about the sweet, sweet fellowship, and the wonderful oneness. I don't have that oneness. I mean, I just come here and sing. I go out. I don't know anybody's name. I think I'll find a smaller church where I can find fellowship.” Well, you could sure find it in a smaller church. But you can find it right here, too. And if you don't find it here, you wouldn't find it there, because, my dear friend, the fellowship is not rooted in the size of the church. That has nothing to do with it.

A. The Fellowship of Soul Winning

Let's look at the way this word *fellowship* is used. For example, in verse 5, he speaks of the *koinonia* of the gospel, the *fellowship* of the gospel. And what is the gospel? The gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ. You want some fellowship? You want to be close to somebody? You look around and find a brother or a sister who is interested in getting out the gospel of Jesus Christ and go out and win somebody to Jesus with that person. Are you listening to me? Two people who win a third person to Jesus Christ are never ever again the same. I'll tell you, there is nothing that will bond your heart to a brother or sister like going out soul winning together. That's true. Isn't that true? Isn't that true? See? It's got to be true: they say it's true.

Now, listen. Let me tell you something, friend. That is the fellowship of the gospel: the fellowship of winning people to Jesus Christ. That's where fellowship is. And you sit here on Sunday and watch Jim perform and listen to me preach and so forth. That's not fellowship. That's just observation.

I used to play football. And let me tell you what fellowship is. Boy, you'll win a big game—you know, the high school game. It's your archrival; they live across the state somewhere, and they come—maybe homecoming. And it's the big game: the stands are full, and there's a kickoff, you know. And it's close, back and forth. And, finally, your team wins.

Those people up there—your dad and mom sitting up there with their friends, as my dad and mom would be when I played football—boy, they hug, and they say, “Boy, we won! We won!” And the coaches down there, they embrace, and they say, “We won! We won!” And the band gets on the bus. And as that band bus drives past the band bus of those who lost, the winning team says, “Yea, yea, yea, yea, yea!” and, “We won!” And, oh, everybody's saying, “We won! We won!”

I'll tell you something. Well, you go down to that locker room. Have you ever been down a locker room—I know you have, Sonny—after a ballgame? I've been down there so tired I couldn't even lift my hands to pull my jersey off. It would be wet and sweaty, and my arms would be bruised; but you finally get that jersey off over your head, unlace those shoes, and take that tape off your ankles; that old stinking locker room down there, and the floors always a little bit wet, and those old towels stinking. And you sit down there, and there's another old boy: he's bruised and battered, and his nose is over this way. He's been down there in the trenches with you. Boy, you look over at him. You say, “Bill, we won, didn't we?” Now, friend, that's fellowship: when you've been in the trenches together.

You know, this building committee has been serving the Lord together. We had a dinner; we had a fellowship. My dear friend, when we had a fellowship, these people who had worked and worked and worked, serving to get out the gospel, they became

one in the Lord Jesus Christ. There's a fellowship of the gospel: that's the fellowship of soul winning and service.

B. The Fellowship of Supplication

Let me show you something else here. Look in Philippians chapter 2, verse 1: *"If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit..."* (Philippians 2:1) There again, not only fellowship of the gospel, but *koinonia* of the Spirit. You say, "I feel like an outsider. I'm not a part of Bellevue. I don't have that warm fellowship." I'll tell you how to get it. Try some fellowship of the Spirit. Get a prayer partner. Get somebody that you meet with. Study the Word of God with that person. Get in a Sunday School class, and get somebody out of that Sunday School class where you two get some people on your heart and begin to pray for those people. Let the Spirit of God just melt you together. So many churches are wired together, or rusted together, or frozen together. They need to be melted together by the Holy Spirit. It's a fellowship of the Spirit.

I'm going to tell you something else, dear friend. Two people who pray together are never ever the same. There's something about it—I'll just guarantee it. If you say it's not true, you don't have a prayer partner. You just get a prayer partner. You get down on your prayer bones with somebody and really begin to pray with them, and you're going to find out there is something called the *koinonia* of the Spirit.

C. The Fellowship of Suffering

I'll tell you one other thing. Look, if you will, in Philippians chapter 3 and verse 10. Paul says, *"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings."* (Philippians 3:10) Fellowship of soul winning. Fellowship of supplication. And now, fellowship of suffering. Fellowship of soul winning. Fellowship of supplication. Fellowship of suffering—the fellowship of His suffering.

You say, "I don't have any friends; I'm not a part of the church." Let me tell you what to do: find somebody who's hurting, and hurt with them. Boy, this city and this town and this church are full of them: people who need somebody to love them; somebody to put their arms around them.

Paul said, "I want to know the fellowship of Christ's sufferings." Well, how can you know that? Jesus is in heaven; but He said, *"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."* (Matthew 25:40) Two people who win a soul together are never quite the same again. Two people who pray together are never quite the same again. And two people who cry together are never quite the same again. The fellowship of suffering. This is not a club; it's a church. We're one body in Christ. Quit being a spectator. Get into it.

III. The Sure Future of God's Forever Family

And one last thing I want to say: Not only do you see in this story the supernatural formation of the church, the sweet fellowship of the church; but also I want you to see, thirdly, the sure future of the church. Philippians 1, verse 6—look at it. Now Paul speaks of the fellowship in verse 5; but then in verse 6 he says, *“Being confident...”*—boy, I like that word; no stutter, no stammer, no apology—*“Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”* (Philippians 1:6)

Now, who began the good work? Jesus. How did He do it? Through the Holy Spirit. We talk about building churches. You don't build churches. Jesus said, *“I will build my church.”* (Matthew 16:18) He didn't say, “You will build my church.” He didn't say, “I'll build your church.” He said, “I will build my church.” And then Paul says, “Since He's the One who began it, I know He's the One who's going to finish it.” Isn't that right?

I'm not talking about these buildings. Dear friend, one of these days these buildings are just going to be rust and dust and rubble, right? Sure! This is not the church. This is the church home. Jesus is the builder of the Church. And, therefore, there is a sure future.

You see, listen. How did you get saved? Did you think it was your idea to get saved? Well, pardon me; but it wasn't. *“There is none that seeketh after God.”* (Romans 3:11) No, not one. *“We love him, because he first loved us.”* (1 John 4:19) He chose us. My dear friend, you were chosen of the Spirit, and then you were convicted of the Spirit, and then you were converted of the Spirit. And I'll tell you something else: You'll be completed by the Spirit. Say *amen*. The chooser, and the convictor, and the converter is the completer.

Conclusion

Now anything you start is not going to be finished. I mean, friend, everything's winding down to the grave. I don't care what it is, it's going into oblivion. But anything He does is forever—forever! The Apostle Paul says, *“Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”* (Philippians 1:6) I don't know what business you're in, dear friend; but there's no business like the gospel business, if you'll let me use the word *business*.

What God does is forever. Diane Fox stood here and talked about that time when Jesus Christ is going to come again and He's going to say, “Welcome home, children.” What a homecoming in heaven that's going to be! These buildings are just a launching pad to get us there, dear friend. Thank God for His forever family.

Getting Ready for Heaven

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: September 25, 1994

Main Scripture Text: Philippians 1:19–24

“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”

PHILIPPIANS 1:21

Outline

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Introduction

Find Philippians chapter 1 and we're going to begin reading in a moment in verse 19. The title of the message today is "Getting Ready for Heaven." And if you're going, then you've got to get ready. We've often heard it said that we are so heavenly-minded that we're no earthly good. But that's not true. You can't be too heavenly-minded. As a matter of fact, the Bible tells us we ought to set our hearts and our affections on things above. (Colossians 3:2) Now, remember this: *To believe in heaven is not to run away from life; it is to run toward it.* That's what we were made for.

Now the Apostle Paul is in prison. He doesn't know whether they're going to kill him or whether he'll be set free. And so he begins in verse 19 to say, *“For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.”* (Philippians 1:19–20) Paul said, "They may kill me. They may not." He said, "I know one thing: Jesus is going to be glorified. If I'm set free, then He'll be glorified. If I am killed, then He'll be glorified, whether it be by life or death." And then he explains what he means: *“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”* (Philippians 1:21) "If I live, then I'll keep on preaching Christ, and I'll live in the power

and the anointing and for the glory of Jesus Christ. But if I die..."—and here is the key—"if I die, then it's not loss; it is gain." *"But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a straight betwixt two,"*—that is, I'm between the two—"having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you." (Philippians 1:22–24) And so here's Paul saying, "Well, they may set me free, and I'll just keep on preaching. And I know that you need me as your pastor, and as your leader; but, oh," he said, "if I had my choice, then I had much rather cut out right now and go to heaven, because it is so much better."

Now, folks, we are limited when we talk about heaven, because there's so much that we don't know about heaven. Did you enjoy the little vignette of the children talking about heaven? Well, don't laugh too much. They know just about as much as you know. A little child can ask questions that no one can answer. There are some sacred secrets about heaven.

The Apostle Paul was caught up into paradise, into the third heaven. And 2 Corinthians chapter 12 and verse 4 says when he was there, *"he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter."* (2 Corinthians 12:4) That is, God showed him some sacred secrets about heaven, and God said to Paul, "Don't you tell anyone." There are a lot of things I don't know about heaven. Even the Apostle John in 1 John chapter 3 and verse 2 said, *"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."* (1 John 3:2) John said, "There are some things we can't be dogmatic about. We don't know what we're going to be like. But," he said, "there are some things we can be bull-dogmatic about. We'll be like Jesus." You know, it's wonderful, isn't it? Some things we don't know, and some things we do know. And something we do know is this—and the Apostle Paul said it in 1 Corinthians chapter 13, talking about heaven: *"For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face."* (1 Corinthians 13:12)

Dr. Robert G. Lee was one of the former pastors of this church, and we owe such a great debt to our former pastors who have prayed for us and loved us, and, I believe, who are looking down from heaven on this service this morning—this heaven service. But Dr. Lee grew old and got sick and had a heart attack, and had some days in bed. He lost most of his eyesight. And I would visit Dr. Lee from time to time, and he wanted to read. He was a prodigious reader. I said, "Well, Dr. Lee, why not listen to some tapes?" He said, "I don't want to listen to tapes; I want to read." And we would talk and pray and think. As he got sicker and sicker, we knew that he was just a few heartbeats from heaven. Billy Graham was in the city, and Billy Graham said to me, "Adrian, would you take me by to see Dr. Lee?" And I said, "Yes, I will, Billy." And so Cliff Barrows, and

Billy Graham, and T. W. Wilson, the associate evangelist, and Tommy Lane, and myself went by to see Dr. Lee.

His adopted daughter Hildred Phillips came out, and she'd gotten some new pajamas to put on him because Billy Graham was coming to see him. And they had the bedroom all fixed up there, and we were ready to go in and see Dr. Lee, because we knew he had just a few days left. Hildred said, "I can't rouse him. He's in a coma. He may be dying. We'd better call the doctor." And they called the old doctor over. This doctor is a dear man of God. He'd been Dr. Lee's doctor for a long time—a little fellow with a bald spot and one of those horseshoe haircuts. He came in with his little black bag just like you'd see in a Norman Rockwell painting; and he came in there, and I wanted to see what he was going to do. So I went on into the bedroom there, and he tried to take those vital signs. Then he put his head down on Dr. Lee's chest to listen. I wish I'd have had a little brownie Kodak like Dr. Lee used to carry around all the time, to have taken a picture of that. It was just one of those pictures.

There was Dr. Lee with that white hair on his pillow in that little bedroom there where he was staying, and that doctor with his head down on Dr. Lee's chest. There were Billy Graham and others standing there. And I thought, "You know, what a moment this is! Few, if any, preachers have ever had the pulpit-anointing power that Dr. Robert G. Lee had, and he's a name that will live on through history, with Spurgeon and others. And there's Billy Graham, the world-famous evangelist. And maybe Dr. Lee is just about to step into heaven." There was the doctor there. It was just one of those poignant moments. And the doctor said, "Yes, he's dying—he's dying now."

I thought, "Well, what will we do? Just stand here and watch him die? You know, if he's going to heaven, then let's sing him to heaven." And so Tommy Lane was there, and Tommy said Dr. Lee's favorite song was "Majestic Sweetness Sits Enthroned upon the Savior's Brow." And he said, "Let's sing that." And Tommy Lane began to sing. And Cliff Barrows began to sing. And I'm so glad they were there to sing, because Billy Graham doesn't sing much better than I do. But I tell you, they began to sing that song, and then Cliff picked up a song:

*Oh, come, angel band,
Come and around me stand;
Oh, bear me away on your snowy wings
To my eternal home.*

—JEFFERSON HASCALL

I didn't know if Dr. Lee was going to heaven at that time or not, but I was sure I was. The room was just filled with the glory and the presence of Jesus there. But then Dr. Lee, who had been in a deep coma, just opened his eyes and he came out of it. And Hildred said, "Papa, Billy Graham is here to see you." And Dr. Lee reached up his arms

and put his arms around Billy Graham and pulled him down and kissed him, and they said a few words of endearment. I've never forgotten that scene. It's written in my heart and in my mind. I'm so glad that God let me be there.

But Dr. Lee didn't die right then; he lingered for a while. I went back to see him, and Hildred said to me, "Do you know what happened?" I said, "What?" "Dr. Lee told me—Papa told me—he'd had a vision of heaven." I said, "Tell me about it." "Well," she said, "that's what I told him: 'Tell me about it.'" And, you know, I believe that one of Dr. Lee's greatest sermons is in a booklet called "A Place Called Heaven." You need to get it and read it sometime. And he wrote all about heaven, and it's quite a long message—a sermon that he preached on heaven. But she said, "Papa, what was heaven like?" "Oh," he said, "Hildred, I didn't do it justice in my sermon—I didn't do it justice." And she said, "Well, tell me." He said, "I can't tell you. I don't have the words to tell you. But," he said, "Hildred, I saw my mother, and she's beautiful." And then he said, "And I saw Jesus."

"Well," you say, "maybe he was just hallucinating." Well, I hope God gives me a hallucination just like it. But, friend, it's not unusual that people would see heaven. Stephen saw heaven just before he stepped into heaven, and he saw the Lord Jesus. The Apostle Paul was called up into heaven after he was stoned and was left for dead: "But whether I was in the body or out of the body—I don't know, but I was called up into paradise—into heaven." (2 Corinthians 12:2–4) But the thing that impressed me about that story is Dr. Lee said, "I did not have the vocabulary..."—and here was the man with the master vocabulary—"I did not have the vocabulary; I did not have what it takes to tell about heaven." And so I'm aware of the limitations that I have as I speak about getting ready to go to heaven.

Charles Darwin spoke about the origin of the species. He's the father of evolutionary thought. And he had some wild guesses—and they were all wrong—about whence we have come. But, friend, far more important than the origin of the species is the destiny of the species. The Bible tells us both about our origin and about our destiny. *The Bible is the one book through which we can look out of the prison house of this world, and it is a window by which we can look into eternity.*

Now the Apostle Paul said, "For to me to live is Christ," and then he said, "and to die is gain." (Philippians 1:21) Now, why is death gain for the child of God? It is not loss, but gain. If you're one of the children of this world and you don't know the Lord Jesus Christ, then for you, to die is loss—unrepeatable, incredible loss—no matter how fine the casket they bury you in; no matter how many big shots are at your funeral; no matter how much oratory; no matter how much they talk about you and brag about the life that you lived; and no matter how much your casket is banked with flowers. If you die outside of the Lord Jesus Christ, then for you, to die is loss. But for those who know the Lord Jesus, for them, to die is gain.

I want to mention some reasons why it is gain, and then I want to ask you a question.

I. The Person to Whom It Takes Us

Death, for the child of God, first of all, is gain, because of the Person to whom it takes us. Look in verse 23. He says, “*For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart,*”—listen to this—“*and to be with Christ.*” (Philippians 1:23) If you’re a child of God, then death takes you to be with the Lord Jesus Christ, and Jesus is in the heaven of heavens. What makes heaven *heaven*? Not streets of gold, gates of pearl, and walls of jasper, though all of that is a symbol of even the yet more glorious things of heaven.

When I’ve been on a long trip, and come home—when I come into my house—I don’t go over and hug my recliner, and kiss the lamp. It’s Joyce I want to see, and Joyce is what makes our home *home*. And friend, it’s Jesus that makes heaven *heaven*—not streets of gold and gates of pearl, but to see the Lord Jesus.

Paul said, “I have a desire to depart and walk streets of gold. I have a desire to depart and be with Christ.” I remember hearing about a young preacher. When he was preaching, he’d preach against sin, and he would preach these kinds of sermons: “Thou shalt not...” Then he got a little more mature and realized the power of the wonderful, positive aspects of the gospel. And rather than preaching, “Thou shalt not,” he began to preach, “Thou shalt.” But then as he fell deeper in love with the Lord, his sermons seemed to just center around the word *thou*: the Lord Himself. And, oh, how we need to be centered on the Lord Jesus! Jesus is the One that makes heaven magnificent for me.

And another song that I think I’d like sung at my funeral 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

Can you imagine the sunrise of His smile? Can you imagine the music of His voice?

There was a great black preacher, a Negro preacher, who lived many years ago; his name was John Jasper. He preached around Richmond, Virginia. And the church was so crowded that you could never get in to hear the eloquence of John Jasper. When John Jasper was asked this question, “John Jasper, what are you going to do when you get to heaven?”, do you know what he said? He said, “For the first five hundred years, I’m just going to look at Jesus”—“for the first five hundred years, just look at the Lord Jesus Christ.”

II. The Place to Which It Brings Us

Why is death gain to the child of God? All right, for the Person to whom it takes us. Number two: for the place to which it brings us. Heaven is a place. Now, look, if you will, again in this passage of Scripture in verse 23. He says, “*For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart.*” (Philippians 1:23) Do you see that word *depart*? That word *depart* means “to unloose something; to untie something; to unravel something.” And it was used when people were going from one place to another place. Heaven is a place: we depart here, and we go there.

A. *Depart: A Nautical Term*

It was a nautical term used by sailors when they would loose a ship and let that ship set sail. They used this word *depart* for the departure of the ship: to loose the ship from its moorings. And that’s what we do when we die. We just loose the moorings here and we set sail. But if you’ve ever watched a ship when it sets sail, it sails over the horizon, and it dips over the horizon, and people on this shore say, “There it goes.” But people on that shore say, “Here it comes”—“Here it comes.” And we sail from this shore to that shore over that ocean of death.

Can you imagine three babies in their mother’s womb? And let’s imagine those babies are able to talk to one another and communicate with one another, and all they’ve known is the womb of their mother. And then one of those babies—we’ll call him Sam—is born: he’s no longer in his mother’s womb. And two are left in their mother’s womb, and they’re still communicating. And one of those babies says to the other baby, “Oh, did you hear about poor Sam? He passed on.” Well, he’s just born into a greater, fuller, more wonderful life. And we so often mourn the death of our loved ones. But, friend, they have gone to a place called heaven.

B. *Depart: A Military Term*

It’s a nautical term. It was also a military term. This word *depart* means “to pull up the stakes of a tent.” And when the soldiers would put their tent stakes down, when they strike the tent loose, the tent cords, that same word was used for that departure. You know, we’re in a battle here, and it’s a real battle. It’s a hard battle. But when the battle’s over, we’ll wear a crown.

I heard about some soldiers on the battlefield and they had stopped and were making camp. And the commander said, “Boys, don’t put the tent stakes down too deeply: we’re going home tomorrow.” And I want to say to every businessman, don’t put your tent stakes down too deeply. Soon we’re going home.

C. *Depart: A Political Term*

To *depart*—it was a word that was also used as a political term. It meant “the loosing of

a prisoner from jail.” When the prisoner was set free, that’s what the word means: “to be set free to go home.” You know, we’re all in a prison of some kind. We’re all chained by some kind of chain—a chain of habits and sorrow and fear. But one of these days, soon and very soon, we’re going to leave the prison for the palace.

Get this in your mind: Heaven is not just a state of mind; it’s not just an idea; and it’s not just some nebulous gaseous form of Never-Never Land. Heaven is a place, real, more real, than Memphis, Tennessee. The Bible said that Abraham *“looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”* (Hebrews 1:10)

Let me give you some verses that tell us that heaven is a place. Of course, you know in John 14, verse 2, Jesus said, *“I go to prepare a place for you.”* (John 14:2) Colossians 3, verse 1: *“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.”* (Colossians 3:1) Jesus is there in a resurrected body. Hebrews 9, verse 24: *“For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself.”* (Hebrews 9:24) That’s where He is, folks. And then, Mark 16, verse 19: *“So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.”* (Mark 16:19) And then, 1 Peter 3, verse 22, speaks of Jesus, *“who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.”* (1 Peter 3:22)

Now heaven is a place of infinite perfection. There’s no sorrow, no sighing, no crying, no dying, no pain, no groan, and no moan. *“The former things,”* Revelation tells us, *“are passed away.”* (Revelation 21:4) “Pastor Rogers, would you describe what heaven is like?” I can’t do it. The Bible gives us many symbols, but they all fall short. Let me tell you what heaven is, folks. Let me tell you what heaven is. Heaven is all that the loving heart of God would desire. Heaven is all that the omniscient mind of God can conceive. And heaven is all that the omnipotent hand of God can prepare—what the heart of God, the mind of God, and the hand of God wants for those that He loves so much that He gave his Son to die for. That’s what heaven is. And I can tell you this much: You will like it.

I’ve preached many sermons on heaven and almost always want to use the story of a little girl who was blind and she’d not seen what the other children see. One day they performed surgery that was to give her sight. They hoped it would be successful. When they unwound the gauze from her face and removed those gauze pads, this little girl opened those eyes and she saw for the first time. And what she saw was the face of that surgeon. What she saw were those nurses. And then she looked up and saw her mother’s face for the first time. And she saw for the first time what she felt with her fingertips: a mother’s tears. She saw the wall. She saw everything there in that doctor’s office. And she was thrilled. And she ran around looking at things. And then she wanted

to see outside. And she went to the window, and she opened the window and looked out.

Now, folks, what you and I take for granted, she saw for the first time. She saw the grass. But she didn't see the grass; she saw the green grass. She saw the trees. But she just didn't see the trees; she saw the green bowers of beauty. She saw the birds and the colors. She looked up and saw the sky. She saw the blue sky. She saw a cloud. She saw things that you and I take for granted. And then she said to her mama, "Mommy, it's beautiful. Why didn't you tell me, Mother, it was so beautiful?" And that mother, with tears of joy, said, "My darling, my sweetheart, Mama tried to tell you; but you had to see it for yourself."

Friend, that's what heaven will be like. God has taken the words of human vocabulary and human emotions and God has put them in the Bible. But "*Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.*" (1 Corinthians 2:9)

III. The Provision with Which It Affords Us

Why is heaven gain? The Person to whom it takes us. The place to where it brings us. And then, the provision with which it affords us. It's going to be a place of rewards. Look, if you will, in verse 22. He said, "*But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour.*" (Philippians 1:22) Every work for the Lord Jesus will be rewarded. There will be rewards in heaven. The Bible says, "*Great is your reward in heaven*"; (Matthew 5:12) "*Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.*" (Matthew 6:20)

Good works don't take you to heaven. We sang "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound." *Heaven is not a reward for the righteous; it is a gift for the guilty.* It is not in the merit of man, but in the mercy of God. And yet we are rewarded in heaven. Everything that we do in the name of Jesus will bring its reward. Jesus said that if you give a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, even that will be remembered in heaven. (Matthew 10:42)

One of the favorite verses I have about heaven is Revelation 14, verse 13: "*And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.*" (Revelation 14:13) *Works never bring you to heaven; they just follow you to heaven.*

And we're going to have crowns in heaven. The Bible speaks of the crown of life. The Bible speaks of a crown of glory. The Bible speaks of the crown of righteousness. And the Bible speaks of an incorruptible crown. Now, what will we do with crowns in heaven? Well, friend, I cannot imagine wearing a crown in the presence of the One who wore a crown of thorns for me. But I do want a crown, because the Bible tells me in

heaven they're going to place those crowns at Jesus' feet. And, oh, heaven is a place of provision, where He will reward those who've served Him.

IV. The People with Whom It Unites Us

Then I'll tell you another reason why heaven is gain: not only because of the provisions that it affords us, but the people with whom it unites us. Have you ever thought about what the fellowship in heaven is going to be like? Jesus said we'll sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom. (Matthew 8:11) And I like the words *sit down*. We're going to have a great time—what gracious fellowship!

Won't it be wonderful to have a conversation with Moses and say, "Moses, really, how did you feel when you stepped into that Red Sea?" Won't it be wonderful to say to David, "David, would you sing the Twenty-third Psalm just for me?" I'd like to hear David sing that psalm just like he wrote it. Wouldn't it be wonderful to sit down with the Apostle John and say, "Now, John, would you please explain the book of Revelation? Let's just have a Bible conference here." How would you like to spend a few years with the Apostle Paul going over the book of Romans again, talking about all the grace of God and those great wonderful things? And old Simon Peter will be there, and he'll tell you, "Didn't I tell you it would be *'joy unspeakable and full of glory'*?" (1 Peter 1:8) Didn't I tell you that?"

And, friend, eternity will seem too short to fellowship with all of the saints. But, oh, our loved ones will be there. What a reuniting there will be: your mama, your daddy, your children! Joyce and I have a little baby boy named Philip; he's already in heaven. And, friend, they will all be there. They'll be just the same, and yet they'll be different. Every wrinkle, every blemish, every fault that has been placed there by the curse of sin will be removed, and in its place will be the perfect likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ. And yet their identity will not be blurred; their identity will only be perfected. And we'll see our loved ones in heaven. We'll have a grand homecoming week.

You know that song:

*We'll sing and shout and dance about,
The Lamb will dry our tears:
We'll have a grand homecoming week,
The first ten thousand years.*

—RAYMOND BROWNING

Do you have a loved one in heaven? Friend, if they're with Jesus, and you're with Jesus, then they can't be too far from you. But one day we'll be face to face with our loved ones again.

*Death hides, but it does not divide,
Thou art but on Christ's other side.*

*Thou art with Christ, and Christ with me;
In Him, I still am close to thee.*

—ELIZABETH URCH

But yet, friend, that mystical union will be turned to a vital wonderful relationship.

Now, go back to verse 21 and look at it. He says, *“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain”* (Philippians 1:21)—*“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”* How about you? I want you to finish this sentence right now. Every person listening to me, and those dear friends who are listening by television, would you finish this sentence for me: “To live is...”—and you finish it. Be honest, and be brief. Put down what for you is to live. Maybe you would put down pleasure; maybe fame; maybe business; or maybe family. But may I suggest that if you put anything down there other than what the Apostle Paul put down there, *“For to me to live is Christ,”* then you cannot say, *“to die is gain.”* If you put anything else other than Jesus, then you’ll have to say, “For me to die is loss.”

Here’s an article from *The Wall Street Journal*. I clipped this: “Trimmed in Gravestones: It’s Highly Personal; It’s Cemetery Art.” “Plainfield Township, Illinois. When Wayne Wiemar died in an automobile accident two years ago at age 17, his mother wanted something special to mark his resting place. So on his gravestone there’s both an etched portrait of Wayne and a drawing of an electric guitar, a symbol of his favorite hobby.” And then it goes on: “Mike Depiazza of Cog Monument Company in Hackensack, New Jersey, built a memorial for a New Jersey man who liked to fight and drink.” He says that on one side of the stone is a bouquet of roses, a reference to the man’s favorite brand of whisky, Four Roses; on the other side is a pair of chiseled boxing gloves: he loved to drink and fight. Fitting memorial! Now here’s one: They did an image of a hundred-dollar bill complete with webbing and the dead man’s name where Ben Franklin’s picture should be. For him, to live was money. Here’s another one: “Donald Rex, owner of Rex Monumental Works in New Bedford, Massachusetts, built a big monument for a man named Luis Viera that features the queen and ace of hearts—twenty-one in blackjack—along with two pink dice. When his widow came into the office, she held the ace and the queen of hearts in her hand. Mr. Rex said that she said her husband’s second love in life was gambling, and she wanted to incorporate that into his monument.”

And it goes on to say, “Ralph Bistell walked into Mr. Querling’s shop with his own design in hand six months before he died in 1990. The stone depicts Mr. Bistell, a lighting engineer, standing atop a Seattle roof at sunset gazing out at the city’s bright light; in his hand is a cigarette.” That’s what he wants to be remembered for. And then, here’s the last one; here’s a memorial that became a legend in the close-knit world of monument makers: a life-sized, lifelike sculpture of a Mercedes Benz limousine made

from a single piece of granite. The thirty-six-ton work cost more than 250,000 dollars and took two years to make. That person said, “For me to live is a limousine”—a limousine!

“Well,” you say, “I wouldn’t want anything like that on my tombstone. I just want to put something nice like “Rest in peace.” But, friend, there’s no peace if you don’t know the Lord Jesus Christ. There’s no heaven for you if you say for me to live is anything but the Lord Jesus.

Conclusion

I have a preacher friend in Florida that died. He knew that he was dying, because he had cancer. This is what he wrote to his children. And I think it’s beautiful. He said, “Children, we would mourn if our old house burned down, taking with it all the memories of a lifetime. Yet we would rejoice too if all the children escaped safely. So, rejoice with me that I have escaped my old house. For, as a house is not a home, so my body was not me. The real me is still alive, living, because Christ lives and has brought me into the very presence of God. Now I’m able to have face-to-face contact with the Father. And one day, because you too have Jesus, there will be a great uniting.

“Children, remember when you were little how you would often get afraid at night and climb into bed with your mother and me? We would snuggle you between us, laugh with you, and sometimes pray with you and let you go off to sleep? And then during the night, I would pick you up, still sleeping, and take you to your own room where I gently tucked you in your bed. Death is like that. No matter what fear may accompany the actual process of dying, the Father’s loving arms are always around you. And during the time when we fall asleep, He gently moves us from this body to our mansion that’s been prepared through the death of Jesus Christ. Others who do not know the Father may fear that process; but I welcome it, and I want you to welcome it also.

“Now in this last will and testament, I leave behind a few mundane things; all of them are temporal. If you have any sense, then you’ll be satisfied to use them wisely, and then just as willingly to leave them behind also. Perhaps you’ll add to what I leave. Perhaps you’ll use it all up. It makes no difference, as long as you do it all to the glory of God. The one thing I do leave that has eternal value is this verse from 1 Corinthians 15: ‘Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.’ (1 Corinthians 15:58) I am now with Jesus. I look forward to your arrival, coming to Him as I did, with empty hands and a heart full of thanksgiving for His love and peace.”

Frankly, I’d rather have that memorial, hadn’t you? Friend, only a heartbeat away! Don’t get the idea that eternity is way out yonder. Every one of us needs to say, “*For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*” If you put, “For to me to live is pleasure,” there’s

no fun and games in a Christless grave. If you say, "For me, to live is money," you'll leave it all; for the Bible says that we brought nothing into this world, and we'll take nothing out. (1 Timothy 6:7) Even if you say something as noble as, "For me to live is family," you'll kiss them all goodbye and never greet them in that bright land unless you know the Lord Jesus Christ. But, oh, when you can say, as the Apostle Paul said, "For to me to live is Christ; He is my Lord, my Savior, my hope, and my all," then to die is gain, because death will take you to Him.

Death will bring me to heaven. Death will cause me to receive those rewards, my labor for Jesus. Death will unite me with the saints of all the ages. What a friend we have in Jesus!

Getting Ready for Heaven

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: September 25, 1994

Main Scripture Text: Philippians 1:21–23

“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”

PHILIPPIANS 1:21

Outline

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- I. The Person to Which It Takes Us
- II. The Place to Which It Brings Us
- III. The Perfection to Which It Transforms Us
- IV. The Provision That It Affords Us
- V. The People with Which It Unites Us

Conclusion

Introduction

Find, please, Philippians chapter 1—we’re going to begin reading here in verse 21 in just a moment—Philippians 1 and verse 21. The title of the message is “Getting Ready for Heaven.” Heaven is a prepared place, and it is a prepared place for people who are prepared to go. And I want you to get ready for heaven. You know, sometimes we hear people say, “Well, thus and such a person is so heavenly-minded he is no earthly good.” But that’s not true. You cannot be too heavenly-minded. The Bible says that we’re to set our affection on things above, (Colossians 3:2) and *to believe in heaven is not to run away from life. To believe in heaven is to run toward it.*

Now Paul was in prison when he wrote this passage of Scripture, and he did not know whether he would be executed or whether he might be set free. So he’s thinking about the alternatives: he might live, or he might die. So he says in verse 21, “*For to me to live is Christ,*”—that is, Christ will live in me, and I’ll live for Him; and He’ll be glorified. If I continue to live, then I will preach and proclaim and love and adore and serve Him if I continue to live—“*and to die is gain.*” (Philippians 1:21) I may live. I may die. But he goes on to say in verse 22, “*But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a straight betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better.*” (Philippians 1:22–23) He said, “Oh, if I could only choose—if I could have my way—then I’d like to leave right now and be with Christ, which is far better.” And Greek scholars tell us that means “very, very, very much

better,” that he’s piling one superlative upon another when he says, “*which is far better.*”

You were made for heaven, and heaven was made for you. Now I realize that when I talk about heaven today, I am limited. I’m limited intellectually; my vocabulary’s limited. And we’re also limited by revelation. There are many things that God has chosen not to tell us about heaven. There are some sacred secrets. The Apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians chapter 12 and verse 4 that “*he was caught up into paradise*”—into heaven—in a vision. (2 Corinthians 12:4) Whether he was in his body or out of his body, he didn’t really know. But he said he heard there words that were unlawful for a human being to utter. God revealed to Paul some sacred secrets.

You know, there are certain things about heaven that God has kept to Himself. The Apostle John, thinking about our resurrection body in heaven, said in 1 John chapter 3 and verse 2, “*Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be...*”—we don’t really know. I thought about the little children and their thoughts about heaven. Well, don’t laugh at them. Some of us might have some strange ideas about heaven also; but they’re only ideas—“*it doth not yet appear what we shall be...when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*” (1 John 3:2) *There are some things we can’t be dogmatic about, and there are some things we can bull-dogmatic about.* We’re going to be like the Lord Jesus is. And that’s the reason the psalmist said, “*I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.*” (Psalm 17:15) But the Apostle Paul himself had to say in 1 Corinthians chapter 13, “*Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face.*” (1 Corinthians 13:12) What a day that will be!

One of the former pastors of this church—and we love our former pastors—one of the great former pastors of this church was Dr. Robert G. Lee, who, indeed it could be said of him, was a legend in his own time. What a masterful use of the English language he had! Few, if any, have every matched Robert G. Lee for oratory. He wrote a sermon one time that’s been published in booklet form and spread around the world called “The Place Called Heaven.” And I think it was almost his *magnum opus*—one of the finest sermons ever written on heaven and published. What a grand sermon that was!

And then Dr. Lee got sick. He had a heart attack and had to languish for a while before he went to heaven. And when he was on what we call the deathbed, Billy Graham was in this city, and he said to me, “Adrian, would you take me by to see R. G. Lee?” I said, “I certainly will.” So we went over to the cottage where Dr. Lee lived. He was being taken care of and nursed there by his adopted daughter, Hildred. And we went in. There was Cliff Barrows, the song leader for the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association; Dr. T. W. Wilson, the associate evangelist; Tommy Lane, who had been the minister of music under the ministry of Dr. Robert G. Lee was with us; and myself. We went in to see Dr. Lee. And Hildred had put some new pajamas there for him to

wear, and it was going to be a special occasion, and I was so happy that I could be there when Billy Graham was to come in and visit Dr. Lee just before he went to heaven. But Hildred came out of that back bedroom after she'd gone in to tell him that Dr. Billy Graham had arrived, and she said, "I can't rouse him. He's in a deep sleep, like a coma. I'm afraid he may be dying right now." She said, "I think I'd better call the doctor."

They called the doctor, and the doctor had been a long-time friend. And he himself was an elderly man, a wiry man, small of size, a bald pate, with what I call a horseshoe haircut—you know, that white hair coming around here—and he had a black satchel—you know, we see the Norman Rockwell paintings of the doctors carrying those black satchels; he had that black satchel. He came in and went back there to the bedroom.

Well, I just wanted to go back, too. I wanted to see what was going to happen. There was Dr. Lee in that bedroom with his white hair spread out on that pillow. And I watched that doctor as he took those vital signs. And then he put that stethoscope around, and then he put that aside and leaned down and put his ear on the chest of Dr. Lee just to listen. Oh, I wish I could have somehow had a Kodak camera, something that would just take a picture of that scene! It was one of those very poignant moments. Then he looked up and said, "Yes, I believe he's dying."

"Well," I thought, "will Dr. Lee die here while Billy Graham is in the room? And what shall we do? He's in a coma." I said, "Well, if he's going to heaven, then let's sing him into heaven." And Tommy Lane said, "Dr. Lee's favorite hymn was Majestic Sweetness Sits Enthroned upon the Savior's Crown. And they began to sing that. And Cliff Barrows and Tommy were there to sing and lead out; and I'm glad, because Billy Graham doesn't sing much better than I do. And they began to sing that song, and then Cliff Barrows took up a song, an old song:

*Oh, come, angel band,
Come and around me stand;
Oh, bear me away on your snowy wings
To my eternal home.*

—JEFFERSON HASCALL

And they began to sing that song, and I could just hear those angel wings in that room. And the room was so filled with the presence and the glory of God.

But then Dr. Lee opened his eyes. He came out of that deep sleep, that slumber. And those eyes, like beautiful blue pools, he opened those eyes. And Hildred said, "Papa, Billy Graham is here to see you. Dr. Lee smiled and reached up and pulled Billy Graham down and kissed him. And I wish I'd had a picture of that also. It's in my mind; I can see it right now. But Dr. Lee lingered after that; he did not go straight to heaven. I came back to see him, and Hildred said to me, "Guess what?" She said, "Dr. Lee said

that he's been to heaven. He's had a vision of heaven." I said, "Well, tell me about it. What did he say?" "He said that, well, he couldn't explain it. He said to me, 'Hildred, I saw my mother, and she's beautiful. And, Hildred, I saw Jesus, and I saw heaven.'" She said, "Well, tell me about it." He said, "I cannot tell you." Now here's the man who had mastered the English language. He said, "I don't have the vocabulary, but I never did it justice in my preaching."

"Well," you say, "do you think he really had a vision of heaven?" Well, why not? Stephen had one before he went to heaven. The Bible said that he saw heaven open *"and Jesus standing on the right hand of the God."* (Acts 7:55) And others have had a glimpse of glory. The Apostle Paul was caught up into heaven—into the third heaven. (2 Corinthians 12:2) Why should not this prince of preachers have a vision of heaven? I talked to someone just yesterday on the phone, who told me about a glorious vision of heaven that God had unfolded to her.

But I'm saying that to say this: that anything we say about heaven will be limited by our vocabulary, our revelation, and our knowledge. But there are some things we do know, and we know this: that if you're saved, if you know the Lord Jesus Christ, then you can say with the Apostle Paul in Philippians 1, verse 21, *"For to me to live is Christ,"*—you can say it, shout it, sing it, or pray it—*"and to die is gain"*—but only, only, if you can say, *"For me to live is Christ."* (Philippians 1:21) Without saying, *"For to me to live is Christ,"* you must say, "For me to die is bankruptcy." It is utter loss. It is utter loss if you do not know the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, why is it gain? I mean, why is death gain to the child of God? I want to tell you why. And then I want to ask you to answer a question. I want to give you some reasons why death is gain to the child of God.

I. The Person to Which It Takes Us

First of all, because of the Person to which it takes us. Now, notice here in verse 23 Paul says, *"For I am in a strait betwixt, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better."* (Philippians 1:23) What makes heaven *heaven*? It is Jesus, who is there. Heaven is to be with the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not gates of pearl and streets of gold and walls of jasper that make heaven *heaven*. Jesus is the glory of heaven. Jesus is the light of heaven. Jesus is the music of heaven. Jesus is the magnetism of heaven—to be with the Lord Jesus Christ. He said in John 14, *"I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."* (John 14:2–3) Heaven is where Jesus is.

When I've been away on a long trip and come back to my home, what is it that thrills me to be home? Do I go in and hug the recliner and kiss the lamp? No, I hug and kiss

Joyce. It is the fact that Joyce is there: that's what makes home *home*. She is there. But the thing that makes heaven *heaven* is that the Lord Jesus Christ is there.

Can you imagine seeing Jesus? Can you imagine being face to face with Christ, “whom having not seen, we love, and...rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory”? (1 Peter 1:8) But one day, we shall behold Him. As we began this service with that wonderful song, “Face to face, we shall behold Him.” Another song that I think I would like sung at my funeral 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

There was a great black preacher, a Negro preacher, whose name was John Jasper. He'd been a former slave, and God had saved John Jasper. He was self-educated, but people far and wide came to hear him preach. His church was packed. The aristocracy, both white and black, came to hear John Jasper preach. They asked John Jasper, “John, what are you going to do when you get to heaven?” John Jasper said, “For the first five hundred years, I'm just going to look at Jesus.” And I want to say *amen*—to see the Lord Jesus Christ.

He is the magnetism of heaven. Can you imagine looking upon Jesus? Can you imagine the sunrise of His smile? Think of the music of His voice, and the glory of His appearance. We will see Jesus. And if you have loved ones in heaven, then they're face to face with Jesus Christ. And so that's the first reason why to die is gain. Paul said, “I have a desire to depart and be with Christ.” (Philippians 1:23)

II. The Place to Which It Brings Us

The Person to whom it takes us. And the place to which it brings us: We're going to heaven. Look, if you will, in verse 23. He says “*depart*.” Look at the word *depart*. Do you see the word *depart*? It actually means “a loosing, an untying, a leaving.” It was a word that was used when a prisoner was set free from jail. It was a word that was used when a ship was untied from its moorings and would set sail. If you've seen a ship—if you've ever been to port, and watched a ship sail over the horizon—it's untied, and it begins to steam out. And you watch it as it disappears because of the curvature of the earth. And on one side, on one shore, people stand, and they say, “There she goes.” But on another shore, people are standing, and they're saying, “Here she comes.” That's the word that's used here: it's a departure.

Heaven is a place with people who know the Lord Jesus. They die and they go to a place. Abraham “*looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is*

God.” (Hebrews 11:10) Heaven is a place more real than Memphis, Tennessee. *“The things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”* (2 Corinthians 4:18) Jesus said, *“I go to prepare a place for you.”* (John 14:2) Jesus is there in a resurrected body.

And don’t get the idea that somehow our loved ones who die are absorbed into some gaseous nothingness, some ephemeral existence. No, heaven is a solid heaven, a real heaven. Jesus is there in a resurrected body.

We talk about our loved ones who’ve passed on, with sadness. Can you imagine three little babies in your mother’s womb, who can communicate with one another? Now, just imagine that somehow they had the ability, these little babies in their mother’s womb, to communicate with one another. And so they’re holding conversations. And let’s say that one of those little babies’ names is Sam, and Sam has been their friend, and they talked to one another by whatever means of communication that they might have. And then, let’s suppose that one day Sam’s mother goes into the delivery room, and Sam is delivered. He’s born, and the other two babies are talking about Sam. And one of them says, “Oh, did you hear about Sam? So sad he passed on!” Well, all he’s done is just to have been born into a bigger, richer, greater, fuller, more wonderful life.

That’s what heaven is: not only the Person to which it takes us, but also the place to which it brings us. Heaven is a real place.

Listen to these scriptures. Colossians 3:1: *“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.”* (Colossians 3:1) Hebrews 9:24: *“For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.”* (Hebrews 9:24) He’s there in heaven appearing in the presence of God and making intercession for us. Mark 16, verse 19: *“So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.”* (Mark 16:19) And then 1 Peter chapter 3 and verse 22 speaks of Jesus, *“who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.”* (1 Peter 3:22) What a wonderful place heaven is! It is a real place.

You say, “Pastor, describe it.” Well, the Bible uses many figures of speech, many metaphors, and many similes. You say, “Will there be literal gold, literal pearl?” I know not. It will satisfy me, whatever heaven is. I’ll tell you this much: Heaven is all that the loving heart of God would desire. Heaven is all that the omnipotent mind of God can conceive. And heaven is all the omniscient mind of God can conceive, and the omnipotent power of God, the hand of God, can perform. And when you get the heart, the mind, and the hand of God all working together to prepare heaven, that’s what heaven is going to be. Friend, I’ll promise you this: You’ll like heaven.

I have hardly ever preached on heaven without telling the story of a little girl who

was blind and had never seen. And they performed a delicate and intricate surgery on her, and they hoped it would be a success. The scene is the doctor's office. They're removing the gauze that holds those pads there on her eyes that were blind. And then gently the nurse removes those pads, and the little girl blinks, and she sees. The first thing that she sees is the face of that nurse, and then the face of that doctor; and then she sees her mother's face; and then she sees what she'd felt with her fingertip but had never seen: a mother's tears—but they're tears of joy. She looks around the room and sees the artifacts, the things in that room; she sees colors and light for the first time.

And then she does what you would want to do: she goes to the window and looks out. And there she sees not the grass, but she sees the green grass; not the flowers, she sees the beautiful colored flowers. She sees the birds. She sees the white clouds and the blue sky. She sees the grandeur of nature.

And then she goes back to her mother and gives her mother a hug. And she says, "Oh, Mama, it's so beautiful! Why didn't you tell me it was so beautiful?" And the mother says, "Sweetheart, I tried to tell you; but you just had to see it for yourself."

Friend, that's the way heaven will be. God has gone through the dictionaries of earth, and he's taken the symbols and the emblems out—gates of pearls, streets of gold, walls of jasper—but they are but prophecies of the indescribable glories of heaven. *"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."* (1 Corinthians 2:9)

III. The Perfection to Which It Transforms Us

Now, here's a third reason that to die is gain: not only the Person to whom it takes us, and the place to which it brings us, but also the perfection to which it transforms us. When we go to heaven, we're going to be made like the Lord Jesus. That's the reason why he says in verse 23 that it is far better. Now the old Apostle Paul was there in prison, his body weak and worn. He'd been beaten; he'd been stoned; and he'd been pickled in the Mediterranean. But you remember that scripture that the Bible says, "When we are with Him, we'll be like Him"? (1 John 3:2) Remember that? You see, and so it's far better, because we are made like the Lord Jesus Christ.

And why will we have perfect happiness? We'll have perfect happiness because we will have perfect holiness. Never again will there be a selfish thought; never again fear; never again pride; never again arrogance. Oh, we will be like the Lord Jesus. And what a thought that will be, to have this old disposition, this robe of flesh, and this proclivity to sin forever erased, and in its place stamped the likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ! And no wonder the psalmist said, *"I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness"*! (Psalm 17:15)

Years ago, I used to have a man who worshipped with us and was a member of our

church. His name was Uncle Charlie Fisher. I've never known a man just quite like Charlie Fisher. I'd like to write sometime a story about my most unforgettable character. It would just probably have to be Charlie Fisher. He loved God with a passion. He was absolutely fearless. I wish I had time to tell you the things he would do. He was one of these old barnstorming pilots, for one thing. He was a preacher. But he had an old rag airplane. He had written in boxcar letters on the side of that fabric airplane, "Christ is the answer." You could read it from the ground. He would fly over county fairs like we're having here in our city this week, and he'd get bushels of tracts and fly over the fair and dump them out, you know, and yell down, "Believe on Jesus." And, you know, he was just an incredible individual. I prayed with him, and he would get so happy praying that he'd just begin to giggle and laugh—just a wonderful, dear man, so happy in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And Uncle Charlie Fisher died, and he preached his own funeral. Let me tell you what he did: He tape-recorded a message. He told his son, who's also a preacher, "When my funeral comes, just put me out there, and don't say a word. Just push that button." So there he was, there in the casket. And everybody was there. And they pushed the button. And you'd have to know him; you'd have to see him, to know what it was like. A little wiry guy—he said, "Hello, folks, this is Charlie Fisher." He said, "I'm up in heaven." He said, "It's wonderful up here." And he began to preach. He said, "I wish you could see me now. I'm just like Jesus." And he went on and preached the sermon about what it's like to be in heaven.

Friend, if you could see your loved ones in heaven right now, then you wouldn't want them back for anything. We couldn't bring them back if we would; and we wouldn't if we could. Oh, they've been made like the Lord Jesus. Every pain, every pang, every groan, every woe, every sorrow, and every tear—it's gone! And that's the reason that heaven is gained perfection, with which it transforms us.

IV. The Provision That It Affords Us

And then, the provision that it affords us. You know, in verse 22, Paul speaks of his labor, and every work for Jesus will be rewarded. Folks, He is going to pay us for all that we do. *Heaven is not a reward for the righteous; it's a gift for the guilty.* But here's the amazing thing: When we're saved by His grace, He pays us for our service. Did you know that? The Bible says, "*Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.*" (Matthew 6:20) That doesn't make sense unless some are going to have more than others there. He says, "*Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.*" (Revelation 22:12) To some, He will say, "Great is thy reward." And, you know, on the other hand, however, even a cup of cold water given in the name of a disciple, Jesus said, shall in no wise lose its reward. (Matthew 10:42)

One of my favorite scriptures about heaven is Revelation 14, verse 13, which says, *“And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.”* (Revelation 14:13) Works never bring us to heaven; works follow us to heaven. We’re going to get a crown if we’ve served the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible speaks of the crown of life; the Bible speaks of a crown of glory; the Bible speaks of a crown of righteousness; and the Bible speaks of an incorruptible crown.

You say, “Well, what do I want to wear a crown for in heaven?” I don’t think I want to wear one up there. I don’t think I could wear a crown. I don’t think I could wear a crown in the presence of the One who was crowned with thorns for me. But I still want a crown, because I read in the Bible where they’re going to take the crowns and put them at Jesus’ feet. And I want one: I want a crown of life; I want a crown of glory; I want a crown of righteousness; and I want an incorruptible crown to lay at the feet of the dear One who laid down His life for me.

V. The People with Which It Unites Us

Why is to die gain? Because of the provision that it provides us, dear friend. And then, to die is gain, because of the persons with which it unites us. You see, we’re going to be with Christ. And when we’re with Christ, we’re not only with Him—our Sovereign Lord is the head of the Church—but we’re with every member of the Body that has now been made a part of Christ. That’s the reason why, if you have a loved one in heaven. Oh, friend, “Death hides, but it does not divide, they are but on Christ’s other side.” Christ is with them. They’re with us.

When we get caught up into heaven, we’ll be with the saints of all of the ages. You talk about company, oh, friend, what will it be like to say, “Moses, tell me again about the opening of the Red Sea; just tell me, Moses, what was it like when you started out? How did you feel?” And we’ll discuss that for a while.

And won’t it be wonderful that you can just have a personal time with David and say, “David, let’s come over here and sit in the corner of heaven; I want you to get your harp and I want you to sing the Twenty-third Psalm to me just like you sang it out there on those fields when you first wrote it.”? And there will be plenty of time for David to fellowship with you in heaven.

Then I’m going to get the old Apostle John, and I’m going to say, “John, I want you to have a Bible conference with me, and I want you, John, to explain the book of Revelation. Will you do that?” And John will explain the book of the Revelation.

And then we’ll spend a few thousand years with Paul in the book of Romans, an exposition of the book of Romans, understanding God’s marvelous amazing grace, and

what God has done through us and with us by the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

And I'm looking forward to meeting Simon Peter. He won't be able to keep his mouth shut up there, either. He'll say, "Didn't I tell you that it was wonderful? Didn't I tell you that it's *'joy unspeakable and full of glory'?*" (1 Peter 1:8) Friend, how wonderful it will be!

But we will also there be united with our loved ones, those who've gone on. We will be with our brothers, our sisters, our fathers, and our mothers; and the Body of Christ will come together in this place called heaven, and they will be there. They will keep their individuality. They will keep their identity. Their identity will not be blurred. Their identity will be perfected. They will be there with every wrinkle, every blemish, every fault placed on us by the curse of sin, removed, and in its place will be stamped the likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ. They'll be recognizable, but they will be there in their fullness. Will we know them? Oh, friend, we'll know as we're known. (1 Corinthians 13:12) And we're going to have a time in heaven rejoicing. I love that song:

*We'll sing and shout and dance about,
The Lamb will dry our tears:
We'll have a grand homecoming week,
The first ten thousand years.*

—RAYMOND BROWNING

Friend, I'm looking forward to seeing my loved ones in heaven. You can call that sentimentality if you want; but, friend, it is real.

Now I want you to look in verse 21—look at it. The Apostle Paul said, "*For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*" (Philippians 1:21) I've given you some reasons, and only a few of the many reasons that could be given, why for you to die will be gain. But I want you to learn this: that *you can only say, "For me to die is gain," if you can say, "For me to live is Christ."*

I want you to finish this sentence: "For me to live is..." And just write down what is the compelling thing of your life—if you had to distill your life into one word or a few words. Be short; be concise; and be honest. For me to live is what? If they put on your tombstone that which really epitomized your life, then what would they put on your tombstone?

Here's something I clipped from *The Wall Street Journal*: "Gravestones Get More Personal with Photographs, Teddy Bears, etc." Then it talks of a trend in gravestones. It's highly personal. When Wayne Wiemar died in an auto accident two years ago at the age of seventeen, his mother wanted something special to mark his resting place. So on his gravestone there are both an etched portrait of Wayne and the drawing of an electric guitar. It's evident that for Wayne, to live was music.

Here's a man here who built a memorial to a New Jersey man who liked to fight and drink. He says on one side of the stone is a bouquet of roses—a reference to the man's favorite brand of whiskey, Four Roses. On the other side is a pair of chiseled boxing gloves. Here's a man who loved to drink and fight: "For me to live is drinking and fighting."

All right, here's another one that included a tablet with the image of a hundred-dollar bill, complete with webbing and the dead man's name where Ben Franklin's picture should be: "For me to live is money."

Here's another one: Donald Rex, owner of the Rex Monumental Works in New Bedford, Massachusetts, built a big monument for a man named Luis Viera that features the queen and the ace of hearts—twenty-one in blackjack—along with two pink dice. "When his widow came into the office, she had the ace and queen of hearts in her hand," Mr. Rex said. She said that her husband's second love in life was gambling, and she wanted to incorporate that on his monument: "For me to live is gambling."

Here's one about a man and his stone—Mr. Bistell. The stone depicts Mr. Bistell, a lighting engineer, standing atop a Seattle roof at sunset, gazing out at the city's bright lights; and in his hand is a cigarette. Evidently, for this man, for him to live was his business.

Then, here's one: They built a memorial in Linden, New Jersey, that has become big in the close-knit world of monument makers: a life-sized, lifelike sculpture of a Mercedes Benz limousine made from a single piece of granite. The thirty-six-ton work, which cost more than 250,000 dollars, and took two years to make, was ordered by the family, and thus and such. Well, for that person, to live was automobiles—a Mercedes Benz.

What do you want to be remembered for? I mean, what are you going to say? For me to live was what? Was it business? "For me to live was money." Then, to die is loss—because you'll leave it all. The Bible says, "*We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.*" (1 Timothy 6:7) "For me to live is pleasure." There are no fun and games in a Christless grave. Then, to die is loss. "For me to live is family." That sounds noble. Without Jesus, you'll give them all goodbyes, never to be reunited in heaven. If you put down anything else except for "For me to live is Christ," then you're going to have to put down also, "To die is loss."

Conclusion

But let me share with you something very wonderful, and I'll be finished. I have a preacher friend that I went to college with. He learned that he was going to die, and he wrote this addendum to his will. I've saved it, because I wanted to read it to you. My friend Jamie wrote this:

"I used to wonder how I would die. Would it be in a flaming crash, as an airplane

hurdled out of the sky? Would it be in some kind of ground accident? Would it be as a martyr's death at home, or on some foreign soil? Or would I, like my beloved earthly father, live a long and useful life and then simply walk on home with God one evening? I guess we all wonder about such things, don't we? Yet the method of death is incidental, for the body is but the house in which the spirit and soul lived. We would mourn if our old house burned down, taking with it all the memories of a lifetime. Yet we would rejoice too if all the children escaped safely. So, rejoice with me that I've escaped my old house. For, as a house is not a home, so my body is not me. The real me is still alive, living, because Christ lives and has brought me into the very presence of God. Now I'm able to have face-to-face contact with the Father. One day, because you too have Jesus, there will be a great uniting.

"Children, remember when you were little how you would often get afraid at night and climb into bed with your mother and me, and we would snuggle you in between us, laugh with you, and sometimes pray with you and let you go off to sleep? Then, during the night, I would pick you up, still sleeping, and take you to your own room, where I would gently tuck you in your own bed. Death is like that. No matter what fear may accompany the actual process of dying, the Father's loving arms are already around you. And during the time when we fall asleep, He gently moves us from this body to our mansion that has been prepared through the death of Jesus Christ.

"Others who do not know our Father may fear that process; but I welcome it. And I want you to welcome it, also. Now in this last will and testament, I leave behind a few mundane things. All of them are temporal. If you have any sense, then you'll be satisfied and will be content to use them wisely, and then just as willing to leave them behind, also. Perhaps, you'll add to what I leave; perhaps, you'll use it up. It makes no difference, as long as you do all for the glory of God. The one thing I do leave that has eternal value is this verse from 1 Corinthians 15: *'Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.'* (1 Corinthians 15:58) I am now with Jesus, and I look forward to your arrival, coming to Him, as I did, with empty hands, but with a heart full of thanksgiving for His love and peace."

His children cherish that, and well they might. Jamie could say, "For to me to live is Christ," and he could say, "To die is gain."

A Philosophy to Live and Die By

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: Unknown

Main Scripture Text: Philippians 1:21–24

“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”

PHILIPPIANS 1:21

Outline

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- A. *Depart* Was a Nautical Term
- B. *Depart* Was a Military Term
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Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take God’s Word and turn with me, please, to Philippians chapter 1, and in a moment we are going to begin reading in verse 21. Just keep your Bibles open to the book of Philippians, because we’re going to stay in that book all this evening. I want to give you tonight a philosophy to live by and a philosophy to die by. My friend, if you’re not ready to die, you’re not ready to live. And as a child of God, you ought to be ready to live and to die. We tell people, “Get right with God: you may die.” Well, that’s true; but get right with God: you may live. You need a philosophy to live by and a philosophy to die by.

When the Apostle Paul wrote what I’m about to read, he was in prison and facing possible execution. He was not absolutely sure that he was going to be executed; but

he thinks he may be, and so he's just running it through in his mind. He's saying, "Well, they may carry me out and cut off my head, or else I may stay in this jail cell, or else I may be released. I really don't know. Maybe I'm going to die; maybe I'm not going to die." But he knew that he was facing something, so he says, "I may live or I may die." Now, keep that in your mind as I read verse 21. Paul says, "*For...me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*" (Philippians 1:21)

Now Paul said, "I don't worry. Whichever way it happens, it doesn't make any difference to me." He said, "I may live. If I live, wonderful! Christ is in me. I'll live for Him, through Him, with Him, to Him"—"*for...me to live is Christ.*" But he said, "I may die. Well, that's wonderful! That's even better! So," Paul said, "I can't lose. Heads, I win; tails, I win. It doesn't make any difference. I am going to have it right, no matter what. I have a philosophy for life and one for death."

Now, what did Paul mean when he said, "*For...me to live is Christ*"? That's the first thing I want to ask and answer; then, secondly, what did Paul mean when he said, "For me to die is gain"?

I. "For Me to Live Is Christ"

What does this statement—"*For...me to live is Christ*"—what does that mean? It sounds good; but what does it literally mean, "*For...me to live is Christ*"? Would you jot these things down.

A. Christ Was the Source of Paul's Life

First of all, Paul is saying that "the very source of my life is Christ." Go back to chapter 1 and verse 6: "*Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you...*" (Philippians 1:6) When the Lord God saved Paul, he began a good work in him. He didn't just do a good work on him; He did a good work in him. Before Paul was saved, Paul didn't have life; he had existence. Jesus said, "I've come that you might have life, and that you might have it abundantly." (John 10:10)

Now many of us don't know what life is, because we don't know what death is. When Adam was in the Garden of Eden, God said to Adam, "Adam, don't eat of the fruit of this tree, for in the day that you eat thereof you will surely die." (Genesis 2:17) Well, Adam ate of the fruit of that tree, and what did he do? He lived for hundreds of years. God said, "You're going to die the day you eat thereof," and yet he existed for hundreds of years. He did die; but he didn't die physically; he died spiritually. He died in his relationship to God. It was a spiritual death. You see, God had lived in Adam. Adam was a temple of God. And when Adam sinned, God moved out. And when God moved out, the light moved out. For the Bible says of our Lord, "*In him was life; and the life was the light of men.*" (John 1:4) So when the life went out, the light went out. And when the light went out, Adam was in darkness and in death and in depravity. When Paul got

saved, the source of his life was Christ. Christ came back into him.

So many people don't understand what being saved is. They think that being saved is getting man out of earth into heaven. But that's not being saved; that is the result of being saved. *Being saved is not getting man out of earth into heaven; it is getting God out of heaven into man.* Paul is saying that the source of life is Christ. That's what I was preaching last night. You can take Buddha out of Buddhism, and still have Buddhism. You can take Confucius out of Confucianism, and still have Confucianism. You can take Mohammed out of Islam, and still have Islam. But you can't take Christ out of Christianity, and still have Christianity. Jesus Christ lives in me. That's what Paul meant: "The source of my life is Christ."

B. Christ Was the Subject of Paul's Life

But not only was the source of his life Christ; listen, folks: the subject of his life was the Lord Jesus. Look, if you will, in verse 12. Paul is in prison, and he's saying to them, "Don't worry about me. That's all right"—*"I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; so that by my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places."* (Philippians 1:12–13) What did he mean by that? He said, "You know, some people think it's a bad thing that I've been put in prison; but it's not a bad thing; it's a wonderful thing." You see, Paul was in prison chained to a guard, and that guard had to listen to Paul preach all the time. When they'd release one guard and chain another guard to Paul, Paul would preach to him. Paul said, *"[My bonds] have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel."* He was winning people to Jesus Christ everywhere. In jail, he took it as an opportunity, because the subject of his life was the Lord Jesus Christ.

Is the subject of your life the Lord Jesus Christ? Or can you keep quiet about the Lord Jesus Christ? I pray the time will never come to me when I can keep quiet about the Lord Jesus Christ.

I heard about a man who was playing the cello. He just had his finger on one spot, and somebody said, "Why don't you move your hand up and down like other people?" He said, "They're looking for it; I've found it." Now Paul was a guy who only had one note—just one note—and that note was the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ was the subject of his life. He was not ashamed of the Lord Jesus Christ.

C. Christ Was the Standard of Paul's Life

Now I want to say a third thing about the Lord Jesus Christ, dear friend: The standard of Paul's life was the Lord Jesus Christ. Look in chapter 3 and verse 14. Paul said, *"I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."* (Philippians 3:14) That is, "Christ is the goal in my life. He is the standard of my life. He is the One

that I aim for.”

Now my heart is broken, and I'll tell you why. I just heard of a pastor of a very large church who has gone down in sin and immorality. It breaks my heart. I see so many young people—they tell me today that many of our Christian young people, those who are members of our church, are drinking beer, committing fornication. You say, “Pastor, do you have names of young people in Bellevue?” No, I don't. I don't know any of them by name. I just pray God that not a one of them is. But the surveys they take of Christian young people find out that many of these young people, many of these people who name the name of Jesus, and many preachers and Christian workers are getting divorced and they're living in immorality. We've all heard these terrible, horrible things. Does that hurt you? That grieves me. Oh, I cannot tell you how it grieves me; how it makes me hang my head in shame! But I thank God I have a Savior who is sinless—I do!

I heard about a man one time back in the olden days who had a slave. He was on the plantation, and the slave was driving this man's carriage, and the man was asleep in the back. The slave was driving at nighttime, and the man wanted to sleep. They were going on a long journey, and there was a meteor shower. And the old slave thought that the stars themselves were falling from heaven. He thought it was the end of time. It frightened him so badly he stopped the horses and turned around and woke his master up, and he said, “Master, wake up! Wake up! It's the end of the world.” The master said, “Why do you say it's the end of the world?” He said, “Look! The stars are falling.” The master said, “Do you see that star?” And he pointed to the North Star. He said, “You put your eyes on that one and drive on. If that one falls, wake me up.”

Friend, Jesus is not going to fall. We see these falling stars all around, these meteors that hit the atmosphere and burn up. Young people need to come back to a standard—and He's Jesus. We need to hold up a standard of righteousness and a standard of holiness.

The Apostle Paul said, “*For to me to live is Christ.*” (Philippians 1:21) And I'm telling you that the source of his life was Jesus. And I'm telling you, my dear friend, that the subject of his life was Jesus. And I am telling you that the standard of his life was Jesus.

D. Christ Was the Song of Paul's Life

And I'm going to say something else: The song of his life was the Lord Jesus Christ. Look in chapter 4 and verse 4: “*Rejoice in the LORD always: and again I say, Rejoice.*” (Philippians 4:4) Do you rejoice in the Lord? You say, “Well, pastor, I do a lot of times; but, you know, sometimes I have difficulty and I don't rejoice.” Oh, is that right? What difficulty do you have? Are you in a prison waiting to have your head cut off? Is that your difficulty? That's where Paul was when he wrote this. Paul wasn't in a motel somewhere when he wrote this. Paul wasn't on a vacation somewhere when he wrote this. Paul

wasn't in a health club when he wrote this. Paul was in a dirty, varmint-filled prison waiting to be executed, and he said, "*Rejoice in the LORD always: and again I say, Rejoice.*" I've told you before, and I'll tell you again: There's only one thing that can take the joy out of your life—not two, not three, not four, but one—and it is sin. And it's only one kind of sin: it's your sin. What somebody else does to you cannot take the joy out of your life.

If you were to come up here tonight and spit in my face for preaching this gospel tonight, that would not take my joy; that would increase my joy, if I react rightly, because the Bible says, "When men persecute you, and revile you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my name's sake," do what? "*Rejoice, and be exceeding glad.*" (Matthew 5:11–12) There's nothing that you can do to me that can take the joy out of my life. My reaction to what you do to me, however, can take the joy out of my life. There is no circumstance that can take the joy out of my life. My reaction to that circumstance can take the joy out of my life.

But I want to tell you that the song of Paul's life was the Lord Jesus Christ. Don't feel sorry for Paul, and don't feel sorry for me because I'm a Christian. Some of you here tonight may not be Christians, and you think we're poor old Christians—we just don't have any fun; we don't have any joy. And some of us who are Christians feel sorry for ourselves.

I heard about a woman in a prayer meeting; there were just a few people there, and she said, "Lord, just be here tonight while we're here. A lot of our people are out. They're not here; they're out there. But, God, you just be with us here while the rest of our folks are out there having a good time." In other words, when we're praying, or when we're here serving the Lord, we're not having a good time.

I think we've had a wonderful time in our Canaan Camp meeting; but whether we're in a camp meeting, or whether we're in a prison, wherever we are, the song of our life ought to be the Lord Jesus Christ.

E. Christ Was the Satisfaction of Paul's Life

Not only was the song in his life the Lord Jesus; but look, if you will, in verse 11—the satisfaction in his life was the Lord Jesus: "*Not that I speak in respect of want:*"—this is chapter 4, verse 11—"*for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.*" (Philippians 4:11) And the word *content* here literally means "self-contained."

There's a motor home out here. It belongs to one of our members, and he's letting me use it for a little office so I can come there. And some of the folks have been so good as to act as host and hostess in that place. Those motor homes are self-contained, so you're supposed to be able to get on the road. And there's the water, and the heat, and the electricity, and the generator—everything is right there: you don't have to stop and plug it into anything. But it's not completely self-contained, because after a

while, the supplies are depleted, right? But Jesus is never depleted.

The word content literally means to be “self-contained,” that you never ever, ever find yourself where Jesus cannot satisfy your deepest needs. I don’t care where you are—in a Russian concentration camp—it doesn’t make any difference: Jesus is the satisfaction of your life if you know the Lord Jesus as the Apostle Paul did.

F. Christ Was the Strength of Paul’s Life

Now all of these things are what Paul meant when he said, “*For...me to live is Christ.*” (Philippians 1:21) But not only was the satisfaction of his life Christ; the strength of his life was Christ. Look in chapter 4 and verse 13: “*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*” (Philippians 4:13) Now these people who are going down, who are falling into sin, is it because the Lord has forsaken them? No, it’s because they’ve made a pet out of some sin.

I clipped this out of the newspaper. It’s such a horrible story that I really don’t even want to read it to you. But I’m going to read it to you. The title of the article was this: “Python...”—do you know what a python is? It’s a big snake—“Python Crushes Sleeping Infant”:

“A pet eight-foot-long python, apparently in search of food, slithered into the crib of a sleeping baby and crushed the girl to death in a vice-like squeeze, authorities said. ‘Seven-month-old Toni Lynn Dubois probably never uttered a cry, because as the victim tries to breathe, the snake squeezes tighter around the body,’ said a spokesman for the Dallas County medical examiner. The baby, whose body was covered by dozens of needle-fine tooth marks, was found by her mother about 8:00 a.m. Saturday, authorities said. The snake was curled on a ledge above the crib.

“Alerted by his wife, Robert Eugene Dubois, a thirty-five-year-old machinist, rushed into his daughter’s bedroom, grabbed the snake, and wrestled it into another bedroom. ‘Dubois, near hysteria, shot the snake with a twenty-five-caliber pistol and partly severed its head with a kitchen knife,’ said Dallas police sergeant Gus Rose. Officers said the nonpoisonous snake, which has tremendous strength, forced its way out of a thirty-gallon aquarium in the living room where it had been kept since Dubois bought it in California one and a half years ago. The medical examiner’s office ruled the child died from traumatic asphyxia from the snake’s wrapping itself around her body and squeezing. It may have taken as long as five minutes for the child to die.”

That’s one of the most horrifying stories I’ve ever read. For the sake of those of you who have who have infants, babies, I hate to even put a story like that in your mind. And yet I do it, because I tell you sin is so very much like that python. That thing that we take as a pet will crush the life out of that which we love the most.

You treat sin like sin would treat you. I cannot understand how these people play with sin. I don’t understand it. How do deacons and preachers, evangelists, and others?

What happens? I'll tell you, my dear friend, it is not because Jesus has failed them. Maybe they don't have a standard. Maybe they've not called upon that strength. You say, "Adrian, don't you sin?" Yes, I hang my head. You'd probably follow me around and say I don't, because I don't curse, or swear, or steal, or drink, or cheat on my wife. I don't do those things. My sins are of a different kind. I weep sometimes because I don't pray more than I ought. I weep sometimes because I don't love more than I ought. Sometimes I don't witness like I ought. I know that. Sometimes I lose my temper when I ought not. Sometimes pride comes in. But when I'm aware of that sin, I hate it. I had rather eat dirt than to willingly sin.

Listen. Jesus Christ did not come to save us in our sin; He came to save us from our sin. I want to tell you something: Jesus didn't come to save you from hell; He came to save you from sin. Going to heaven and not going to hell is the byproduct of being saved from sin. And if Jesus Christ doesn't have enough strength to keep you from sin, He doesn't have enough strength to keep you from hell. I am not talking about sinless perfection. You don't understand what I mean if you think I am. We're not going to be sinlessly perfect until we get to heaven; but I am telling you that the Bible says, "*Sin shall not have dominion over you.*" (Romans 6:14) The Apostle Paul said, "*For...me to live is Christ*" (Philippians 1:21)—not sin; Christ! The strength of his life was Christ. "*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*" (Philippians 4:13)

G. Christ Was the Supply of Paul's Life

But I want to say something else about the Apostle Paul: Not only was the strength of his life Christ; the supply of his life was Christ. Look in Philippians chapter 4 and verse 19: "*But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*" (Philippians 4:19)

Whatever I need, I get from Christ. The Lord has taken care of me since He called me into the ministry. My dad and I were talking about it. My dear dad's here tonight. I asked my dad, "How were you able to get four kids up, get them all educated, all of them with higher degrees?" He said, "God did it"—"God did it." When I went off to college, I didn't have money to go to college. God supplied my need. When I got married, I really didn't have the money to get married; but God supplied our need, because we felt it was His will that we get married. And we have lived these years giving the tithe, and way beyond the tithe, and giving to our children, giving to our church, giving to this need, and giving to that need. And I've found out God is so good you just can't out-give God.

When we were going to college, Joyce and I lived from hand to mouth, and it was God's hand and our mouth. We were so poor we didn't even know it. I can remember when I was working my way through school working there in the cafeteria clearing tables for my meals; working there in the A & P stocking things; working as a butcher;

working as a car salesman; working as an elevator mechanic; working as a carpenter's helper; working at this thing, working at that thing; just paying the bills, just doing this, just doing that.

I remember one time sitting in a restaurant. The lady said, "What do you want?" I reached in my pocket: there were twenty-one cents there. I looked at the menu, and there was a cheese sandwich for twenty cents. I said, "I want a cheese sandwich." She said, "Do you want anything to drink?" I said, "Just water, ma'am." That's all I had. But the next day there was more.

I heard a preacher say one time, "I don't need any money." I thought to myself, "Well, you're the first preacher I've ever heard say, 'I don't need any money.'" And this is what he said: "My wife and I have forty-something dollars in the bank, and we don't need any money until that's gone." Now, you think about that: "We don't need any money until that's gone."

Here's the Apostle Paul. He's in prison. But I'll tell you, he had everything he needed in prison—everything he needed! And he said, "*My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*" Do you know what's wrong with so many of us? We want things we don't need. We're trying to keep up with the Joneses. About the time we catch up, the Joneses refinance—buying things with money we don't have to impress people we don't like. "*My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*" The Apostle Paul was saying, "The supply of my life is Christ."

I want to say something else. I thank God for Bellevue Baptist Church. I thank you that you give Joyce and myself a salary. But I want to tell you something—and I'm not being cocky: You're not my supply; God is. He may use you—and I'm not ungrateful—but I hear people talk about "hiring a preacher"; you didn't hire me, folks. I'm no hireling. "*The hireling fleeth.*" (John 10:13) "*The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.*" (John 10:11) And in a real sense, you don't pay me. You give your money to God, and God pays me. That's the reason I'm going to preach what God tells me even if you fire me, because I'll tell you something else: I believe the minister ought to be paid; but I would pay to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. And if no church pays me, I'll get a job somewhere. God will pay me. God will take care of me. I'm not going to be dependent upon any church, any man, any woman, any boy, any girl, or anybody but Jesus Christ.

Now I'm not being smart about that. I'm not swaggering about that. I'm not being ungrateful for your love to me. Please don't misunderstand what I'm saying. And please don't stop paying. I don't want to go too far in this sermon. But do you understand what I'm saying? I hope you do.

My dear friend, we can't get dependent upon anybody. I believe a preacher must step in the pulpit, ready to stay the next twenty years, or leave in the next twenty

seconds. He ought to be God's man, preaching God's Word, not dependent upon anybody or anything but Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul said, "I'm not all wrapped up in worries. I'm not worried about it. Jesus Christ is the source of my life. Jesus Christ is the subject of my life. Jesus Christ is the standard of my life. Jesus Christ is the satisfaction of my life. Jesus Christ is the strength of my life. Jesus Christ is the source of my life. He will supply all my need."

Sometimes we want things we don't need. Sometimes we need things we don't want. My dad's here tonight. He used to say, "You need a spanking." He was right. I didn't want one, but I needed one. God knows what we need, and God meets our needs. Now that's what the Apostle Paul meant when he said, "*For...me to live is Christ.*" (Philippians 1:21)

II. "For Me to Die Is Gain"

Let's look at the rest of this verse; just look at the other side. He is saying also, "For me to die is gain." (Philippians 1:21) Now, go back, if you will, to Philippians 1 and verse 21, and look at it: "*For to me to live is Christ,*"—that's the heads; now here's the tails—"*and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not.*" Now, what does that mean: "*I wot not*"? It just simply means, "I don't know." "*For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.*" (Philippians 1:21–24) Now he says, "I have a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better." Now that literally means "which is very much, very far better." That doesn't sound like it's good English, but they tell me it's good Greek. What that means is that he's piling up comparatives. He's saying it's really, really very far much better to be with Christ. What we call "death" is not a tragedy; it's a blessing.

Look at the word *depart*: "I have a desire," he said, "to depart." Let me tell you what that word *depart* means.

A. *Depart* Was a Nautical Term

It was a term that sailors used. It was a term for the unmooring of a ship. When a ship would set sail, the departure of that ship is the word that the Apostle Paul used here. Now when a ship would go out of the harbor, people would stand in that harbor and they would watch that ship sail over the horizon. Have you ever done that and seen a ship just dip over the horizon? So the people in that harbor say as the ship embarks and goes over the horizon, "There she goes." But somewhere there's another harbor, and that ship appears on the horizon, and they say, "Here she comes." Now about those of us who go, they say, "He has gone; he's left us." That's right. But others say, "Here he comes."

I heard about two babies who were in the womb—one baby in one mother's womb,

another baby in another mother's womb—and they were talking about a third baby. Now these babies had learned to communicate in the mother's womb. All this is highly hypothetical and impossible, of course; but they were carrying on a conversation. One baby was talking to the other baby about the third baby. Now the third baby's name was Sam, and this baby was talking to the other baby about Sam. They were very distressed about Sam, for Sam's mother had gone into the delivery room and Sam had been born. And this baby said to that baby about Sam, "Did you hear about Sam? He passed on."

Now, my dear friend, that's like when we say, "Oh, So-and-so passed on." They just went on to a greater life, a more beautiful life, a more wonderful life.

B. *Depart* Was a Military Term

Now, listen: Not only was it a nautical term; it was a military term. When soldiers would fold up their tent and move on to another campaign, the very taking down of the tent, the very folding up of the tent, was the same word that is used here: to *depart*. All of us are in a battle of one kind or another; and when the battle's over, He shall wear a crown.

C. *Depart* Was a Political Term

But I'll tell you what else it was: Not only was it a term that sailors used, and not only was it a term that soldiers used; it was a term that politicians used. It was a political term. It was used for the setting free of a prisoner. When a prisoner was released from jail, this same word was used: a *departure*. Now every one of us is wearing a chain of some kind. I mean, every one of us is hindered and hampered somehow, some way. But when we die, we're going to be unshackled from sin; we're going to be unshackled from fear; we're going to be unshackled from lack of knowledge, and sorrow.

D. *Depart* Was a Farming Term

I'll tell you what else it was: It was a farmer's word. When the farmer would unburden the ox at the end of the day, when he would take the yoke from off the oxen, when he would lay aside that yoke, he used this same word. It was the departure, or the laying aside, of the yoke. That's what's going to happen when we go to heaven: we're going to have this burden lifted. "We'll sing and shout and dance about, and the Lamb will have the praise." Now that's the reason "*for...me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*" (Philippians 1:21)

May I be very frank with you and very honest with you? I mean this. God is listening. I wouldn't mind dying right now at all. I don't want to die right now, because I love my wife, and I love my children, and I've got some work I want to do. See, for me to remain and be with you is far better, and I'm not morbid about it. But if God said to me, "Adrian, come on home," I want to tell you, don't weep for me. When you come to my funeral, I hope—well, it's really not fair to invite you, because I'll not be there, and that will be impolite. But don't pull down the shades and sing some old gloomy song. You all have a

good time, okay? Just have a good time. I am looking forward to it, and I'm not morose about it. And I don't want you to feel sorry for me. I may die of a heart attack, an automobile wreck, or something—I hope not, but who knows?

But listen. The Apostle Paul said, *“For...me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”* Like that ship, I'm sailing into another port. And like that soldier, I'm just going to pull up the tent pegs. And like that prisoner, I'm going to be set free. And like that ox, I'm going to lay down the burden. I am going home with God. That's a philosophy, dear friend, to live by, and a philosophy to die by: *“For...me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”*

Conclusion

Now, let's use our imagination. I want you to finish this sentence: “For me to live is...” Now I want you to put it in one word for you. “Oh,” you say, “I know what the answer is: it is Christ.” No, that's Paul's answer. I want you to put your answer there. You say, “I can't put it in one word.” Paul did. Use two or three, if you have to; but be honest. Nobody else knows what you're thinking. Would you dare to be honest right now and put it in one word? Some of you, if you were to put it in one word, would have to say, “For me to live is money.” I mean, that's what motivates your life. Others would say, “For me to live is pleasure.” I mean, if you would be honest, some would say, “For me to live is my business.” Others would say, “For me to live is my family.” That's noble. Many ladies here tonight, you're living for your family. Others might say, “For me to live is my ministry.” What is it? Could you put it in one word? “For me to live is...”

Now if you put down anything other than Christ, here's the way you have to finish the sentence: “For me to live is whatever you put down there,” and then, “to die is loss.” Whatever it is, if you didn't put Jesus—“for me to live is money”—when you die, you're going to lose it. I mean, you can't take it with you. If you could, it would melt where some of you are going. You say, “Well, for me to live is pleasure.” Okay, to die is loss, because there are no fun and games in a Christless grave. “For me to live is family.” All right then, you're going to kiss them goodbye and go to hell. You name it. You say, “For me to live is ministry.” Well, dear friend, if you have a ministry without Christ, you're going to hell. What I'm trying to say is this: that if your life is anything other than the Apostle Paul's; if you don't have a philosophy to live by, you don't have a philosophy to die by. The Apostle Paul said, *“For...me to live is Christ”*—“He's the source of my life. And therefore,” he said, “for me to die is gain. If I live, I'm living for Christ. If I die, I'm going to Christ.”

The Crucifixion of King Self

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: October 19, 2003

Main Scripture Text: Philippians 2:1–11

“Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.”

PHILIPPIANS 2:4

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Introduction

Be finding, if you would, Philippians chapter 2. If you don't have a Bible, there may be one there in the pew before you. And pick it up, and turn it to Philippians chapter 2. I want to talk to you today on this subject: “The Crucifixion of King Self.”

There is a cruel despot that wants to rule over your life and keep you in bondage. He

is, beyond the shadow of doubt, your worst enemy. And if you want to see more about him, then go look in the mirror. His name is Self—King Self. His throne is the human heart. His kingdom consists of three people: I, myself, and me. He comes from a dynasty. It began with Adam, and it continues on down to this present age. Self wants to rule in your heart. Now let me tell you something: *When self is on the throne, Christ is on the cross; when Christ is on the throne, self is on the cross. There needs to be a crucifixion of King Self.*

Now his majesty King Self was born a king. He came into this world wanting to rule and wanting self-attention. He cried when he was yet a baby and wanted to be served. Like it or not, we are all by nature self-centered. Now you may think that your problem in life is your weakness. Your problem in life is not your weakness; your problem in life is the strength of King Self, who is ruling over you if you've not yet put King Self to death.

Now with all of this in mind, I'm here to tell you that we need a complete change of thinking. What we need is a mind transport, not a brain transplant. That's not possible. But a mind transport is. Let's look in Philippians chapter 2: *"If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind"*—underscore that: *"of one mind."* Everybody having one mind—wouldn't that be unusual for everybody here in this building to have one mind? *"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind"*—underscore that, again—*"in lowliness of mind"*—*"let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things,"*—that is, with King Self ruling—*"but every man also on the things of others."* Now, watch this: *"Let this mind..."*—there it is again—*"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."* (Philippians 2:1–11)

Now I've said, in order to deal with King Self, what we need, really, is a new mind. We have to have the mind of the Lord Jesus, not a new brain. If you do what I tell you to do, and what God's Word urges us to do today, then it's not going to increase your IQ; but, oh, my brother, my sister, it will change your life.

Now, what is the mind of Christ? What is the mind of Christ as over against the machinations and the despotic rule of King Self? I want to tell you three things about the mind of Christ. I'll spend more time on the first one, and less time on the second two.

I. The Mind of Christ Is a Selfless Mind

But, first of all, the mind of Christ is a selfless mind—a selfless mind. Look again in verse 4: *“Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.”* Underscore the word others: *“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him”—listen to this—“the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.”* (Philippians 2:4–7)

Now the purpose of life is this: It is not about you; it is about God. And God wants to use you to be a blessing. Now a purpose-centered, purpose-driven life is not a self-centered life. Most of us by nature are self-centered. Most Americans are self-centered; and on top of that, they’re proud of it. As a matter of fact, they value self-centeredness. And it’s good to have a good self-image. You need a good self-image. But churches today are not talking about having a good self-image. Many churches today really are talking about self-centeredness. Theology has migrated into *me-ology*: “It’s all about me.”

Now again, I want to say there’s nothing wrong with having a good self-image. As a matter of fact, I hope you do have a good self-image. Having a good self-image and being self-centered are two different things. A wise man has said, “There is nothing so empty as a self-centered life; and there’s nothing so full as a life centered in the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Now Madison Avenue and those who market know the power of self-centeredness: “You owe it to yourself.” “You deserve a break today.” “Have it your way.” Now, friend, that will sell hamburgers. The booksellers know it. You go into the bookstore today and look at the books in this genre, and you’re going to find out that all of these books are talking about success, self-esteem, realizing your potential, being the best, and being fulfilled.

The social engineers know it, and that’s the reason we have the problem of abortion. They speak of what? A woman’s right to choose. Now they never finished the sentence. To choose what? To choose to kill a baby. Now people say, “Well, we’re not going to have this baby.” You already have this baby. Your choice is whether you’re going to have a dead one or a live one. That’s hard, but it’s true. What does most abortion today root in in America? King Self, Queen Self on the throne. Why do we have the divorce epidemic in America today? I’ll tell you why. The number one reason is a man or a woman says, “I owe it to myself to be happy.” May I say that you owe it to yourself to keep your holy vows before a righteous and a holy God. That’s what you owe. You owe something to your children. But we are a self-centered society. And even the church today is trying to make God in man’s image. And as I say, churches have become a self-service cafeteria line.

Now the purpose of the purpose-driven life is not to find our freedom, but to find our Master. And when we find our Master, when we are abandoned to Him, for the very first time, we will find our freedom, for *“If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.”* (John 8:36)

Now the passage that I read to you was taken from the book of Philippians that was written to the church at Philippi, a very wonderful church. But there was some division in the church. And so Paul is writing to these people to be likeminded. Look, if you will, in verse 2: *“Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory.”* (Philippians 2:2–3) Now God have mercy on us when we’re not of one mind. God have mercy upon us when a church is filled with strife and vainglory. What causes strife is vainglory. What is another word for *vainglory*? Pride. And pride causes strife. And strife causes division. And what Paul wanted was a unified church.

Now, what was the reason for the division? Pride. Vainglory. King Self is on the throne. Now, what is the answer to this? Look at it again: *“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory;”*—verse 3—*“but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.”* (Philippians 2:3–4)

Now, let me say again. When I’m talking about King Self, I’m talking about an old sinful predisposition to sin and selfishness and pride. I am not talking about a good self-image. Humility is not thinking bad of yourself. You are the righteousness of God in Christ. (2 Corinthians 5:21) God made you. God loves you. You are somebody in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now we’re to be like Christ.

Was Christ humble? Indeed, He was the very Lord of glory. But was He clothed with humility? He was. Sometimes, when you want a good time of meditation, take your Bible and turn to John chapter 13, and read slowly how Jesus is washing His disciples’ feet. Here He is, the Lord of glory. The Bible says, “And Jesus, knowing that he had come from God, knowing that He is going to God, knowing that the Father had committed all things into His hands...” (John 13:3) Is that a good self-image? You’d better believe it. He’s come from God, going to God, and all things are in His hands. The Bible says that then He laid aside His garments, took a robe, girded Himself, and washed His disciples’ feet. (John 13:4–5) Knowing He’s come from God, and is going to God, and that all things are in His hands, He is washing His disciples’ feet.

I’ll tell you there’s one thing you’ll never do—and, friend, that is to look down on somebody while you’re washing their feet. It’s impossible. It’s impossible. Here He is washing the smelly, dirty feet of fishermen—the Lord of glory. That is humility: not thinking lowly of yourself, but rather knowing who you are, and yet thinking of other people. It is a selfless life, not King Self on the throne. Now the key word is *others*. Look

at it, if you will here, in verse 4; look at it clearly—Philippians 2, and verse 4: “*Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.*” (Philippians 2:4)

William Booth founded the Salvation Army. He was getting up in age and he was a little feeble. They were having a grand convention. They said it would be wonderful if William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, could come. He couldn't come. They said, “Well, send us a letter.” He wasn't able to do that. “Send us a telegram.” He sent a one-word telegram. Do you know what was on it? One word: “Others.”—“Others.” That's what it's all about: others. It's not about you; it's about God; and therefore, through God, it is about other people.

A. **The *One Another* Commands**

Have you ever thought about the *one another* commands in the Bible? Let me give you some. I'm going to go through them real quickly, and I want you to jot them down—talking about how we're to deal with others.

1. **We Are to Love One Another**

For example, we are to love one another. These are what we would call reciprocal commands, the *one another* commands. Listen to this. In John 13, verse 34, Jesus said, “*A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another.*” (John 13:34) That's not a suggestion; it is a command. It is the last command that Jesus Christ gave before His arrest, trial, and crucifixion. Friend, you don't need a bumper sticker, a fish on your car, a cross around your neck, or a lapel pin to show that you're a Christian. Jesus said, “*By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*” (John 13:35) That's the mark of a Christian. It's not optional, but it's not automatic. If it were automatic, then He would not have given the command. You must choose to love one another. We're to love one another. Do you love?

2. **We Are to Receive One Another**

Number two: We're to receive one another. Put this verse down—Romans 15, verse 7: “*Wherefore receive ye one another,*”—why?—“*as Christ also received us to the glory of God.*” (Romans 15:7) When you come to church, do you receive everybody? We're to receive them.

You know, this church at Philippi was an unusual church if you see how the church got started. Do you know who made up the church at Philippi? The intellectual Apostle Paul had about the equivalency of a triple Ph.D.—a brilliant man. And then there was also a jailer and his household that had been converted. There was also a demon-possessed girl who had been saved and was a part of the church. And there was also in this church there at Philippi a lady whose name was Lydia. She was a traveling saleslady. And together they became the nucleus of this church. You could not get a

group with much more disparity than this group, and yet they all had the same mind.

Now even when people don't understand all of the faith, when people are weak in their theology, that doesn't mean they're to be excluded; that means they're to be included all the more. Romans 14, verse 1, says this: "*Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations.*" (Romans 14:1) That is, don't argue with him about the difference between Tweedle-dee and Tweedle-dum. Receive him. The paraphrased Living Bible gives it something like this: "*Receive a brother into the church, even if he scarcely believes Christ can save him.*" (Romans 14:1) Now we're not here to cause people to jump through all these kind of hoops before they can come into the fellowship.

Who needs the fellowship but babies in Christ? We are to receive one another. And why do we receive them? We receive them because Christ has received them. And I want to tell you, there is plenty of room in the family for these. Now that doesn't mean we're to receive heretics. It doesn't mean that we're to receive willful sinners. The Bible says, "*If there come any unto you, and bring not [the doctrine of Christ], receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed.*" (2 John 1:10) Friend, you can have a soft heart; you don't have to have a soft head. But we are to receive people.

3. We Are to Greet One Another: Personally, Impartially, and Thoughtfully

Not only are we to love one another, receive one another; but also, listen to this: We are to greet one another. When we have this little time of fellowship and we greet one another, do you do that? Or do you just kind of stand there? Well, if you're a new Christian, we're going to give you a chance to grow. But if you're an older Christian and you haven't learned how to receive one another, then you're missing a blessing, and others are missing a blessing.

Listen to 1 Corinthians 16, verse 20: "*All the brethren greet you. Greet ye one another with an holy kiss.*" (1 Corinthians 16:20) Now when I tell you to shake hands, you ought to be glad that I don't tell you to kiss. The Bible says we're to greet one another with a holy kiss. Well, have you ever been kissed in church? I have, plenty of times. If you go to the Middle East today, they'll still kiss you.

I took my father overseas and I introduced him to a friend in the Middle East, and he kissed my father on both cheeks. My father, who had never been overseas before and didn't know a lot about Bible customs, backed off. He said, "Well, that's the first time that's ever been done." But he was kissed on this cheek and kissed on that cheek. That was a custom in Bible times.

"Well," you say, "Pastor Rogers, are we to be biblical? Therefore, are we to kiss one another?" No, you're missing the point. The Bible says, "Render custom unto whom custom is due." (Romans 13:7) What is our custom today? To shake hands. It's the same thing. You ask what this means today. How does this apply to us today? It means

that we are to receive one another. We'll find some way to demonstrate our love and our welcome. It should be personal. It's not just simply singing a welcome song. The radio can't do it. Television can't do it. The pastor cannot do it from the pulpit. You must do it.

Not only personal, it is also to be impartial. *A great church is a church where everybody is somebody and where Jesus Christ is Lord.* It is to be thoughtful. Now, friend, be careful. Our challenge as a church is to stay small as we grow. We're to keep our church not program-centered—I thank God for our programs—but people-centered and relational-centered, and we're to create a climate for growth. Listen. *Evangelism is as much caught as it is taught. Loving churches grow, and growing churches love.*

Sometimes people say, "Well, I don't believe in a big church. I want a little church that's friendly. Big churches are not friendly." Well now, let me ask you a question. How do you think they got big: by being unfriendly?" Think about it. No. In a big family, there's plenty of love. But we need to be thoughtful and wise. It's a myth that large churches are cold. But, friend, they've taken surveys to see what makes a church grow. Do you know what it is? Number one—number one: It is friendliness—the key factor. In the surveys taken, nearly fifty percent of those who filled out a survey said it was friendliness that attracted them to a church; fifteen said program; and twelve percent said location.

Do you have the idea that a church is going to grow because of its location? Let me ask you, how do you choose your friends? Do you put a spot on the map and then make concentric circles and say, "We're going to keep our friendship within that circle"? Of course not: not today in the day of automobiles! Twelve percent said they choose a church because of belief. Seven percent said they choose a church because of denomination. We are to receive one another. We're to do it personally. Everybody who comes in needs a touch. They need a handshake. They need a smile. They need a look, a word, and love. We need to tell your face about it.

I led a man to Christ in another church. He said, "I came to your church. I wanted to criticize; but I watched people walking out of one service before I went into the next." He said, "Every one of them had a smile of their face. They looked like they'd been chewing lotus leaves." That's what the man said to me—whatever chewing a lotus leaf will do for you; I've never chewed one. But he said, "I saw the radiance of Jesus Christ on the faces of these people." Listen. Learn to laugh. Learn to smile. It's more important to influence people than it is to impress people.

I have learned from my study of crowd psychology, and what people say is that people make up their mind the first twelve minutes they come to a church building whether they like it or not. I mean, after then, you've lost your opportunity—the first twelve minutes! Now, how much of it is what you're going to do?

You ushers—how many ushers? Lift your hand. Now, listen. I want to tell you something. An usher may be more important than these dudes sitting on the platform. Who is more important to you when you go out to the airport: the president of the airline, or the person at the ticket counter? The person at the ticket counter, not the president of the airline. You may not ever even meet the president of the airline. Chances are, you will not. But you'll deal with that person at the counter, right? You walk in this church and see these ushers. Now if an usher looks like he's been weaned on a dill pickle, then that may be the very first impression that you're going to get of this church. You sit by some person who claims to be a member of this church and treats you coldly and indifferently, friend, I want to tell you, we need to receive one another. People want to be wanted. They want to be welcomed. But they don't want to be watched. They don't want to be stuck out. And we need to practice here at Bellevue Baptist Church nonjudgmental love.

That doesn't mean we accept or approve the wrong things they do. Jesus did not accept or approve what the woman at the well did. This woman had been married five times and was living with a man that wasn't her husband. But Jesus loved her, and Jesus ministered to her and cared for her. Church, this is a needy world, and our ministry is to others. We're to receive one another.

4. We Are to Care for One Another

Number four: We're to care for one another. First Corinthians 12, verse 25: *"That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another."* (1 Corinthians 12:25) You're to care for me. I am to care for you. There's no room in a church for arrogance. There's no room in a church for envy. There's no room in a church for rivalry. There's no room in a church for self-sufficiency or disunity. God put you here not to be served, but to serve—to minister to others.

5. We Are to Endure One Another

And we're to endure one another. You say, "Well, you don't know some of the members of this church like I do. If you knew them, then you'd feel about them like I feel about them." Well now, listen. In Ephesians chapter 4, verse 2, the Bible says, *"With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love."* (Ephesians 4:2) *"Forbearing"*—well, let me just change that to "enduring one another."

Now we're not all lovely. If you don't believe it, then go look in the mirror. I used to think that a perfect church was a church where everybody was a mature, Spirit-filled believer. That's not a perfect church; that's a failing church. A perfect church is where there are baby Christians. Would you say that a perfect church is a church, or a perfect family is a family, where they are all parents and grandparents, and no babies coming in? No. If at all possible, we're made to reproduce and to keep our family going, that there might be a godly seed. And so some of you this morning are baby Christians. And

you may have to endure certain things with babies. If you've had any around your house, then you know what I'm talking about.

6. We Are to Forgive One Another

Now we're also to forgive one another. Ephesians 4, 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) How many of you have been forgiven? Let me see your hand. All right now, what right do you have therefore not to forgive one another? God has quickly, willingly, gladly, and gracefully forgiven us. We're to forgive one another quickly and genuinely and completely. Now that's what a Christ-centered life is like: the mind of Christ. It is of others.

B. The Profile of King Self

Now, what is King Self like? What are the marks of a selfish life? I want to mention some, and I want you to jot them down. Here's the profile of King Self, this king who is your worst enemy, who rules over the kingdom of selfishness.

1. King Self Has Self-Will

King Self has self-will. Remember Lucifer said, *"I will exalt my throne above the stars of God."* (Isaiah 14:13) Five times in that passage in Isaiah chapter 14 he says, "I will," "I will," "I will," "I will," "I will." That was his mark. What did Jesus say? *"Not my will, but thine."* (Luke 22:42) There are two ways of living: the mind of self—"I will"; and the mind of Christ—"Thy will." Satan said, *"I will ascend."* (Isaiah 14:13) Jesus said, "I will descend." He stepped out of heaven and came to this earth. King Self is self-willed.

Now, do you want to be like Jesus? Listen to John chapter 5, verse 30. Jesus said, *"I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me."* (John 5:30) This morning we're going to ask you to make some commitments—not to us, but to yourself, and to God. And would you say, "O God, I want your will"—"I want your will?" King Self is self-willed. King Self is self-seeking. Self lives for its own pleasure, pride, and glory. What did Jesus say in John chapter 8, verse 50? *"I seek not mine own glory"—"I seek not mine own glory."* (John 8:50)

I can remember playing sports when if you did something good, then you just kind of bowed your head and you didn't strut. It all started with "the mouth of the South," Muhammad Ali, who was then Cassius Clay. And now it's the big thing in sports to strut your own glory. And sometimes that happens in churches. I know church members who can strut sitting down. Jesus said, *"I seek not mine own glory."*

2. King Self Is Self-Assertive

King Self is not only self-seeking, but he's also self-assertive. His three favorite words are *I*, *me*, and *mine*. And he'll turn every conversation to himself. *In the South Pacific, there's a bird called the me-me bird. True. They call it the me-me bird, because if you*

listen to the song of the me-me bird, he just has two words in his vocabulary: *me-me, me-me*. I've never seen one with feathers. But I've met a lot of them. I mean, when you talk to these people, it won't be long till they'll be knee-deep in conversation. You tell them about your surgery, they'll tell you about their surgery. You tell them a joke, they'll tell you a better joke, or so they think. They turn everything to themselves. They are self-assertive, wrapped up in themselves.

3. King Self Is Self-Indulgent

They are self-indulgent. King Self indulges himself. He's motivated by selfish desire and not by principle. There's no room for denial in King Self. King Self eats and drinks, because he wants to eat and drink.

There was a man who said he was a headhunter for organizations trying to find true leaders. He said, "How do you determine a true leader? How do you find a man who's going to excel?" He said, "Not by giving him responsibilities"—listen to this—"but giving him privileges." He said, "You can get a man to do his responsibilities if you pay him enough; but if you want to see what a man really is, then don't give him responsibilities; give him privileges, and see how he uses those privileges." A man who's self-centered will use those privileges for himself; but a man who is a true leader will use his privileges to develop other people. Now many of us have privileges in the Lord Jesus Christ; but what do we do? We take these privileges, and we become self-indulgent.

4. King Self Is Full of Self-Pity

King Self is full of self-pity. He's always licking his wounds; complaining, moaning, and groaning. You don't dare ask him how he feels, because you'll get an "organ recital." Now I'm not talking about people who are truly hurting, but I'm talking about those who are constantly feeling sorry for themselves and exaggerating their sorrows.

5. King Self Is Self-Conscious

King Self is self-conscious. He's easily wounded. He enjoys a pout. True love is not easily provoked. (1 Corinthians 13:5)

6. King Self Is Self-Deprecating

King Self is self-deprecating. Have you ever heard a person say, "Well, I just know I'm no good; I'm just not much." That's not humility. As a matter of fact, it's one of the worst forms of pride. And these people are always saying, "I'm so humble." You watch them. One man said, "Well, at least I'm not proud." A friend said, "Well, why should you be? You have nothing to be proud of." He said, "Oh, yeah! I've got as much to be proud of as you do." You see how subtle this thing of pride is. Self-deprecation.

7. King Self Is Self-Exalting

Self-exaltation: Again, people not who put themselves down, but who put themselves up. They claim to be self-made men. And then they worship their creation.

8. King Self Is Self-Justifying

Self-justification: Self—King Self—is never wrong. He can give you a good reason for every neglect or every failure. King Self always wants to exact his rights and revenge the wrongs against him, and an apology will stick in his throat: he can't get it out.

9. King Self Is Self-Confident

Self-confidence: You say, "Well, pastor, that's one thing we need to develop, is self-confidence." No, it's one of the worst things around. Who was filled with self-confidence? Peter, when Peter said to Jesus, "I'll go with you to prison and to death." (Luke 22:33) That was self-confidence that failed him. Something that may sound like self-confidence is not self-confidence. The Apostle Paul said, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:13) That's Christ-confidence. Now all I'm trying to say is that the mind of Christ is a selfless mind.

II. The Mind of Christ is a Serving Mind

Now I said the first point would take more time. For the second point, I've only got a couple of minutes. Number two: The mind of Christ is a serving mind—a serving mind. Look in Philippians 2, verse 7—speaking of Jesus: "*But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him...*"—listen, church—"took upon him the form of a servant." (Philippians 2:7)

Do you want to be like Jesus? Do you want the mind of Christ? We have learned that you have been shaped to serve. God made you to serve. Jesus came as a servant. The Apostle Paul—the mighty Apostle Paul, greater than anyone in this building—said of himself in 1 Corinthians chapter 9, verse 19, "*For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all.*" (1 Corinthians 9:19) Paul, a freeborn Roman citizen, made himself servant to the Greeks and the Barbarians, the wise and the foolish; all were precious to him. (Romans 1:14)

III. The Mind of Christ Is a Sacrificial Mind

Number three—you say, "Why wasn't number one that quick?"—number three: The mind of Christ not only is a selfless mind, and a serving mind; but the mind of Christ therefore is a sacrificial mind. Look in verse 8. Here's Jesus, who made Himself a servant. Now, watch this: "*And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*" (Philippians 2:8)

Sacrifice: He laid down His life for us.

A preacher of yesteryear, Dr. Jowett, said, "The ministry that costs nothing accomplishes nothing." Now many of us are wondering what those other people are going to sign up for, but we don't think the message this morning applies to us. We're like that man who heard that song, "Take My Life and Let It Be": he just re-translated it,

“Take My Wife and Let Me Be.” God has a ministry for you. Now, what good is it going to do us to have *40 Days of Purpose*, and come to the end, and you not be changed?

Now, let me tell you the first sacrifice that is to be made is a crucifixion. And the one who is to be crucified is not Jesus. He’s been crucified. He was crucified to die for that old man that we are by nature; and therefore we are to die with Him. There is to be the crucifixion of King Self. I warn you, Self will plead eloquently for its life. *Self will even make Christ King if Self can make Self prime minister.* We do not want to literally die to ourselves. Now in me, in my flesh, is no good thing. When I say, “Deny self,” I’m not talking about denying yourself things. Simon Peter denied himself things before he denied Simon Peter. He gave up his nets before he gave up himself.

“Well,” you say, “Pastor Rogers, how am I going to crucify myself?” You can’t. You can’t! You might get one hand nailed up, but you’re not going to nail the other one up. No man has ever crucified himself. Good news: You’ve already been crucified when Jesus died for you. But now what you need to do is to receive it, to recognize it, and to act on it. The Bible says, “Reckon yourselves therefore dead unto sin and alive unto God.” (Romans 6:11) You have to deal with King Self—self-will, self-assertion, self-pride, self-arrogance—and say, “It’s not about me; it is about God.”

Conclusion

Now, what have we learned? Five things: I was planned for God’s pleasure—that’s worship. Number two, I was formed for God’s family—that’s fellowship. Number three, I was created to be like Christ—that’s discipleship. Number four, I was shaped for serving God—that’s ministry. And, number five, I was made for a mission—that is evangelism. Oh, oh, oh, friends, brothers, sisters, listen. When we say, “Dear God, it is not about me; it is about you; and therefore, about others,” what do you think is going to happen to Bellevue? What do you think is going to happen in your family? What do you think is finally going to happen in your life? King Self is a cruel master. Don’t let him rule. He was crucified with Christ.

Unity

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: November 10, 1996

Main Scripture Text: Philippians 2:1–11

“Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.”

PHILIPPIANS 2:2

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Conclusion

Introduction

I want to talk to you about the thing that I want us to preserve perhaps more than any other thing except our orthodoxy—and that is our unity and our fellowship. The devil would love to divide this church. But I think one of the great marks of Bellevue Baptist Church is her unity and the wonderful, wonderful, glorious spirit of God that we feel when we come here together. The Bible calls that fellowship. It comes from the Greek word *koinonia*. It means “to be of one mind and of one spirit.”

There was a great basketball coach that many of you know about—Coach John Wooden. Coach Wooden was formerly the basketball coach at UCLA, and he indeed was a legend in his own time. And somebody asked this coach, “Coach, what does it take to have a winning team?” Now you would expect that he might give some great explanation or some convoluted answer, but his answer was so simple that it sounds

simplistic. But yet if you think about it, you can understand why he was such a great coach. He said, “There are three things that are essential to have a great team: Number one: You must get the team into condition. Number two: You must teach them to play together. And, number three: You must teach them the fundamentals of the game.” It’s that simple. Get them in condition. Teach them to play together. And teach them the fundamentals of the game.

Now the Apostle Paul said that being a Christian is a lot like an athletic endeavor. And it takes exactly those three things that Coach Wooden said to make a great basketball team, to make a great coach, and to make a great church: Number one: Get the people in condition. Number two: Teach them to play together. And, number three: Teach them the fundamentals of the game. Or if you’d like for me to put it in a little bit more spiritual language: Get the folks sanctified—that’s getting them into condition. Number two: build a fellowship—that’s teaching them to play together. And, number three: Do discipleship—that’s teaching them how to play the game. Sanctification, fellowship, and discipleship will make a great church, will it not? Same three things, but we’re just putting them now into spiritual language. Well, I want to take that middle word, that word of teaching them to play together, *unity*—or if we want to use the spiritual term, *fellowship*—and I want us to think about this.

It seems that Paul had detected a slight flaw in this wonderful church, this church at Philippi. It seemed like that perhaps there was beginning to be just a little drift in the fellowship. For example, if you would look in chapter 4, verse 2: “*I beseech Eudoias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.*” (Philippians 4:2) And evidently there were a couple of ladies here who were miffed at one another. And so he said, “Now, listen, ladies. Be of the same mind in the Lord.” So I want us to think a little bit about unity in the church tonight. And go back to chapter 2, if you will.

I. The Motive for Unity

And I want us to think, first of all, of the motive for unity in our church. Why should we at Bellevue Baptist Church strive with all of our hearts to preserve this unity? Let me give you four reasons for unity that come right out of this passage. I’m in Philippians chapter 2, and look in verse 1: “*If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.*” (Philippians 2:1–2)

Now, let’s just stop there and say, “What is the motive for unity?”

A. Our Common Lord

Number one: our common Lord. He says, “*If there be therefore any consolation in*

Christ...” That literally means—the word *consolation* means—“encouragement.” “If there’s any *encouragement* that comes from God...” And he’s saying *if*, he’s not saying like there may be or there may not. That word *if* may be translated “since.” “*Since* the Lord Jesus encourages us”—that’s what he’s saying; “*Since* the Lord Jesus *encourages* us, then we are to be of the same mind.” It is Jesus, not Paul, who is encouraging Bellevue Baptist Church to be of the same mind.

And any disunity is disloyalty to Jesus Christ. Do you believe that? If we do not love one another, then it is because we do not properly love the Lord Jesus. The highest motivation for unity in our church is not because of our reputation, not because of the congregation, and not because of the denomination; it is because of Jesus. So here’s the first reason for this reason. Here’s the first motive: our common Lord. His name is Jesus.

B. Our Common Love

Number two: our common love. Look again in this verse. He says, “If there be any encouragement from Christ, any comfort of love...” That is, if our love is real—and the word *comfort* means “with strength”—then we’re going to have this tender love one for another. We just had a wonderful deacons meeting tonight. And a great part of the deacons meeting was where the deacons were telling one another how much they love one another. And it brought tears to my eyes, because the Bible says, “*If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.*” (1 John 4:11) And Jesus said in John 15:12, “*This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.*” (John 15:12)

C. Our Common Life

So, why should we stay together as a church? Our common Lord—Jesus encourages us to do it. Our common love—we love one another, because Jesus first loved us. And then, here’s a third reason. He mentions in verse 1 the “*fellowship of the Spirit.*” (Philippians 2:1) Now that word *fellowship* is *koinonia*; it means that the Holy Spirit that’s in me is the same Holy Spirit that’s in you. And the Holy Spirit that’s in her is the same Holy Spirit that’s in him. This is the fellowship of the Spirit: the *koinonia* of the Spirit. We have a common Lord, a common love, and a common life. The Holy Spirit of God that dwells in me dwells in you. The Holy Spirit of God keeps us from being just an organization and makes us an organism. He is the life of the church. He puts the life of Christ in us. And the same Spirit that’s in me is in you, because we’re in the same Body and share one Spirit, the Holy Spirit. Therefore, if I hurt you, then I hurt me. If I encourage you, then I encourage me, for we are in this together.

Years and years ago as a young preacher, I read a story about two ships that were in a naval battle, and they were shelling one another in the fog. And when the fog lifted,

they found out they were both on the same side. And I think sometimes that happens in churches where people who share a common life turn on one another to feed and devour on one another.

D. Our Common Load

And then, here's the fourth reason that we need unity in the church: our common Lord—our common love, our common life, and the common load that we're all carrying. Look, if you will, here in verse 1. He speaks of *“bowels and mercies.”* (Philippians 2:1) What does that mean? It literally means “tender mercies.” Why does the old King James say the *“bowels and mercies”*? Have you ever hurt so bad that you just felt it in the pit of your stomach? That's what he's talking about. He's saying, “Oh, if you really love Jesus, then you're going to love down so deep that you're going to have this tender mercy for those who are hurting.”

Now every one of us is sitting on a row in this church. And I can say this, and I believe I'm correct: On every row tonight there's a heartache; if you only knew it—on every row! Everybody is sitting near somebody, most likely, who has a heartache. And, folks, they're carrying a load, and they need your love, because they share your life, and they know your Lord. And that's the motive for unity.

II. The Method of Unity

Now, let's talk a little bit about the method of unity. What is it? Look in verses 2 through 4—we're in chapter 2. He says here, *“Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.”* (Philippians 2:2–4)

A. Harmony

So, first of all, he says we're to be likeminded; that means we're to be in harmony. Now here at Bellevue Baptist Church we have people from all walks of life. We have young and old, educated and uneducated. We have people who are financially well off; we have people who are impoverished. We have people who are white, people who are black, and people who are Asian. We have people who are from the North and people from the South. We have people who have different ideas and who have different political persuasions. And yet we are to be in harmony. We are to be, according to this verse, likeminded.

Now that doesn't mean that we all have to be carbon copies. That doesn't mean that we all have to think alike. It doesn't mean that we can't have various ideas about various subjects. But yet there must be that harmony.

A well-known music teacher said—and I’ve used this illustration many times—“It’s virtually impossible to tune one piano to another piano—virtually impossible! But if you’ll take one piano and tune it to a tuning fork, and take another piano and tune it to the same tuning fork, then rather than having cacophony, you can have harmony, because both pianos are tuned to the same tuning fork. As a matter of fact, you could take one of these pianos and take it downtown and tune it to the same tuning fork: it could be in a completely different place, and yet it would be in harmony with the piano here.”

And that’s the way it is with us. When I’m in tune with Jesus, and you’re in tune with Jesus, we may be different on some subjects; but, folks, in our core, in our heart, we’re going to be likeminded. We’ll have as many different ideas as there are people here tonight—several thousand of us; but we’re all going to be in agreement on this one: His name is Jesus, amen? Jesus! We are likeminded about the Lord Jesus.

Now you see, folks, we’re talking tonight about unity. You know, there are three words that sound alike: One is *unity*. One is *union*. And one is *uniformity*. Now it’s unity that we’re looking for, not union. Somebody has well said, “You can take two tomcats, tie their tails together, and hang them over a clothesline; and you have union, but you don’t have unity.” And you can kind of conjure up that picture in your mind. We want more than union. We want to be more than wired together, or rusted together, or frozen together—that’s union. And then, uniformity. What is uniformity? Uniformity comes from *without*: everybody saying the same thing, looking alike, and doing the same things. But that uniformity comes by pressure from *without*. Union comes from *within*, where we have the same Spirit and the same Lord. We’re not brought together by rules. We’re not brought together by threats. We are bound together by love of the Lord Jesus. And so there’s to be harmony.

B. Humility

And right with that harmony, there’s to be humility. Look in verse 3: “*Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.*” (Philippians 2:3) Now the word strife refers to a party spirit. You say, “Well, I’m a Democrat,” or, “I’m a Republican,” or, “I went to this high school,” or, “I went to that high school,” or, “I belong to this class,” or, “I belong to that class.” And if you have a party spirit, then your group will come first, rather than the Church of the Lord Jesus.

And sometimes I see churches with a party spirit. And sometimes it keeps a church from growing. You see, for example, a growing church might need space. We might move you out of your Sunday School class to another Sunday School class. And you say, “Now, wait a minute! You’re not going to move us! This is our department! This is our Sunday School class!” No, it’s not. It belongs to Jesus. And when we get that class spirit, when we get that party spirit, that’s dangerous. Sometimes people want to follow

different pastors. The Apostle Paul had that problem with the Corinthian church. One said, “*I am of Paul*”; another, “*I am of Apollos*.” (1 Corinthians 3:4) No, folks. We’re of Jesus. We belong to the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so, *strife* speaks of a party spirit. *Vainglory* speaks of a proud spirit. And pride is a hurtful thing in any church. And the reason we don’t have unity in churches is because of pride, because the Bible says, “*Only by pride cometh contention*.” (Proverbs 13:10) You see, the party spirit is putting someone else down; the prideful spirit is lifting yourself up. And either one of these will hurt the fellowship of the church.

C. Helpfulness

And so, what do we need? What is the method of this unity? What is the method of this fellowship? It is humility. It is, my dear friend, harmony. Here’s the third thing: It is helpfulness. Look, if you will, in verse 4: “*Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others*.” (Philippians 2:4) William Booth founded the Salvation Army. They were having a great convention. They wanted the old general to come, and he was too sick and worn to come. They said, “Well, send us a letter. Send us a telegram. Send us something that we can read to the convention.” He sent a one-word telegraph. You know what that one word was? “Others.” Others: that’s what keeps a church together—when we’re thinking of other people. We sing a song:

*Others, Lord, yes others,
Let this my motto be,
Help me to live for others,
That I may live like Thee.*

—CHARLES D. MEIGS

III. The Model for Unity: The Mind of Christ

Now, here’s the third and final thing before we have the Lord’s Supper. I’ve talked to you about the motive for our unity. I’ve talked to you about the method for our unity, and what it is. This method that comes right out of the Word of God is harmony, humility, and helpfulness. Now, last of all, before we have the Lord’s Supper, let me talk to you a little bit about the model for unity.

Now Paul is asking for unity; but now he’s going to give an illustration of what he is talking about. Begin now, if you will, in verse 5. He says, “*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus*:”—now that’s the model—“*who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name*

which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:5–11)

Now to have the kind of unity that I’m talking about, we must admit that we do not have what it takes, because our minds are carnal. So what we need is the mind of Christ. And we can have the mind of Christ, because the Apostle Paul says, *“Let this mind be in you.”* (Philippians 2:5) And if you’re willing, then you can let the mind of the Lord Jesus be in you. That means that His mental and moral attitude will be ours, supernaturally.

Now we just allow the mind of the Lord Jesus to be in us. What is the mind of Jesus?

A. The Mind of Voluntary Service

Well, first of all, it is the mind of voluntary service. Look at it right here, if you will—verse 7: *“But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant”* (Philippians 2:7)—voluntary service.

In our Love Offering this year, we’re not asking you merely to give your money. We are asking you to give your voluntary service. Now you may think you’re too good, too big, or too important to serve in our children’s department and our pre-school department. I’m glad the Lord Jesus, who was *“in the form of God [and] thought it not robbery to be equal with God,”* (Philippians 2:6) didn’t think He was too good to leave heaven to come to this earth and to gird Himself with a towel and wash His disciples’ feet. *“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”* (Philippians 2:5) His service was voluntary service. And this church ought to be crowded with volunteers who say, “Here I am. You don’t have to beg me to serve Jesus by serving these little children.” Service does not demean you; it exalts you. And you didn’t get saved and put in Bellevue Baptist Church to sit, soak, and to sour; but to serve.

B. The Mind of Vicarious Sacrifice

Now, here’s the second thing; here’s the second thing in this model: not only voluntary service, but also vicarious sacrifice—vicarious sacrifice. Look again, if you will, in verse 8 of this same chapter: *“And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”* (Philippians 2:8) Jesus died upon that cross in agony and blood for the Church.

We’re going to ask you in the Love Offering not only to serve, but to sacrifice. And very frankly, most of us know very little about sacrifice. Very frankly, most of our giving does not change our lifestyle. We do the same things we would have done had we not given. We go to the same places, eat the same food, wear the same things, drive the same car, and live in the same house. It does not affect our lifestyle. But Jesus did voluntary service. He did vicarious sacrifice. That is, He died for others. You might say,

“Well, you know, I’ve done my time in the nursery. My children are up and grown. Why should I go in there and sacrifice my time and my effort for others?” I’ll tell you why: because Jesus is your model—Jesus is your model.

C. The Mind of Victorious Significance

Now, here’s the third thing before we have the Lord’s Supper: Not only do we see Jesus as this model in voluntary service, and not only do we see Jesus as the model in vicarious sacrifice; but we also see Jesus as the model in victorious significance.

What was the significance of what Jesus did? Well, I want you to look at it here very carefully. And the Bible says in verse 9, *“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,”*—now here it is; here’s the significance—*“to the glory of God the Father”*—*“to the glory of God the Father.”* (Philippians 2:9–11) When a church is filled with people who in harmony and humility and helpfulness love and serve one another, when we serve voluntarily and when we give sacrificially, here is the significance: God is glorified. He was glorified in the life of His Son, the Lord Jesus. And I want Him to be glorified in my life, and I want Him to be glorified in your life. And I want to say this: that unity in the church glorifies the Lord Jesus. Jesus prayed in John chapter 17 that we might be one that the world might believe. (John 17:20–21)

Conclusion

C. S. Lewis was a brilliant and a gifted British writer. He wrote a book that is very interesting: it’s called *The Screwtape Letters*. Screwtape was his name for the devil himself. And in C. S. Lewis’ mind, he imagines Screwtape speaking to his nephew. His nephew’s name, this demon, is Wormwood. And Wormwood was Screwtape’s favorite recruiter on earth. And what Screwtape is trying to do is to get division in the Church. And here’s what he says to Wormwood: “The church is a fertile field. If you just keep them bickering over details, structure, organization, money, property, personal hurts, and misunderstandings, the one thing you must prevent: Don’t ever let them look up and see the banners flying. For if they ever see the banners flying, you have lost them forever. Just keep them on these details.” He’s saying, “Don’t let them see the blood-stained banner of Prince Immanuel over their heads.” That’s the idea. And, friend, I want Bellevue Baptist Church always to see the banners flying. I want this to be a glorious church.

In 1917, the bishops of the Orthodox Church in Russia were holding a meeting, and they were having a heated debate —the bishops of the church. Just a few blocks down

the street, the Bolsheviks, the young revolutionaries, were also having a meeting. They were going to put into implementation a plan that would overthrow the Czar of Russia, that would decimate the church, and that would put in its place godless atheism. Over here, the bishops were arguing; over here, the Communists were plotting. The year was 1917. And, by the way, would you like to know what the bishops were arguing about? Would you like to know what was causing such bitter division? They were arguing about whether they were going to use eighteen-inch or twenty-two-inch candles in the church when right down the road the Communists were at work plotting to overthrow the government.

Now, folks, when we have the Lord's Supper, when we come together, do you know the significance of the Lord's Supper? Well, of course, it speaks of His body, and it speaks of His blood. Do you know what else it speaks of? It speaks of our unity. Paul, when he spoke of the Lord's Supper, said, "We are all to be together in one place," for he said, "You are one loaf of bread baked together." (1 Corinthians 10:16–17) That's what he's talking about.

Look up here and let me ask you something: Will you pledge your heart to my heart, and let us together pledge our hearts to heaven, that we will do all within our power always to preserve the unity of the Church? Will you? Just bow your heads and nod your heads *amen*.

Others

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: May 31, 1998

Main Scripture Text: Philippians 2:3–4

“Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.”

PHILIPPIANS 2:4

Outline

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- I. I Will “Love One Another”
- II. I Will “Receive One Another”
- III. I Will “Greet One Another”
 - A. Our Greeting Should Be Personal
 - B. Our Greeting Should Be Impartial
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- IV. I Will “Care for One Another”
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Conclusion

Introduction

Take your Bibles and turn to Philippians—Philippians chapter 2—and in a moment we’re going to read verses 3 and 4. William Booth was the founder of the Salvation Army. And when he got old, they were having a convocation in the Salvation Army, and William Booth could not come. So they said, “Will you send us a word of encouragement? Will you send us a telegram that we can read to the entire convocation?” The telegram came. It had on it one word, and that one word is the title of my message tonight. The word that William Booth put on that telegram to be read before the Salvation Army was this: “Others.” Philippians 2—look, if you will, in verse 3: *“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.”* (Philippians 2:3–4)

A wise man said, “There’s no life so empty as a self-centered life, and there is no life so centered as the self-emptied life.” When we’re preoccupied with ourselves, we are miserable. When we let Jesus Christ love others through us, we have the joy that

Christian fellowship is supposed to give to all of us.

Now I want to talk to you about others. And when I'm talking to you about others, what I'm really talking to you about is fellowship—fellowship with one another. And what we're going to do tonight, we're going to look at eight commands in the Bible that, if we will fulfill these commands dealing with others, they will make this church, or any church, a little colony of heaven.

Now if you can get a bulletin or scrap of paper or something, I want you to put at the top of that scrap of paper these words: "I will." And then put a little colon there. And then I'm going to give you eight things I hope that you will say, by God's grace, you will do. Now if you will do that, you will enter into one of the most exquisite lives that you can possibly enter into. It is the life of *koinonia* or "fellowship." *Koinonia* is the Greek word for "fellowship."

Now, so many times, we don't understand what fellowship is. I've heard people say, "Well, fellowship is two fellows in the same ship." No, that's not fellowship. You can be on the same ship and not love one another. Some people think that fellowship is union. A wise man said, "No, it's more than union. You can take two tomcats and tie their tails together and hang them over a clothesline: you have union, but you don't have unity." What is fellowship? What is this *koinonia*? Well, you know, it's more easily described than it is defined. And so I want to give you eight commands, and I hope that you will say to yourself, "By God's grace, for God's glory, for my joy, I will fulfill these commands."

I. I Will "Love One Another"

All right, here's the first one—I want you to write it down on your piece of paper: "I will love one another"—"I will love one another." Here's the scripture—John 13, verse 34. Jesus is speaking to His disciples, and He says this: "*A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.*" (John 13:34) Now this was the last command that Jesus gave before His arrest, before His trial, and before His crucifixion.

You know, I see so many bumper stickers. I love bumper stickers. You just get a lot of information watching bumper stickers. I saw one here a while back a man had on his truck. Steve Gaines has a truck—a pickup truck. You still have your pickup truck, Steve? Yeah. One man had on the back of his pickup truck, "The more I learn about women, the more I love my truck." We don't need a bumper sticker to let others know that we're Christians. There's nothing wrong with bumper stickers. I like to see them. But you don't need a bumper sticker. You don't need a lapel pin. The Bible says, "By this shall all men know that you're my disciples: if you have love one for another." (John 13:35)

Now, let me say this about this love: This love is not optional, because Jesus commanded it. But it is not automatic, or He would not have commanded it. That is, you have to decide. You have to write on your slip of paper: “I will: Love one another.”

Now, what is this love? This love is not giving to people what they deserve; it is giving to people what they need. Jesus said it’s a new command. (John 13:34) What was new about this command was this: that He said, “You love one another as I have loved you.” And if you will remember, He gave this command after He had just washed His disciples’ feet. Love is serving one another in love, not because you deserve it. Those disciples did not deserve it. As a matter of fact, they were so selfish and self-centered that they had forgotten even to wash Jesus’ feet. But Jesus said, “If I, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another’s feet.” (John 13:14)

Do you know, one of the problems in so many churches is that sometimes we get a little haughty and a little arrogant, and we tend to look down upon other people. Can you imagine Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, laying aside His garments, girding Himself with a towel, the clothing of a slave, getting down on His knees, and washing the dirty feet of fishermen? Friend, I tell you, there’s one thing you won’t do: you’ll never look down on a person while you’re washing their feet, is that not true? And Jesus said, “If I, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another’s feet.” “A new commandment I give you, that you’re to love one another as I have loved you.”

II. I Will “Receive One Another”

Now, here’s the second thing I want you to write on your sheet of paper: not only, “I will love one another”—“I will receive one another.” Just write down, “Receive one another,” and put down this scripture here—Romans 15, verse 7: “*Wherefore receive ye—receive ye—“one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.”*” (Romans 15:7) And then, this text that I read when we began in Philippians 2, verses 3 and 4: “*Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.*” (Philippians 2:3)

Now, folks, one of the things that we need to learn to do over and over again here at Bellevue Baptist Church is to receive one another. The early church was made up of a strange mixture of people. They had come from different religious backgrounds. They came from different social backgrounds. There were Jews and barbarians, Greeks; slaves, and free people; young and old; mature Christians and babes in Christ. Think about the church, for example, at Philippi, where our text came from. Do you know what was in that church, what that church was made up of? Well, there was the Apostle Paul. He had the equivalency of a triple Ph.D.—erudite, learned, a world traveler, had a Jewish pedigree. But also, there was a woman there named Lydia. She was a traveling

saleslady from Thyatira. Also, one of the members of that church was a little demon-possessed girl who had been delivered from demons and led to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Also, in that church was the jailer and his family—that hardened jailer who had beaten Paul and Silas and later on came in and got saved in that Philippian jail.

Now, you think about it: The philosopher Paul, the traveling saleslady Lydia, a demon-possessed girl, and an ex-fortuneteller who'd been saved, and a jailer—what did they all have in common? I'll tell you what they all had in common: It was Jesus—Jesus! You know, we're a different congregation. I mean, we're a big congregation. We have all kinds of ideas in this congregation. And what holds us together is that we know and love the Lord Jesus. There is room in the family for all of us.

There's a book in the Bible called the book of Philemon. It's a very short book, and what it is about is a man named Onesimus, who was a slave. And Onesimus was owned by Philemon, and Onesimus had run away. And by the providence of God he and Paul ended up in the same jail, and Paul led Onesimus to Jesus Christ. Now Philemon and Paul had been very close friends. And so Paul tells Onesimus, "Onesimus, I'm going to write a letter. You go back to your owner and tell him that you have been saved, and take this letter."

Now, here's what the letter said—and I want you to listen to it. It's very interesting—Philemon chapter 1, verses 15 through 17. And Paul now is writing to Philemon, and he says, "*For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever;*"—now we're talking about receiving one another. Paul says, "Look, this runaway slave has come back to you. He went away for a little while. It was in the providence of God that he could get saved so you could receive him forever"—"*not now as a servant,*"—"don't receive him back as a servant." And the word there literally means "slave"—"*but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord?*" And here's what Paul says to Philemon. He says this: "*If thou count me therefore a partner,*"—and the word *partner* is "somebody that we have fellowship with"—"*receive him as myself.*" (Philemon 1:15–17)

Now, let's suppose that Bob Sorrell and I are good friends. Well, we don't have to suppose that. We're still friends, right? Now, let's suppose that Bob has a slave that runs away, and that slave gets saved; that slave comes back. This was the day when people owned slaves. And that slave comes back. And let's suppose that I met Bob's slave in prison, and I led Bob's slave to Christ. And I'm not there, but Bob's slave comes back to him with a letter from Adrian. And I say, "Bob, I met John in prison. I led John to Jesus. He's coming back to make restitution to you. Now, Bob, I want you to receive John, and I want you to treat him just as you'd treat me." That's what Paul said. He said, "You receive this man just as if he were me."

Now, what would you do if I came to your house? You'd say, "Buna, Adrian's here."

He's going to spend the night with us. Buna, cook something good." Well, we'd go out to eat. And, you know, you'd fluff up the pillow, and you would treat me not as a runaway, renegade slave. Well, you see, the Bible says, "We are to receive one another as God for Christ's sake hath received us." (Romans 15:7)

Now, folks, I'm telling you there are a lot of folks who are going to come into this church fellowship—and do you know what they need? They need to be received. I don't care who they are: don't look down your long nose at people.

John talked about a man named Diotrephes—the Apostle John. And this is how the Apostle John was heartbroken over Diotrephes—3 John chapter 1, verses 8 through 11. And John is talking about receiving people. He says, "*We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth. I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church. Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.*" (3 John 1:8–11) In plain English, "If you don't receive people, if you don't lovingly welcome people into the church, that is evil. You don't know God."

Now there are a lot of folks that you and I might tend to look down upon. We had here last Sunday the motorcycle club. We had over here about twenty or thirty people in a motorcycle club. And these people were all sun-tanned, and a lot of them had long hair. They were wearing leather, and so forth. And, man, I'll tell you, if you didn't know who they were, you'd be a little antsy as they came in there. They were all riding up on their Harleys, and Hondas, and all of that, and were sitting right over here. They came to the visitors' reception afterward. I have never met a sweeter group of people. They were so on fire for the Lord Jesus. They were greatly in love with the Lord Jesus.

But I'm just afraid that sometimes when people that dress a little different than we do, or look a little different, have a little different hairstyle, we just don't receive them; we kind of draw ourselves up. And they say, "Well, you know, they don't dress Bellevue-style, so maybe they're not to be received." Listen, friend. The Bible says in Romans 14:1, "*Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations.*" (Romans 14:1) Don't argue with him about things that are doubtful: the way he dresses, the way he looks, what his manners are. Now that doesn't mean that we're to let false doctrine come into the church. We're not to receive that. We're to have a warm heart, not a soft head. Second John 1, verse 10, says, "*If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine,*"—the doctrine of Christ—"receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed." (2 John 1:10) But you know what I want Bellevue Baptist Church to

be? I want Bellevue Baptist Church to be the church where everybody is welcome, regardless of their background, regardless of their culture, regardless of their race, regardless of their socio-economic status. If they've come to worship God, they're welcome. Say *amen*. They're welcome!

I heard about one of these “high-steeple, few-people” churches, and, you know, the “frozen chosen.” They were sitting out there, and a man came in, hoping that somebody would speak to him. Nobody spoke to him. He wasn't dressed just right. He wasn't from the same socio-economic background. But when the service was over, he came forward to present himself for membership. The pastor was a little mortified and didn't know what exactly to do. And he said, “Well, we have this brother here that has come requesting membership in our church. We just want him to be certain this is the church that he wants to belong to. And so we're going to ask him to go and pray about it for several weeks before we receive him into our membership,” and thought that that would do it, that the man would cool down and forget about it.

But about two weeks later, the pastor, walking down the street, saw this man on the sidewalk, and there was no way the pastor could dodge him. And so the pastor, kind of embarrassed, said to him, “Well, it's good to see you, sir. Did you pray about your church membership?” “Oh,” he said, “yes, I did.” He said, “Well, what did God tell you?” “Oh,” he said, “God told me not to worry about it at all. God said He Himself had been trying to get into that church and couldn't do it.”

III. I Will “Greet One Another”

Now we're to love one another. And we are to receive one another. Now, here's the third thing I want you to write down: “I will greet one another”—“I will greet one another.” Let me give you the scripture—Romans 16, verse 16: “*Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you.*” (Romans 16:16) First Corinthians 16:20: “*All the brethren greet you. Greet ye one another with an holy kiss.*” (1 Corinthians 16:20) Second Corinthians 13, verse 12: “*Greet one another with an holy kiss.*” (2 Corinthians 13:12)

Well, that's interesting. What was a holy kiss in Bible times? Well, they still do that in the Middle East, and they do that in Eastern Europe in the churches there. If you go in there, the men will kiss the men, and the women the women, on either side. It is just a greeting; it is a holy kiss. It is an outward acknowledgement of the mutual life.

Now, should we greet one another with a holy kiss? Well, don't miss the meaning here. It is not the way that you greet. Their holy kiss is the same as our handshake. The Bible says, “Give custom to whom custom is due.” (Romans 13:7) The point of the matter is that we find some way to express this acceptance. We accept one another. Well, if we accept one another, how do we express it?

The First Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas, is a great church. I had never been in a church as large as the First Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas, until 1962. We were traveling, and as we stopped in Dallas, Texas, I'd always heard about the First Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas, and I wanted to go to the First Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas. Now that was the largest church building I'd ever been in. It was, well, probably not half as large as this building is right now, really—not half as large—but it was huge. And Joyce and I went in there, just a young couple.

I will never forget, people, what happened as we went in that church. There were some of the most wonderful, gracious, godly, smiling, loving ushers who brought us in, seated us, attended us. They didn't know who we were. We were just a couple of kids. They gave us bulletins and so forth. A couple of ladies sitting in front of us turned around and said, "Is this your first time in our church?" We said, "Yes, it was." They said, "We're so glad to have you. Do you know about our pastor?" We said, "We've heard of him." They said, "Oh, you will love our pastor; he is wonderful," and "Do you have a song book?" and so forth. We felt so much at home.

And all this stuff about big churches not being friendly! Folks, how do you think big churches get to be big churches: by being cold and indifferent? That's a myth—that big churches are not friendly.

How should we greet one another?

A. Our Greeting Should Be Personal

Well, it needs to be personal. John said in 2 John 1, verse 12, "*Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink: but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full.*" (2 John 1:12) There's nothing like a face-to-face greeting. It needs to be personal.

B. Our Greeting Should Be Impartial

And it needs to be impartial. Paul said in Romans 16, verse 15, "*Salute Philologus, and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints.*" (Romans 16:15) That is, he knew them by name. They were not just people: he knew them by name. *A New Testament church is a church where everybody is somebody and Jesus Christ is Lord.* James 2, verse 9, says, "*But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin.*" (James 2:9)

C. Our Greeting Should Be Thoughtful and Wise

We can't just have our little group. It's got to be personal. It's got to be impartial. And listen, folks. When we greet people here at Bellevue, it needs to be thoughtful and wise. You know what we need to do as a church? We need to stay small as we get large. And some of the programs we have here at the church are just so wonderful that if we're not careful, we can get program-centered rather than person-centered and relationship-centered. I'm convinced that churches grow not only because of the truth that they

preach, but because of the climate; that evangelism is as much caught as it is taught.

If you are ever in the northwest up near Vancouver, you should go over to Victoria. There's a place there called Butchart Gardens—the most beautiful flower gardens, I believe, in the world. It's done in a huge cement quarry—the sunken part of the gardens there. It is absolutely beautiful. If you can go, go maybe in the middle of the summer sometime. It will bring tears to a glass eye, it's so pretty. I mean, it's just beautiful—absolutely beautiful! Do you know why things grow that way there? It's always cool and it's always moist. There's just a climate for growth. I would like for our church just to have that kind of climate where the flowers of grace can bloom and souls can come to Jesus. *Growing churches love, and loving churches grow.* And in our Sunday School classes, we need to learn how to greet people.

They've taken surveys to find out what causes people to attend a church. Did you know that nearly fifty percent of the people who filled out the survey said, "I went to thus and such a church because of friendliness"—fifty percent? Fifteen percent said programs. Twelve percent said location. By the way, location doesn't have a whole lot to do with where people attend church. I met a lady here last Sunday. She drives from Paris, Tennessee. How far would that be, Bob? Two and a half hours. We have people who come from West Memphis. We have people who come from Senatobia. They drive to this church. They come from all over.

Now, you think about it. You drive to ballgames. You drive to restaurants. How many of you just ever would put a dot in a piece of paper and say, "This is where my house is," and then draw a little circle and say, "This is where my friends are going to be: within ten blocks of my house"? No. When automobiles and highways came into being, location is not the important thing. Friend, I'm telling you, fifty percent said that they came because of friendliness. Another fifteen said programs. Twelve percent said location. Another twelve percent said belief. And only seven percent said denomination. We need to receive one another.

Now we need to be careful also when we receive one another and greet one another. Some people don't like you just putting your hands all over them. And it's fine to handshake, and if you know somebody, to give a Christian hug; but be careful. Allow people a little space, and be discreet. If you're a man, be careful how you hug the ladies.

I heard of a deacon in a church who was doing a little too much hugging. And they didn't know what to do, because he was a good man, but he was just not discreet. And so they got a little committee and they called on him. And the deacon said, "Well, I'm just enfolding the lambs." Well, that sounded so spiritual they didn't know what to do. They went back and had another meeting. They came back and they said, "Well, that's fine. But from now on, just enfold the ram lambs."

We need to be friendly. We need to greet one another. But we need to be wise. You know, people need a smile. They need a touch. People don't like to be looked at when they come to church. You know, they want to feel welcome, but they don't want to feel watched.

Can you imagine if you had some neighbors who were Buddhists and they invited you to go to a Buddhist temple? Can you imagine what you would feel like going to a Buddhist temple? I mean, suppose your neighbors stayed after you, and then they said, "We're having 'Bring a Friend Sunday,' or 'Bring a Neighbor Sunday,' at our temple. And you're my friend; you're my neighbor: you've got to go." Well, you would grudgingly say, "Well, okay." Then you say, "What do they do in a Buddhist temple? What do they wear? What's going to happen here?" And suppose your friends would say to you, "We'll come by and pick you up." What would you say? "No, that's all right. We'll take our own car." You'd want to be able to go, and you'd want to be able to leave when you wanted to. And you would wonder, "Are they going to point me in any way? Are they going to make me say anything or do anything? Is there going to be any kind of strange ritual?" Well, folks, I'm telling you there are people who feel just that way about coming to a Baptist church. Did you know that? They think we handle snakes.

Some in this day and this age, they don't know what's going to happen down there at the church, and they are frightened to death to come in here. I know one person: they literally thought that we baptized people without any clothes on. I'm serious—deadly serious! And this was not a person from Pago Pago. They really thought that. They did not know.

And do you know who may be the most important person in our church? It's not some staff member, but it's the people at the door who greet people. Listen. I fly a lot on airplanes. Do you know where I get my opinion of the airlines? Not from the president of the airlines, but from the ticket clerk. You think about it. That's where I get my opinion of the airlines. You see, people need to be greeted; they need to be welcomed.

Joyce and I were invited to the White House for a state dinner. You talk about a person feeling out of place! I didn't know what to do. I've never been in a place like that before—for a state dinner. And I thought I was reading somebody else's mail when we got the invitation from President Ronald Reagan and his wife. And when Joyce and I got there, we made the first social error. I did have enough sense to wear a tuxedo. But we came in a taxi. You're not supposed to come in a taxi; you're supposed to come in a limousine—one limousine, another limousine, another limousine, and then an old yellow taxi. And we got there and they put Joyce on the arm of a Marine guard and walked her in there. And then there was man at the door who said, "Dr. and Mrs. Adrian Rogers." And the place was full of high muckety-mucks and movie stars and all that. And Joyce and I just kind of backed up against the wall; and I'm telling you we felt so out of place,

felt so intimidated. We didn't know what to do—just kind of standing there. I'll tell you what was the greatest blessing to me—and I love him for this: Vice President George Bush came up to us, and Mrs. Bush, and they put out their hands and introduced themselves—I guess they could see that we were babes in the woods—and said, “Would you go down with us? Would you walk down with us down to the Rose Garden?” And I thought to myself, “I just feel so much at home right now: just by somebody who cared enough to single us out.”

And I'll tell you, folks, there are people who come to Bellevue Baptist Church, they've never been in anything this big. Sometimes it's intimidating. And I've been in small churches. I used to pastor a church: we wouldn't have as many on Sunday morning as we have in the choir right now, and that would be a big crowd. And what these people need is they need to be greeted. The Bible says we are to greet one another. They need to be loved. They need to be greeted. They don't need to be judged. Listen, folks. You can give acceptance without approval. Somebody comes in here who's not dressed appropriately; maybe dressed a little salaciously, or maybe they wear their hair a little like you wouldn't want them to wear it: accept them! Jesus was a friend of publicans and sinners. You accept; you don't approve. Just accept for Jesus' sake.

IV. I Will “Care for One Another”

Now, here's the fourth thing I want you to put down. Write down, “I will care for one another”—“I will care for another.” In 1 Corinthians 12, verse 25, Paul says *“that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.”* (1 Corinthians 12:25) God put us in the church not to be ministered unto, primarily, but to minister. And God gave us different gifts, and God made us different, that He might make us one.

And when we learn that we need others, and others need us, do you know what will happen? There will be no arrogance. There will be no envy. There will be no rivalry. There will be no self-sufficiency. There will be no disunity. We are to minister one to another. I need you. You need me. God did not put you in the Body to do nothing. Every member in the Body has a purpose. And our church, if our church has twenty-six thousand members, it is to have twenty-six thousand ministers. And we are to serve one another. We are to care one for another. When one member suffers, every member suffers. When one member rejoices, every member rejoices.

V. I Will “Submit to One Another”

Well, I've got to hurry on. Put number five, and write down, “Submit to one another”—“Submit to one another.” Here's our scripture—Ephesians 5, verses 18 through 21: *“And*

be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.” (Ephesians 5:18–21)

Now he’s talking about the Spirit-filled life. And in the Spirit-filled life, there is a spirit of adoration and the spirit of accommodation. We praise God, and we submit to one another. If you’re one of those individuals always talking about your rights, you’re not Spirit-filled. A dead man has no rights. When you say, “I know my rights,” you don’t understand the New Testament. *Submission is not merely for women; submission is one equal voluntarily placing himself under another equal, that Jesus Christ may be glorified.* And so, don’t have a spirit of arrogance, saying, “I’m not going to let somebody else tell me what to do. If it’s not my way, I’m going to swell up like a poison pup.” Learn to submit. Submit one to another.

VI. I Will “Forebear with One Another”

All right, we’re moving on. Number six: “I will forbear with one another”—“forbear.” Now, what does *forbear* mean? It means “to put up with the idiosyncrasies and the peccadilloes and the failures of others.” Here’s the scripture—Ephesians 4, verses 1 through 3: *“I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”* (Ephesians 4:1–3) We’re to forbear with one another. Keep the unity of the Spirit. *The devil had rather start a church fuss than sell a barrel of whiskey any day.*

Colossians 3, verses 12 through 14: *“Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.”* (Colossians 3:12–14)

Now, what is *forbearance*? We need so much of that at Bellevue. It is “graciously enduring and putting up with displeasing and offensive and sinful attitudes in other people.” Now, folks, do you know why we need a lot of forbearance in our church? Do you know why? Well, if you don’t know why, go home and look in the mirror—go home and look in the mirror!

*Faults in others I can see;
But, praise the Lord, there’s none in me!*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Now we need to bear and forbear with one another. None in this church is perfect.

We all have faults; we all have peccadilloes. Do you know what I used to think? Dr. Gaines, I used to think that a perfect church would be a church where every member is a mature, Spirit-filled believer. That's not a perfect church. That's not even a great church. That is a failing church. That would be like saying the ideal family is a family where they are all adults, and there are no children, and no grandchildren. No!

Thank God for the little babies, amen? Do you know, this morning when I preached and gave an invitation, we had a lot of people who just got born again and are little babies in Christ? Well, little babies have to grow up. There are crayons when they write on the wall, cheerios on the floor, dirty diapers, and spilled milk—all of that! That's just a part of it. But it's great—it is great! It is worth it. And we're going to have these little babies in our church. And what we need to do is not to criticize them, but to forbear.

VII. I Will “Confess to One Another”

All right, number seven—write this down: “I will confess to one another.” Now, here's the scripture—James chapter 5, verse 16: “*Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*” (James 5:16) Now what we need to do is to confess to one another and to forgive one another. And the failure to do this, I think, holds back revival more than anything else. And when we do begin to confess to one another, God gives us *koinonia* like never before.

Most of us don't trust one another enough to let one another know about our faults and our failures. Every so often in my preaching, I'll tell you somewhere where I've failed. And I can see some of you saying, “My pastor made a mistake!” Well, if anybody ever says anything bad about me, I just say, “Thank God they don't know any more.” Listen, folks. We're all pilgrims; we all fail. And do you know what confessing our faults to one another is? The reason we don't like to do that is, we don't trust one another. But *real revival is not just getting the roof off and getting right with God; real revival is getting the walls down and getting right with one another*—how we confess to one another.

In the great Shantung Revival, when Miss Bertha Smith and Charlie Culpepper were there—some of you may or may not know these great pioneer missionaries of the Southern Baptists and the great Shantung Revival—it started when those missionaries, who had been on tender hooks and had little resentments one to another, in one meeting, one of them, with tears, said, “I have something I want to confess. I've had a bad feeling toward thus and such a person, and I want to ask them to forgive me.” And that other missionary, moved with tears, came and said, “Oh, I do forgive you, and I receive you.” And then somebody else confessed, and somebody else confessed. And not only did those missionaries get the roof off; they got the walls down. They confessed

their faults one to another and prayed one for another, and they were healed—not healed physically, but healed spiritually. And the great Shantung Revival in China began.

Folks, we don't need to draw our robes of self-righteousness around us and act like we never have any problems. Humble yourself. Go to your fellow brother and sister in Christ and confess your faults one to another. Don't confess somebody else's fault. *"Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed."* (James 5:16)

VIII. I Will "Forgive One Another"

And here's the last thing: Not only we confess to one another; that we forgive one another. Ephesians 4, 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) Oh, when we begin to do this, when we stop holding grudges, and we begin to forgive!

Now you cannot forgive unless there is repentance. Even God doesn't forgive without repentance. But you can have a spirit of forgiveness. There's somebody who did me very, very, very, very wrong. And I wanted to forgive, but the person wouldn't repent. So I'll let you know what I did: I just stayed up late, late at night and I wrote a letter—a full letter of forgiveness, a full letter of acceptance, a full letter of restoration—prayed over it, and gave it to this individual from my whole heart, and I unloaded the whole thing. But that letter has never been received by that individual because he's not yet repented. But it's off of me. I put it in the bank; it's there in escrow. And all he has to do is write the check of repentance—and it's his! But I've already put it in the bank. I'm not carrying it.

And, you know, if there's somebody who's done you wrong, just forgive. Put it in the bank, so when they come and write the check of repentance, it will be there. But as far as you're concerned, it's off of you.

You know, one of the sweetest letters that I have received, I got a letter—I think I may have told you about this sometime ago—from a lady from Rome, Georgia. She was over here and found herself in the hospital, and she needed some blood. And some of the young men from this church—I don't know who the young men were—but some of the young men from this church went down there and donated their blood. They did not leave their name, but they wrote her a note. They let her know that they were from Bellevue, and they said this: "We gave our blood for you because Jesus gave His blood for us." She wrote me. She said, "That's the sweetest thing that's ever happened." "We gave our blood for you because Jesus gave His blood for us." That's the spirit of this verse that says, *"Be ye kind...tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for*

Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

Conclusion

Now, folks, I'm telling you something: If we in this church will take those eight commands—we call them the reciprocal commands. Can you say *reciprocal*? The reciprocal commands—that is, the “one another” commands—where we look not upon ourselves, but others. As William Booth said, just in that one-word, that terse telegram: “Others.” “Yes, Lord, others; let me live for others, that I may live for thee”—when we begin to do that, again, I tell you, this church will become a colony of heaven. We won't have to make it grow; it will grow, because so many people need that kind of love, now don't they? Now you've got eight things. And you take them home now and pray over them and say, “Now I want to get the sermon not on paper, but in my heart.”

Here's a parting shot. Do you know what happens in Bellevue Baptist Church sometimes? And, you sweet people, do you know what you do on Sunday mornings? You come down here and you put your books all over these seats down here at the front. You drop your sweater and everything, because you say, “When I come out of Sunday School, I want to have a place saved for me on Sunday mornings. I want to be down by the spout where the glory comes out.” And so you're all right down here at the front. I'm not saying that is wrong per se, but here's what I have seen: I have seen strangers and guests come here to Bellevue Baptist Church and come right down here to the front—they've never been in this church before—looking for a seat; and some church member will wave them off and say, “That's my seat. Out! Out!”

God forbid! Friend, you ought to go stand in the corner. Friend, we need to think about other people. Some person coldly treated like that, that may be the last time they'll ever darken the door of this church or any church. God help us to think about others, not about ourselves.

Who Is Jesus? The God-Man

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: December 21, 2003

Main Scripture Text: Philippians 2:5–11

“Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.”

PHILIPPIANS 2:6

Outline

Introduction

- I. Jesus Is the Supernatural Son of God
- II. Jesus Is the Sinless Son of God
- III. Jesus Is the Sovereign Son of God
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- V. Jesus Is the Surviving Son of God
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Introduction

Would you find, please, Philippians chapter 2; and when you’ve found it, I want you to look up here. We’re talking, and have been for these last Sundays, on God in human flesh: Jesus, the God-Man; God in human flesh.

Just who is the Lord Jesus Christ? People are asking that question perhaps more than ever before. I just received *U.S. News and World Report*, and on the front page is an artist’s depiction of what someone supposed Jesus may have looked like. And the title is “The Jesus Code: America Is Rethinking the Messiah Again.” And I will not bore you or disturb your mind with the trivialities and the banality that’s in that particular article.

Some time ago, Peter Jennings hosted a program entitled “The Search for Jesus.” And they had some so-called scholars there who pooled their ignorance looking for Jesus. I’d just as soon expect a group of blindfolded men in a dark cave with a jar full of lightning bugs to examine the noonday sun, as these people who were examining and searching for Jesus. Of course, the reason they didn’t find Him is they were looking in the wrong place.

Bryant Gumbel on national television interviewed Larry King. And at the close of the interview, he said, “Larry, if you could ask God one question...”—now, remember Larry King is a Jew—“if you could ask God one question, what would it be?” He said, “I would ask Him if He has a Son.” That’s a good question, because you’ll never answer the sin question until you answer the Son question: to know whether or not God has a Son.

Well, who is Jesus, the God-Man? Philippians 2—let’s begin in verse 5: *“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”* (Philippians 2:5–11)

John Blanchard has estimated that of all the people who have ever lived from the beginning of creation to this time, there have been about thirty billion people who have lived here on this planet. Out of those thirty billion, very few have had any major effect on human history. There is one person who stands out, unique above all of the rest. That one person, Jesus Christ, has attracted a greater combination of attention, devotion, criticism, adoration, and opposition than any other person of those thirty billion. Every recorded word that this man spoke has been studied and sifted and analyzed from generation to generation by theologians and by philosophers and by historians. And while we are sitting here talking, at this moment, there are millions of people studying what He said—at this very moment, multiplied millions. And there is no moment on the clock’s face where there are not millions of people who at that moment are studying what this one individual had to say. He is Jesus of Nazareth. He existed on this earth some two thousand years ago, and He preached and taught in a tiny little land called Israel. And yet the birth of this baby has divided the centuries to B.C.—“Before Christ”—and A.D.—“*Anno Domini*” or “the year of our Lord.” He divides world history.

He never wrote a book, so far as we know; but more books have been written about Him than any person in all of history. He never painted a picture, or wrote a poem, or did a sculpturing, so far as we know; never wrote any music, so far as we know; and yet His life has been the impetus and the inspiration for music and art and literature and films and videos and other art forms. He never raised an army; and yet millions of people have laid down their lives for Him. He never traveled very far from that tiny little area where He walked; and yet His influence is worldwide. He never spoke to more than a few thousand at one time in His earthly ministry; and yet today, thirty percent of the world’s population—thirty percent—claim to be followers of this one man.

His ministry lasted, really, only for three years; and yet today by radio and television and printed literature His Word goes around the world. So far as we know, He never had any formal education; but thousands of universities and seminaries and colleges and schools are built in His name. And no one can claim to be educated who does not understand who this baby was and is. The great noted historian Kenneth Scott Latourette said this—listen to it: “Jesus has had more effect on the history of mankind than any other of its race who ever existed.” Nobody has had the influence that Jesus Christ of Nazareth has had. *To explain Him is impossible; to ignore Him is disastrous; to reject Him is fatal.* My speech is too limited to describe Him. My mind is too small to comprehend Him. And my heart is inadequate to fully contain this One whose name is Jesus.

Now, who is Jesus, the God-Man? I want us to see several things about the Lord Jesus that are going to come out of this passage of Scripture here, because if you really want to know who Jesus is, you’ve got to go to the Word of God.

I. Jesus Is the Supernatural Son of God

Now, first of all, I want you to notice that Jesus is the supernatural Son of God—He is the supernatural Son of God. Look now in Philippians chapter 2, verses 6 and 7. It speaks of Jesus, “*who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him...*”—underscore that—“*took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.*” (Philippians 2:6–7) This speaks of His birth. He was made in the likeness of men.

But He was not conceived like any other child. He was born of a virgin. Isaiah chapter 7 and verse 14: “*Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.*” (Isaiah 7:14) Do you find that hard to believe: that a virgin could have a child? Well, may I tell you, the first person to doubt it was Mary herself? When the angel announced this to Mary, Mary said, “How can this be?” (Luke 1:34) And the angel answered in Luke chapter 1, verse 37, “*For with God nothing shall be impossible.*” (Luke 1:37) Can you say *amen* to that?

Now if you have difficulty with the virgin birth, what you really have difficulty with is the omnipotence of God. Think about it: “*For with God nothing shall be impossible.*” Jesus was the virgin-born, supernatural Son of God. He could not have been a son of Adam, for “*in Adam all die.*” (1 Corinthians 15:22) Had He been a son of Adam, He would have had the sin nature of Adam.

If you doubt the virgin birth, you’ve got some king-sized character problems. First of all, you have a problem with the character of the Word of God: you’re saying the Word of God is not true. Secondly, you have a difficulty with the character of Mary: you’re

saying that Mary was a harlot. Thirdly, you have difficulty with the character of Jesus: you're saying that Jesus was illegitimately born with a sin nature. But I'll tell you where you've got the biggest character problem: you've got the biggest character problem with your own character if you denounce or refuse the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. You have no real hope of heaven.

Somebody has imagined the Lord Jesus there in the temple being questioned by the theologians and the doctors. He's twelve years of age. But they ask Him this question: "Son, how old are you?" And Jesus might have smiled and said, "Well, on my mother's side, I'm twelve years old; but on my Father's side, I'm older than my mother and as old as my Father." Friend, what a marvelous person is the Lord Jesus Christ! He is—put it down—first of all, the supernatural Son of God. He *"took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men,"* (Philippians 2:7) by a virgin birth.

II. Jesus Is the Sinless Son of God

Number two: Not only is He the supernatural Son of God, virgin-born; but it follows, as night follows day, He is therefore the sinless Son of God. Look in verse 8: *"And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."* (Philippians 2:8) Underscore the word *obedient*. The Lord Jesus said, *"I do always those things that please [my Father]."* (John 8:29) And God the Father said of God the Son, *"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."* (Matthew 3:17; Matthew 17:5; 2 Peter 1:17)

Do you always please the Father? Of course not! But Jesus always pleased the Father. The Bible tells us in Hebrews chapter 4 and verse 15 that Jesus was *"without sin."* Satan tempted Him, but Satan never won a victory over the Lord Jesus Christ. All of the artillery of hell was aimed at the Lord Jesus Christ. He *"was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin."* (Hebrews 4:15) Satan had no trophies that he could put on his wall. Jesus looked at those who were accusing Him and said, "Which of you can convict me of sin?" (John 8:46) I wouldn't ask that to my friends, much less my enemies. But Jesus, the supernatural Son of God, is the sinless Son of God.

III. Jesus Is the Sovereign Son of God

Thirdly, not only is Jesus the supernatural Son of God and the sinless Son of God; Jesus therefore is the sovereign Son of God. Look in chapter 2 and verse 6. It speaks of Jesus, *"who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery"*—now, here's the point—*"to be equal with God"* (Philippians 2:6)—*"equal with God."* Not only is He the Son of God, but He is God the Son.

Here is a key verse, and I want you to put it on your margin—Hebrews 1:8. God the Father is speaking. Now, listen to it: *"But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is*

for ever and ever” (Hebrews 1:8)—“*unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.*” The Son of God is God the Son.

Now this is the reason that He was rejected by the Jews of His day: because He was the Son of God, and that did not fit in with their theology. Jesus in John chapter 8, verse 58, was talking back and forth. They were bantering with Him, and they said, “We are not born of sin. We know who our father is.” Do you understand the inference there? “You are illegitimate. You were born out of wedlock.” And they were boasting that Abraham was their father—that is, they were descendants of Abraham. And then, here’s what Jesus said in John chapter 8 and verse 58: “*Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.*” (John 8:58)

Now, don’t miss that. “I AM” is the most sacred name for God that the Jews knew. When Moses was leading the people of Israel out of Egypt into the Promised Land, Moses said, “I need some credentials. Who can I say sent me?” And Jehovah God said, “Moses, you tell them that ‘I AM’ sent you.” Now that’s a very interesting name: “I AM.” Not “I was”; not “I will be”; He is the great “I AM.” There never was a time when He was not; there never will be a time when He will not be. He is the self-existing Creator God, and He said, “Now, Moses, you just tell them with all their silly gods that ‘I AM’ sent you.” Now Jesus says in John 8, verse 58, “*Before Abraham was, I am.*” He didn’t say, “Before Abraham was, I was”—that “I got here first.” He’s just saying, “I’ve always been.” That’s the reason they took up stones to stone Him.

The Jehovah’s Witnesses do not accept the eternality of the Lord Jesus Christ—that He is God in human flesh. And so in their so-called New World Translation, they take this verse without any manuscript authority at all, and they say—they have to force it to say this, because they cannot let it say what it literally says and believe what they believe—so they say, “Before Abraham was, I have been.” But that isn’t what it says. It may sound alike to you, but what it says—and any Greek scholar will tell you this—is, “*Before Abraham was, I am.*” That’s the reason they took up stones to stone Him. They said, “Blasphemy!”—“Blasphemy!”

You see, Jesus made some great claims about Himself. And when you look at the Lord Jesus Christ, you’re on the horns of a tri-lemma. Either He was deceived and thought He was God; or He was a deceiver and knew that He was not God but pretended to be; or else He was Deity. Deceived, deceiver, or Deity: there’s no other choice. Now, do you think that Jesus was a madman, a megalomaniac, like a guy with a fried egg on his head and a strip of bacon over each ear? Or do you think that Jesus was a shrewd, cunning, conniving, religious fraud? Or was He who He said He was? He “*thought it not robbery to be equal with God.*” (Philippians 2:6)

The disciples said, “Show us the Father, and it will satisfy us.” (John 14:8) And Jesus said, “*He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.*” (John 14:9) Now, suppose

you were to say to me, “Adrian, show me God,” and I would say, “You’re looking at Him.” You’d say, “Go get the guys with the straightjacket. We’re going to need to haul him off.” He’s God—He is God! He is the supernatural Son of God. And being the supernatural Son of God, He is the sinless Son of God. And, friend, He is the sovereign Son of God. He is God in human flesh. And you see Him in His ministry as the sovereign God.

IV. Jesus Is the Sacrificial Son of God

Now, next, Jesus is the sacrificial Son of God. Look, if you will now, in verse 8: *“And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient...”*—*“thought it not robbery to be equal with God,”* but now—*“in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”* (Philippians 2:8) Now His death was not incidental; it was not accidental. He did not die as a victim. He did not die as a martyr. He died in obedience to the Father, that you and I might be saved the death of the cross.

This was in the heart and mind of God before this planet was flung into space. The Bible says of the Lord Jesus, “He was slain before the foundation of the world.” (Revelation 13:8) Now, you see, He had to be the supernatural Son of God, born of a virgin, to be the sinless Son of God. But He had to be the sinless Son of God—He was the sovereign Son of God—to do what He did, that He might be the sacrificial Son of God. You see, the blood that was shed on that cross was the blood of God, because He is the God-Man.

As I told you in the other sermon, someone might say that God doesn’t have blood, because God is Spirit. Yes, but God became flesh. *“The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.”* (John 1:14) And Jesus had blood coursing through His veins. But whose blood was coursing through the veins of the Lord Jesus Christ? Not Mary’s blood. Mary was a sinner. You know, some people don’t like the idea that Mary was a sinner. Of course she was a sinner! But she was a virtuous woman, a wonderful woman; but she was a sinner. She said of the Savior, *“My soul doth magnify...God my Savior.”* (Luke 1:46–47) She needed a Savior. Sinners need a Savior. Mary needed a Savior.

Whose blood was in Mary’s body? She had Adamic blood in her body, coursing through her body. Whose blood was in that baby in her womb? Don’t get the idea that the blood of the mother and the blood of the fetus is interchanged. Of course not! A mother may have one blood type, the child, a complete different blood type. Who determines the blood type? The father, not the mother. That’s the reason in some paternity cases they can scientifically prove that a man did not father a child by examining the blood of a specific child. What I’m trying to say is that the blood type is

determined by the father, not the mother. Joseph was the caretaker father, not the true father. That which was conceived in the womb of Mary was conceived by the Holy Spirit; and therefore His blood was rich, red, royal blood—the blood of God.

Now, let me give you the proof text—Acts chapter 20, verse 28. Paul is talking to the Ephesian elders about taking care of the church, and he says, *“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”* (Acts 20:28) Did you get that? *“Feed the church of God, which he”*—God—*“hath purchased with his own blood.”* Jesus is, dear friend, the supernatural Son of God. Being the supernatural Son of God, He’s the sinless Son of God. And He is the sovereign Son of God, therefore, that He might be the sacrificial Son of God.

V. Jesus Is the Surviving Son of God

But we’re not finished yet. The Lord Jesus Christ is also the surviving Son of God. They put Him on the cross; they nailed Him up there and they said, “He is finished.” But He wasn’t finished. Jesus said, *“It is finished”* (John 19:30)—“The plan is finished; it is done; I’ve paid the sin debt.” And now, look in verse 9—Jesus, the surviving Son of God: *“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name.”* (Philippians 2:9) The grave could not hold Him. He is the Lord of life, and He is the Lord of death. He said, “I have power to lay my life down, and I have power to take it up again.” Jesus is *“the first begotten of the dead.”* (Revelation 1:5)

You say, “Weren’t other people raised from the dead?” Well, in the truest sense, they were resuscitated. They may have been dead physically, brought back to life. But the first thing they did after they were brought back to life was to begin to die again. Jesus in His resurrected life ever lives to make intercession for us. (Hebrews 7:25) C. S. Lewis said this: “He has forced open a door that had been locked since the death of the first man. He has met, fought, and beaten back the king of death. Everything is different because He has done so.”

Who is Jesus? Jesus is the surviving Son of God. Confucius died: he’s dead! Buddha died: he’s dead! Muhammad died: he’s dead! Jesus died and rose again. He’s the living Son of God. “He’s shown to be the Son of God with power...by the resurrection of the dead.” (Romans 1:4)

VI. Jesus Is the Soon-Coming Son of God

And I’ll tell you what else Jesus is: Jesus is the soon-coming Son of God. Look, if you will, in Philippians 2, verses 9 through 11: *“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;*

and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2:9–11) He is the soon-coming Son of God. And when He does, knees will bow. Satan will bow on his thorny knees and confess that Jesus is Lord. Saddam Hussein will bow and confess that Jesus is Lord. Madonna, the so-called rock star, will bow and confess that Jesus is Lord. And all of the people on Planet Earth, and all that who have lived or will live, will bow one day and say that Jesus Christ is Lord. He is coming again.

Now His coming is literal, actual. Some missed His first coming because they did not believe the prophecy. Jesus is literally, actually, visibly, bodily coming back to this earth. Acts 1, verse 11—Jesus was there on the Mount of Olives—and I've visited the Mount of Olives many times, and I wonder if I have stood in the same spot where Jesus stood before He ascended up into the glory—and those blessed feet that still bear the marks of the nails, as we told you last week, ascended up from that Mount of Olives; and He was taken up into the sky, as we see in the *Passion Play*. And then Acts 1:11 says there were some angels there, *"which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus..."*—not death, not some event in history, not salvation—*"this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."* (Acts 1:11) It is literal.

This same Jesus is coming again. Those feet left the Mount of Olives. Those feet will stand on the Mount of Olives. Those dimpled feet that lay in the straw of Bethlehem, those bare feet that walked among the shavings in Joseph's carpenter shop, those sandaled feet that walked the dusty shores of Galilee, those miracle feet that walked on water, those nail-pierced feet, those glorified feet that ascended from the Mount of Olives, are the same feet that the will come again. And when He does, those feet will crush the serpent's head, and Satan will be bruised beneath His feet. And my desire is to bow at His feet. *"This same Jesus, which is taken up from you...shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go."* (Acts 1:11) And we all ought to fall at His feet.

VII. Jesus Is the Saving Son of God

Last of all, Jesus is the saving Son of God. This is who the Lord Jesus is. Look again, if you will, in Philippians chapter 2 and verse 8: *"And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."* (Philippians 2:8)

Why Christmas? Because of Calvary. Why did Jesus come? Luke 19:10: *"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."* (Luke 19:10) John 14:6: *"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."* (John 14:6) He is the solitary Savior. I've often said, *Jesus is not a good way to heaven; Jesus is not the best way to heaven; Jesus is the only way to*

heaven. And when you say that, a lot of people get their hackles up. But I still want to tell you, apart from Jesus, there is no salvation. He said, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life.”* He’s not just one more Savior. If He’s not the only Savior, He’s no Savior, because He said He was the only One. And if He said He’s the only One, and He’s not the only One, then He’s a liar—and a liar is nobody’s Savior. 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)

And I’ve got some wonderful news for you, friend: He can save anyone. I got a letter here just the other day: “To Adrian Rogers: I hope you’re doing very well. I just wanted to write you a few lines for the first time to tell you how much I enjoy your sermons.” And then he says some very nice things about me that I won’t repeat, but I’m grateful. And then he said, “I accepted Christ as my Savior about two years ago.” And then he goes on to talk about how he listens every Sunday morning: “I sit, waiting for your show with my Bible, pen, and paper. You see, I cannot do much anymore. God is my strength and my salvation every day. Praise the Lord. I am an inmate in the Arkansas State Penitentiary, on death row. I look forward to that great and glorious day when Jesus Christ comes to take His saints up into heaven. I also have gotten my dad to listen to your shows. He even records them. I just wanted to give my thanks to you for all your wonderful preaching. With all my heart, I thank you. May God bless you.” And he signs his name. I don’t have permission to use his name, so I’ll not use it.

But I got to thinking about that, and that’s one of the reasons I’m so grateful for this ministry that goes out. And I’m so grateful for the Word of God. And, friend, I want to tell you, whether you are on death row, or Wall Street, or Madison Avenue, you need Jesus. He’s the saving Son of God. There’s no one that He cannot save; there’s no one that He will not save.

*Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall;
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.
And all the king’s horses and all the king’s men
Couldn’t put Humpty together again.*

Humpty never met Jesus.

I want to tell you, friend, whoever you are, Jesus—Jesus—is what the world needs today. You can thank God for Christmas. Think, if there had been no Christmas, what that would mean. Think, if there had been no birthday of Jesus, what your birthday would mean. Every birthday you have would mean that you’re one year nearer death. Every birthday that you have would mean that you’re one year nearer the grave. And every birthday that you have would mean you’re one year nearer a Christ-less eternity. But, oh, because of the birthday of Jesus, think what your birthday means! Each birthday you have means you’re one year closer to heaven, one year closer to seeing

His dear face, knowing the Lord Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

Who is Jesus? Jesus is my dearest friend. He is more real to me than you are. I talk to Him far more than I talk to you. And I'm not ashamed to tell you that I love Him with all of my heart. He is the Son of God who left heaven, came to this earth, suffered, bled, and died, and walked out of that grave a living, risen Savior. And He's the One who sent me to tell you that He loves you and He wants to save you, and that He will save you today if you'll give Him your heart.

Who Is Jesus? The God-Man

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: December 21, 2003

Main Scripture Text: Philippians 2:5–11

“Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.”

PHILIPPIANS 2:6

Outline

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Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take God’s Word and find Philippians chapter 2; and when you’ve found it, I want you to look up here. We’ve been talking about “Jesus: God in Human Flesh.” And this is the last in this small series of messages, as we’re getting ready for Christmas: “Jesus, the God-Man”—“God in Human Flesh.”

Now many people are asking a question: “Just who is Jesus Christ?” I got my recent copy of *U.S. News and World Report*, and on the front is an artist’s depiction of his conception of Jesus Christ. And the title is “The Jesus Code”; and then it says, “America Is Rethinking the Messiah Again.” And it’s full of trivia and banality and foolishness I’ll not bore you with, but it’s here.

Recently, Peter Jennings hosted a program entitled “The Search for Jesus,” and he had some so-called scholars who pooled their ignorance. And it was pitiful. You would expect to get about as much information as you would out of a group of blindfolded men in a cave with a jug full of lightning bugs trying to examine the noonday sun, as these men examining the Lord Jesus Christ. The reason they didn’t find Him: they were looking in the wrong place.

Bryant Gumbel recently interviewed Larry King on national television, and at the close of the interview, he asked Larry King a question—a very pertinent question. He said, “Larry, if you could meet God and ask Him one question, what would it be?” Larry King said, “I would ask Him if He has a Son.” Good question. I hope Larry learns the answer to that question.

In the 1994 issue of *Life* magazine, the cover said, “Jesus: who was He?” Well, that’s the wrong question. They ought to be asking, “Jesus: who *is* He?” The world doesn’t understand the Lord Jesus Christ. But the world will never answer the sin question until they answer the Son question: Who is Jesus?

Philippians chapter 2—I begin in verse 5—the Apostle Paul says, “*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*” (Philippians 2:5–11)

John Blanchard has estimated that of all the people who have ever lived in recorded history, there have been about thirty billion people—thirty billion—who have lived on Planet Earth. Out of those billions and billions and billions and billions, only a handful have risen to such prominence that they could have affected human history. Now of those, there’s one name that stands out above all of the others—and that is Jesus Christ. Jesus is genuinely unique. You can say this about Jesus: No other person has ever attracted such a combination of attention, devotion, criticism, adoration, and opposition as Jesus Christ. He is the focal point of all theological discussions. Theologians and philosophers and historians have studied this one solitary life: the life of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Jesus of Nazareth, who lived about two thousand years ago in the flesh in a small country called Israel. Yet His birthday divides the centuries into BC and AD: “Before Christ” and “*Anno Domini*,” or “the year of our Lord.”

Jesus never wrote a book, so far as we know; and yet more books have been written about Him than any person who has ever lived. He never painted a picture, or did any sculpturing, or wrote a poem, so far as we know; and yet Jesus of Nazareth has been the inspiration for artists and poems and books and paintings and music that fill the world. Jesus Christ never raised an army; and yet millions have died for Him and for His cause. His travels were limited. He traveled just a few miles from His birthplace in all of His ministry; and yet today His ministry reaches around the world—it is worldwide. He never spoke to more than a few thousand people at one time; but for twenty-four

hours—every day that the clock goes around—any moment of that twenty-four hours, at that moment, there are millions of people studying what He said—at any moment, millions of people. You can look at your watch at any time, and there will be millions of people studying His Word.

His ministry lasted only three brief years; and yet His message is going around the world by radio and television. He had no formal education; and yet His life has caused the founding of more colleges and seminaries and universities than any other. Many schools, multiplied thousands of schools and other institutions, have been built in the name of Jesus Christ. *To explain Jesus Christ is impossible. To ignore Him is disastrous. To refuse Him is fatal.* My speech is too limited to describe Him; my human mind is too finite to comprehend Him; and my heart is too small to contain all the love that this one Lord Jesus has.

Who is Jesus? Well, if we want to know who Jesus is, we need to go to the divine, inspired Word of God; and Philippians chapter 2 is a wonderful place for us to begin. I want to say several things about the Lord Jesus that are spoken of—or inferred, at least—in Philippians chapter 2.

I. Jesus Is the Supernatural Son of God

And, number one, I want us to think of Jesus as the supernatural Son of God. Jesus is the supernatural Son of God. Look, if you will, in verses 6 and 7. It speaks of Jesus, *“who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:”*—that is, here He is pre-existing in the form of God, pure Spirit—*“but made himself of no reputation,”*—now, listen to this—*“and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.”* (Philippians 2:6–7) The Infinite became an infant. What we’re seeing here is the virgin birth, a fulfillment of Isaiah chapter 7 and verse 14: *“Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son.”* (Isaiah 7:14)

Do you find it hard to believe that Jesus was born of a virgin? Well, you’re not the first one. The first person to doubt how this could be was Mary herself. Mary said, *“How can this be?”* (Luke 1:34) And the angel answered Mary in Luke chapter 1 and verse 37, *“For with God nothing shall be impossible.”* (Luke 1:37)

Now, let me tell you something. If you have difficulty with the virgin birth, your real problem is your God is too small, for with God nothing is impossible. If you will admit the fact of God—if God made the first man, the first woman, out of nothing—don’t you think God could bring a baby into this world through a virgin? Think about it: *“For with God nothing shall be impossible.”* Now some theologians treat with disdain the idea of the virgin birth, and they are openly, positively saying they don’t believe in the virgin birth.

Well, if you don’t believe in the virgin birth, you’ve got some character problems. First of all, you have a problem with the character of the Word of God, for the Word of

God clearly teaches it. Secondly, you have problems with the character of Mary, because if Jesus was not born of a virgin, she was unmarried, and therefore, she was a strumpet and a harlot. Thirdly, you have problems with the character of Jesus. If Jesus was not born of a virgin, He was born out of wedlock, and He was a son of Adam—and *“in Adam all die.”* (1 Corinthians 15:22) And He had the sin nature of Adam; He was not the sinless, stainless Son of God. But I’ll tell you whom you’ve got the biggest problem with character-wise—and that’s yourself. Friend, if you don’t believe in the virgin birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, you’ve got a king-sized character problem, because without the virgin birth, as we’re going to show you this morning, you have no hope of salvation—none whatsoever!

I can imagine the Lord Jesus Christ at the age of twelve in the temple, and the teachers and the wise men and the sages are questioning Him. Jesus is about twelve years old. They say, “How old are you, son?” He might have smiled and said, “Well, on my mother’s side, I’m twelve years old; on my Father’s side, I’m older than my mother and as old as my Father.” That ought to have had them scratching their heads for a little while. He was the supernatural Son of God, *“who...thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant.”* (Philippians 2:6–7)

II. Jesus Is the Sinless Son of God

So, put it down: First of all, Jesus is the supernatural Son of God, born of a virgin. Number two: Jesus, therefore, is the sinless Son of God. Look in verse 8: *“And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient.”* (Philippians 2:8) He was the obedient Son of God. He said of Himself, concerning His Father, *“I do always those things that please him.”* (John 8:29) Not one time did Jesus ever transgress the Father’s will. Jesus said, *“I do always those things that please him.”* And God the Father said of Him, *“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”* (Matthew 3:17; Matthew 17:5; 2 Peter 1:17) He was the sinless, spotless, stainless Son of God.

They were criticizing and critiquing Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ said to them, “Which one of you can convict me of sin?”—now, notice these were His enemies—“Which one of you can convict me of sin?” (John 8:46) I wouldn’t ask that question to my friends, much less to my enemies. He was the sinless Son of God. Satan unleashed all of the artillery of hell against the Lord Jesus Christ, but Satan never once got Jesus to sin. Satan has no trophies that he can hang on his wall where Jesus Christ ever sinned. Jesus said, “Satan comes”—“the prince of this world comes”—“but he finds nothing in me.” (John 14:30) That is, Jesus had no itch the devil could scratch.

III. Jesus Is the Sovereign Son of God

Now Jesus, the supernatural Son of God, is, as night follows day, the sinless Son of God, because He was born of a virgin. And because He was the supernatural Son of God, the sinless Son of God, He is the sovereign Son of God. He is God in the flesh. Look in verse 6, if you will. It speaks of Him, “*who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.*” (Philippians 2:6)

Now it's very important you understand this. The Muslims don't believe this; the Jews don't believe this; the Mormons don't believe this; the Jehovah's Witnesses don't believe this: that Jesus is not only the Son of God, but He is God the Son. You say, “By whose authority?” By Jehovah God's authority He is God the Son. Put this down—in Hebrews chapter 1 and verse 8, Jehovah is speaking: “*But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.*” (Hebrews 1:8) What does God call His Son? God. “*Unto the Son he*—Jehovah—“*saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.*” “Jesus,” the prophet said, “is the mighty God.” He is the sovereign—sovereign—Son of God.

The Pharisees, the Jewish rulers, were bantering with the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus had said there in John chapter 8, “Abraham saw my day and was glad” (John 8:56) They said, “Wait a minute. Abraham? He's been dead for centuries. You're not fifty years old. How can you say, ‘Abraham saw my day’?” They'd already been boasting that Abraham was their father. “We have Abraham for our father. We are not born of fornication.” (John 8:33) What they were doing, that was a slur, a sneer. They were saying, “We know about your birth. We know all of that hocus pocus about a virgin birth. We are not born of sin.” And then Jesus said something to them in John 8, verse 58, that rocked them back to their heels. They said, “How can you say that you saw Abraham, or that Abraham saw your day? You're not fifty years old.” And Jesus said—listen—“*Before Abraham was, I am.*” (John 8:58)

Now, don't miss that. That's not just a subtle thing. The most holy name that the Jews had for Jehovah is the name “I AM.” When Moses was ready to lead the children of Israel from Egypt to the Promised Land, he said to God the Father, “I need some credentials. When I go to Pharaoh and to these others, I need to say under whose authority I'm operating. I need to tell them who sent me.” And Jehovah God said to Moses, “Moses, you tell them ‘I AM’ sent you.” Now, notice “I AM”—not “I was”; not “I will be”; just “I AM.” “There never was a time when I was not. I will always be. I am the great ‘I AM’”—a holy, sacred name for the self-existing Almighty. And now they say to Him, “How can you say that Abraham saw your day?” And He said to them, “*Before Abraham was, I am.*” At that moment, they took up stones to stone Him, because to them that was blasphemy, because He clearly and plainly was making Himself co-equal and co-eternal with God the Father: “...*who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.*” (Philippians 2:6)

I said the Jehovah's Witnesses don't believe in the eternality of the Lord Jesus Christ. They believe Jesus was a created being. What do they do with this passage of Scripture in John 8, verse 58? How do they handle this? They force a bogus translation with no manuscript authority—none whatsoever! And they translate John 8, verse 58, "Before Abraham was, I have been." But that isn't what He said. He didn't say, "I have been." He says, "*I am.*" What's the difference? That they believe He was created first. No, no, no, no! He was never created. He is God—very God! He is the great "I AM." You say, "Pastor, what's the difference?" If you take away the deity of Jesus Christ, the whole house of Christianity collapses like a house of cards.

Friend, Jesus is God in human flesh. That's what this series has been all about. This is not incidental; this is fundamental. Jesus is the supernatural Son of God, born of a virgin. Being the supernatural Son of God, He is the sinless Son of God. And being the supernatural, sinless Son of God, He is the sovereign Son of God. He is God in human flesh. No wonder they wanted to stone Him.

Now, friend, you don't just tip the hat to Jesus Christ; you just don't admire Him as a great philosopher. I hear Bill O'Reilly talk about Jesus the philosopher. He is Jesus, Almighty God—Almighty God! You don't tip the hat; you bow the knee. You see, you're on the horns of a tri-lemma. Jesus Christ is one of three things: either He is deceived, He is a lunatic, who thought He was God and really wasn't, a megalomaniac; or else He was a deceiver, who knew He wasn't God but pretended to be—therefore, a charlatan, a huckster, a shyster, an imposter, and a king-size hypocrite; or else, He was Deity. You choose: deceived, deceiver, or Deity. You have no other choice. Either He was what He says He was; or else, He knew He was not, and was lying; or else, He didn't know, and was a fool. Which was He? "*Before Abraham was, I am.*"

I'm saying that this one, Jesus Christ, is the supernatural Son of God, born of a virgin. He is the sinless Son of God, who was totally, completely obedient. And He is the sovereign Son of God; not only the Son of God, but God the Son. You say, "That's a mystery to me." It may be a mystery to you, but it is a fact. The Bible says, "*Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh.*" (1 Timothy 3:16)

IV. Jesus Is the Sacrificial Son of God

Number four: Jesus is the sacrificial Son of God. Why the supernatural Son of God? Why the sinless Son of God? Why the sovereign Son of God? Why God in the flesh? So that He could die for our sins. That's what it's all about! Look, if you will, now in verse 8: "*And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*" (Philippians 2:8)

Why the death of the cross? "*For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.*" (1 Corinthians 1:18)

You see, the cross is not incidental; it is not accidental. The Bible teaches that Christ was slain before the foundation of the world. (Revelation 13:8) That is, in the heart and mind of God, before God created anything, before He swung this planet into space, before He scooped out the oceans, and heaped up the mountains, and flung out the moon, stars, and sun, in the heart and mind of God was the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the cross.

Now I said that He was the sacrificial Son of God. Why? Because He was the sinless Son of God. Had He not been sinless, He could have died for no one's sin but His own. He would have deserved the death on the cross. *"For the wages of sin is death."* (Romans 6:23) But being the sinless Son of God, He could be my substitute and your substitute.

Now I want to remind you again, this is God in human flesh. He *"took upon him the form of a servant,"* (Philippians 2:7) and He is the Son of God. Therefore, the blood that coursed through His veins was rich, red, and royal; it is the blood of God. You say, "Now, pastor, God is Spirit, and a Spirit doesn't have blood." That's the reason for the incarnation, for the Bible says in Hebrews 9:22, *"Without shedding of blood is no remission."* (Hebrews 9:22) God cannot forgive sin until the wages of sin is paid, and *"The wages of sin is death."* (Romans 6:23) Jesus Christ had to die. *"Without shedding of blood is no remission."* Jesus had to die for us to be saved. But that blood that was shed had to be innocent blood; it could not have been blood that was inherited from Adam, for *"in Adam all die."* (1 Corinthians 15:22) Jesus was not a son of Adam; He was the Son of God and the Son of man at the same time.

But the blood that was in Mary's body was not the blood that was in Jesus' body. Now we have some gynecologists in this church and some medical doctors, and they will tell you—as any book on hematology, or biology, or gynecology will tell you—that the blood that flows through the mother's body is not the blood that flows through the baby's body. Don't get the idea that the mother and the baby are interchanging blood somehow. No, the mother may have one blood type, and the baby, another blood type.

Who determines the blood type? Where does the bloodline come from? From where does it come? It comes from the father. That's the reason that sometimes in a paternity suit, a man may be proven not to have sired a baby by giving a blood test. Someone says, "You're the father of this baby." He says, "I'm not, either." And they can take a blood test and say, you know, that this father could not have sired that baby. It's the father that determines the blood type.

Now you say, "Pastor, what is the point?" The point is that when Jesus hung His head and bled and died, the blood that was shed was sovereign blood; and therefore it was fully sacrificial blood. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.

In Acts chapter 20, verse 28, Paul is talking to the pastors of the church at Ephesus,

and he tells them something very interesting. He said, *“Take heed...unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers,”*—now, listen to this next phrase; listen to it—*“to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood”* (Acts 20:28)—*“to feed the church of God, which God has purchased with His own blood.”* You see, Jesus, the supernatural Son of God, is the sinless Son of God, who is the sovereign Son of God, who is the sacrificial Son of God. He *“became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”* (Philippians 2:8)

V. Jesus Is the Surviving Son of God

But now, next, He is the surviving Son of God. Death could not hold Him. He rose from the dead. Notice, if you will, in verse 9: *“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name.”* (Philippians 2:9) The grave could not hold Him, because He’s both the Lord of life and death. And He said, *“No man taketh my life from me; I lay it down of myself. I have the power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again.”* (John 10:18) He survives the ages. He’s not somewhere in a tomb. The Bible says, *“He’s able to save unto the uttermost those that come unto God by Him, because He ever liveth to make intercession for them.”* (Hebrews 7:25)

Listen to me, friend. What makes Jesus unique? Not only His birth, and His death, but His resurrection. Listen carefully. Buddha died: he’s dead! Confucius died: he’s dead! Muhammad died: he’s dead! Jesus walked out of that grave. *“God...hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name.”* And *“He is shown to be the Son of God with power...by the resurrection from the dead.”* (Romans 1:4) He is alive!

VI. Jesus Is the Soon-Coming Son of God

Now, next, Jesus the surviving Son of God is the soon-coming Son of God. Look now in verses 9 through 11: *“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”* (Philippians 2:9–11) Every knee will bow. Satan will bow on his thorny knees and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. The rock star Madonna will bow and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Saddam Hussein will bow and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Those who nailed Him to the cross will bow and confess that Jesus is Lord. Pontius Pilate will confess that Jesus is Lord. King Herod, who murdered the babies, will confess that Jesus is Lord.

And I’m going to tell you something: You have a date with Deity. You’re going to meet Jesus Christ. He is inescapable, unavoidable, and inevitable. You may not walk

down this aisle and give your heart to Jesus. They may roll you down this aisle sometime at your funeral. But if you don't know Jesus Christ, your soul will be in hell before the undertaker hears you're dead. And you will bow before Jesus Christ and confess that He's Lord. It doesn't mean you're going to be saved; but it does mean, "*As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.*" (Romans 14:11) Now He is the coming Son of God; He is the soon-coming Son of God. I don't know when He's coming. I'm going to be preaching next Sunday on signs of His coming. I want you to be here as we start the new year. But He is the soon-coming Son of God.

He was out there on the Mount of Olives after His resurrection, and His feet were standing there on the Mount of Olives. I've been to the Mount of Olives east of Jerusalem many times, and walked around on that mountain and wondered, "Am I standing right where Jesus stood before He ascended?" The Bible says again that His feet are going to touch upon the Mount of Olives—His feet are going to touch down. (Zechariah 14:4) Those nail-pierced feet are going to touch down upon that Mount of Olives. And I'm wondering, "Could it be here that those feet are going to touch that Mount of Olives?" And the Bible says it's going to cleave in two, a great earthquake, when Jesus comes.

Now in Acts 1:11, Jesus had been taken up, and the angels were there; and they saw these people with their jaws unhinged, their eyes upward looking to Jesus going up and being received into a cloud of glory. And in Acts 1:11, the angel said, "*Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go.*" (Acts 1:11) And the Bible says that His feet will touch the Mount of Olives.

Think about those feet. Think about those little dimpled feet that lay in the straw—those little baby feet, those chubby feet, that we were talking about last week, that bear the scars. Think of those bare-footed feet that walked in the shavings in Joseph's carpenter shop. Think of those sandaled feet that walked the dusty shores and lanes of Galilee. Think of those nail-pierced feet as they nailed Him to the cross. Think of those miracle feet that walked on water. Those feet are going to stand upon that Mount of Olives when Jesus comes again.

Jesus—listen, friend, don't forget it—Jesus is coming back—actually, literally, visibly, bodily back to this earth! Now, don't explain that away. There were people who missed His first coming because they did not believe the prophecies and the Scriptures. Now, friend, the prophecies that were fulfilled literally in His first coming will be fulfilled literally in His Second Coming: "And every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2:10–11) And if those baby feet, and those bare feet, and those sandaled feet, and those miracle feet, and

those pierced feet are going to stand on the Mount of Olives some day, I think we ought to fall at His feet. I think we ought to just say, “Jesus, you’re Lord.” I want to say it now; I want to confess it now: *“Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*

VII. Jesus Is the Saving Son of God

Now, let me say, finally, not only is Jesus the soon-coming Lord, but He is the saving Lord; Jesus Christ is the saving Son of God. Look again in verse 8: *“And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”* (Philippians 2:8)

Why Christmas? Because of Calvary. Christmas is to make Calvary possible. Luke 19:10: *“For the Son of man...”*—that is, God in human flesh—*“the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”* (Luke 19:10) Jesus is the only way to be saved. He’s the saving Son of God. Acts 4:12 says, *“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)

We get a lot of mail through Love Worth Finding. Here’s a letter that came: “To Adrian Rogers: I hope you’re doing very well. I just wanted to write you a few lines for the first time to tell you how much I enjoy your sermons.” And then he says some very nice things about the sermons, and I’ll skip that. “I accepted Christ as my Savior about two years ago.” And then he talks about watching Love Worth Finding. He says, “Ever since I first listened to you on Sunday at 11:00 a.m., now every Sunday morning I sit waiting for your show with my Bible, pen, and paper. You see, I cannot do much anymore. God is my strength and my salvation. Every day I praise the Lord. I am an inmate in the Arkansas State Penitentiary on death row. I look forward to that great and glorious day when Jesus Christ comes to take His saints up to heaven. I also have gotten my dad to listen to your show; he often records them. I just want to give my thanks to you for your wonderful preaching. With all my love, I thank you. May God bless you.” And his first name is Randy. I’ll not give his full name, because I don’t have permission. But Randy, on death row, heard the gospel of the Son of God, born of a virgin.

The supernatural Son of God; the sinless Son of God; God in human flesh, the sovereign Son of God; God, who hung naked upon a cross, the sacrificial Son of God; God, who walked out of that grave, the surviving Son of God; God, who is coming again in human flesh, the soon-coming Son of God, became the saving Son of God to this man on death row.

“Well,” you say, “it must be awful to be on death row, knowing you’re going to die.” Well, friend, you’re there. Don’t you realize that? Do you think just the people on death row are people who are going to die? You’re on death row. You say, “Well, he’s done

something terrible.” We’ve all sinned and come short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23)
Don’t we have a wonderful Savior?

*Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall;
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.
And all the king’s horses and all the king’s men
Couldn’t put Humpty together again.*

Well, Humpty Dumpty never met Jesus. Friend, He’s the One who can put you together again. You see, there’s no sin so great that He cannot forgive and cleanse. The blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanses from all sin.

Conclusion

I want to tell you something this Christmas season: I love the Lord Jesus Christ. He is very real to me. He’s more real to me than you are. I’m so grateful for our dear Savior. I love Him with all of my heart. And God sent me here today to tell you that He loves you. He is the Christ who came, and He is the Christ who is coming again. And I promise you on the authority of the Word of God, this One named Jesus, the highest of the high, the greatest of the great, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, is reaching out His hands to you and saying to you today, *“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”* (Matthew 11:28)

Trust and Obey

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: January 22, 1992

Main Scripture Text: Philippians 2:5–18

“Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”

PHILIPPIANS 2:12

Outline

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Introduction

Turn to Philippians chapter 2, please, and we’re going to read a familiar part of Philippians chapter 2, and then read just a little past it. It’s the part that’s past the familiar part that I’m going to deal with, but the familiar part sets the stage for the other part. Philippians 2, and in a moment we’re going to begin reading in verse 5. But I want to talk to you tonight on this subject—at least, the subject of our Bible study is this—the words of an old song: “Trust and Obey”—“Trust and Obey.” I want to talk to you, really, about the importance of obedience; and not only the importance of obedience, but I want to show you the strength for obedience, and I want to show you what that obedience really entails. And I hope tonight—I really hope—that you’ll be as excited about this passage of Scripture as I am as I’ve looked at it.

Now here the Lord is talking to me and He’s speaking to you. And He says, *“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself,”*—now, look at this phrase now—*“and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”* Not only was He obedient; He was obedient unto death; and not only unto death, but even the death of the cross. *“Wherefore God*

also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus...—and this is one of my favorite verses in all of the Bible—*“that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”* (Philippians 2:5–11)

Now that’s the familiar part. Now I want to read the rest of it. And the rest of it is somewhat familiar, but we don’t tend to read this much as much: *“Wherefore...”*—now he’s only using Jesus therefore as an example to get to a place, to say something to us—*“Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed,”*—there’s our word again—*“not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Do all things without murmurings and disputings: that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain. Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all. For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me.”* (Philippians 2:12–18)

Now, folks, there’s no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey. Somebody called trust and obey “the old T & O,” the railroad of redemption—“the T & O.” And I hope that you’re aboard and that you’re riding. Really, trust and obey are the two feet upon which the Christian walks: trusting is one thing; obeying is the other. One is not a substitute for the other. The two form the two feet of the Christian faith. Or, really, trust and obey are the two hands by which we lay hold of the blessings of God. Trust and obey are the two eyes that make the things of God real to us.

Now I don’t know how you feel about obedience, and I don’t know how your obedience is tonight. But I want you to check up tonight. Is there something God has laid upon your heart you’ve not yet done? If so, keep that in mind as we look in this passage of Scripture.

I. The Seriousness of Obedience

And, first of all, I want you to see what I’m going to call the seriousness of this matter of obedience—the seriousness of it. Look in verse 12. He says, *“Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation”*—now, look at this next phrase—*“with fear and trembling.”* (Philippians 2:12) Now Paul is not talking about a light matter here; he’s talking about something very, very serious. Now Paul was away from them. While he was with them there, they were obeying. It’s very obvious. Look at it. He says, “When

you were with me and I was with you, you obeyed.” Look again: *“Wherefore, my beloved,”*—verse 12—*“as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only.”* Now when Paul was there, they were obeying. But now Paul is absent.

You know, the mark of a mature church is how they behave when the pastor is away. Did you know there are some of you who, if I’m out of the pulpit, don’t come to church? That’s always been strange to me. I wonder why there would be people who say, “Well, the pastor’s not there this morning. I think we’ll do thus and such.” That’s always been strange to me that you would take that as an opportunity to be a disobedient child. You know, the mark of maturity in your own children is, when you’re away from them, they obey when you are away.

Now these people had to some degree, I guess, become dependent upon the Apostle Paul. And maybe they were saying to Paul, “Now, Brother Paul, don’t you ever leave us. If you ever leave us, we don’t know what we’re going to do.” Paul says, “I’ll tell you what to do: you just keep on obeying God as you did when I was there.” Now what Paul is saying is, “You need a faith that can stand on its own two feet. You obeyed when I was with you. Now when I’m away from you, I want you to obey, also.”

Now here’s what he tells them to do. Look at it very carefully. He tells them to work out their own salvation. But many people misunderstand this passage of Scripture. Look at it again: *“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”* Now, work *o-u-t*: what does that spell? *Out!* He doesn’t say, “Work *f-o-r*”—“for.” Now, make it very clear in your mind. He says, *“Work out your...salvation.”* He doesn’t say, “Work for your salvation.” You cannot work for your salvation. Ephesians 2, verses 8 and 9, says, *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.”* (Ephesians 2:8–9) Nowhere does the Bible tell us to work for our salvation.

Obedience is not working for our salvation; obedience is working out our salvation. You cannot work it out until God works it in. When God works it in, that’s salvation. You work it out. That is obedience. You simply work out what God has worked in. You can’t work out a college curriculum until you enroll in college. Actually, this word *“work out”* has the idea of working a mine, like a gold mine. If you have a gold mine, and it has all kinds of gold in it, and it may be yours, but you have to work out your mine. And actually, the Greek word literally has the idea of mining a mine. And so I must mine that which is mine. God has worked it into me. Now I must work it out.

And he says that we’re to do it *“with fear and trembling.”* We ought to be deathly afraid that we will miss God’s best or that we will fail to obey Him. You say, “Pastor, I didn’t know that a Christian was to have fear and trembling.” Well, this verse tells us that we are. And just go back to 1 Corinthians chapter 2 and look with me in the first three verses. Paul says here, *“And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency*

of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.” (1 Corinthians 2:1–3) That’s the great Apostle Paul: weakness, fear, trembling.

Sometimes people ask me, “Pastor, are you ever afraid to stand up there in front of all of those people?” Almost always. “Well, pastor, do you think you’ll ever get over it?” I hope not. When we think about the seriousness of what we’re about—Paul said, “I am afraid. I stay afraid that I might depend upon my own strength, my own ability, rather than depending upon Almighty God.” Paul was not afraid he was going to lose his salvation. That’s not what he’s talking about at all. It’s a warning against self-reliance: “*Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.*” I heard Billy Graham say on one occasion, “I stay afraid.” Every one of us ought to see the seriousness of this thing of serving the Lord.

Why with fear and trembling? Because of the weakness of the flesh, because of the wiles of the devil, because of the ways of the world. It’s a matter of obedience. It’s a serious thing. And we work out what God has worked in.

II. The Strength of Obedience

Now, how are we going to do it? Notice not only the seriousness of obedience, but the strength of obedience. Continue to read now and look in verse 13. He says, “*Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*” (Philippians 2:12–13) Now, why do I work? Because He’s worked in me. I work out what He has worked in. But how do I work? It is God that works in me “*both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*” Look at the word *worketh*. You see, “*For it is God which worketh in you.*” That word actually means “energize.” It is God that energizes you.

How do you get the strength to obey? Now Jesus is the example of obedience. Notice he talked about how the Lord Jesus Christ obeyed, and it says that, “*Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death.*” (Philippians 2:8) Jesus is my example. But if He’s only my example, all that does is mock me, because if you were to tell me to be like Jesus, I can’t be like Jesus. All I would be is a little cheap tin imitation Jesus. You see, for me to be like Jesus, Jesus will have to be in me. He has to inhabit my humanity in order to display His deity. I don’t know whether you’ve heard me say it before; but I’ve said it before, and I want to say it again—and I hope you’ll listen to it: *There is only one person who has ever lived the Christian life—only one. His name is Jesus. And if the Christian life is lived in your house and in your body, it will be Jesus Christ living that life in you and through you.* Learn this: “*It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*”

The seriousness of obedience is one thing; but, my dear friend, the strength of obedience is another. We work because God works in us.

But now, wait a minute. Why doesn't God work in everybody? Because, my dear friend, He will not work until we do. The Scripture never teaches us to be passive, to say, "Oh well, it's God that does it; therefore, I won't do anything."

I came here tonight in my automobile. My automobile has power steering, and that power steering helps me to control that automobile, to turn it to the right or to turn it to the left. It has power brakes to stop that automobile. But, my dear friend, I don't want an automobile that decides for itself whether it's going to turn right or left, or when it's going to stop and when it's going to start. All of that power is there, and I could not operate the automobile without it; yet it operates under my volition. I'm the one that says, "Go right," and the power steering begins. I'm the one that says, "Go left," and the power steering begins. I'm the one that says, "Slow down," and the power brakes take over. I'm the one that says, "Speed up," and the engine begins to move. You see, *my responsibility in the Christian life is my response to His ability.*

Now, learn this: Both the desire, however, to turn right or to turn left spiritually comes from God. God not only works in me to do His will; God works in me to desire His will. That's the strength of obedience. *"It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."* He will not do it without me. I must decide. I cannot blame God if I'm disobedient. Yet, on the other hand, it is God that energizes me, that works in me both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

"Well," you say, "Pastor Rogers, suppose therefore I don't have a desire. I mean, what's wrong with me? I don't have a desire to do God's will, and God is not working in me to do His will. What's wrong with me?" Promise you won't get mad if I tell you? You're lost—you're lost! One of the ways that you can know that you're saved is you will to do the will of God. I can tell you, you're looking at a man that wants to do the will of God. I do! I will to do the will of God. Now if you don't will to do the will of God, God won't work in you. He has to work on you in order to get you saved. And once God gets you saved, then, my dear friend, you work out what God has worked in. And God works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. One of the best ways that you can know that you're saved is that you have a desire in your heart to obey God. In order to be saved, you have to come to the place where you're willing to be made willing, where you humble yourself and say, "God, come into my heart and begin to work in me." That's the strength of obedience.

III. The Spirit of Obedience

Now I want you to notice also the spirit of obedience. With what spirit are you to obey God? Look in verse 14: *"Do all things without murmurings and disputings."* (Philippians

2:14) Now when we obey, we're to obey quickly, and we're to obey happily. Have you ever had to force your children to clean up their room? Well, would you say that's an obedient child? I mean, does God have to twist your arm? Does God have to threaten you, bribe you, or wait forever on you? God says we're to do all things, first of all, without murmuring.

I'll tell you, folks, there are a lot of things that I don't want in life. I'll tell you, number one on the list, I believe, is a church full of murmuring people. Don't murmur: the Bible forbids it. You know what murmuring is? It's half-concealed, half-uttered complaints. And the Bible teaches that is it a form of disobedience. *"Do all things without murmurings."* Why? Because murmuring leads to disputing. No murmuring and no misunderstanding: that's the spirit of obedience. Never, never murmur about what God lays on your heart to do.

You see, the example is this: *"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."* (Philippians 2:5) And then it says that He laid down His life. (Philippians 2:8) He never murmured. He never disobeyed. And that's the Christ that works in us: no murmuring, no misunderstanding. Jesus did not murmur, and the one who murmurs never really understands Calvary.

You say, "Well, pastor, I've got problems." Well, that's the reason we have this illustration of Jesus at Calvary before He talks about obedience and the spirit of obedience. Someone wrote these words: "We thank Him for sun. Do we thank Him for rain? We thank Him for joy. Do we thank Him for pain? We thank Him for gains. Do we thank Him for losses? We thank Him for blessings. Do we thank Him for crosses?"

IV. The Service of Obedience

Now, here's a fourth thing I want you to notice as you look at this passage of Scripture: the seriousness of this matter of obedience; the strength of this matter of obedience; the spirit of this matter of obedience—no murmuring, no disputing; and then, I want you to notice the service of it. When we begin to live this way, what happens? Well, look in verse 15. He says, *"Do [this] that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation..."*—well, boy, if Paul could write that then, I wonder what he'd write today—*"in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain."* (Philippians 2:15–16) That is, "I haven't wasted my time being your pastor."

Now he says here that when you begin to obey, number one, you're going to be blameless. Now that doesn't mean sinless. None of us are sinless. But we can be blameless. It means "above reproach." They tried to find fault in young Daniel. In Daniel chapter 6 and verse 4, the Bible says, *"Then the presidents and princes sought to find*

occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him.” (Daniel 6:4) That’s one of the greatest testimonies of any man I’ve ever heard. Friend, I don’t want the name of Jesus to be drug through the mud and the mire and somebody point a finger at me and say, “It’s Adrian’s fault: he’s to blame—he’s to blame.” I want to be blameless; and the only way I can be blameless is to be obedient.

And then he says we’re to “*shine as lights in the world.*” (Philippians 2:15) God put us here as a lighthouse; but a Christian that does not obey has no light to shine. We’re to be holding forth the Word of life. And where? “*In the midst of a crooked and perverse nation.*” Why did God put Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee? As I said the other Sunday, we are a greenhouse for the saved, and a lighthouse for the lost; but we won’t be unless we obey. One of these days, my dear friend, we’re going to have to give an account. Look, if you will, in verses 16 of this same chapter: “*Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.*” (Philippians 2:16) That is, one of these days we’re going to have to give an account for the way that we’ve run, the way we’ve labored, the way we have obeyed.

V. The Sacrifice of Obedience

Now, look, if you will, in verse 17, and that speaks of the sacrifice of obedience: “*Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.*” (Philippians 2:17) Now, notice he says that we’re to be a burning and a shining light. You see, in verse 15, the last part: “*Ye shine as lights.*” (Philippians 2:15) There’s no shining without burning, and there’s no burning without consumption. When you burn, you’re spent. And what he’s trying to say here is that “*I [am] offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith*” —that it costs to obey.

We sing, “It pays to serve Jesus, it pays every day”; but it costs to serve Jesus. We say honesty pays. Honesty may cost. You may have less money if you’re honest. You may make more money if you’re a crook. If you’re looking for a cheap way, an easy way, a lazy way to serve God, you’ll not find it. Let me tell you something: The test of your obedience is not how much you’re willing to take in terms of suffering, but how much you’re willing to give in terms of sacrifice. May I say that again? The test of your obedience is not how much you’re willing to take in terms of suffering, but how much you’re willing to give in terms of sacrifice. We suffer. We can’t do anything about it most of the time. But what about when you don’t have to suffer; not when you’re taking it, but when you’re giving it in terms of sacrifice? That’s what Paul is saying: “*Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.*”

VI. The Sweetness of Obedience

Which brings me to the last and final thing, which is the sweetness of obedience. Now I don't know whether you've picked up the word *joy*, but I want to read just the last few verses, and I want you to see if you hear the word *joy* or anything that sounds like *joy*: *"Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain. Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all. For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me."* (Philippians 2:16–18)

*Trust and obey, for there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.*

—JOHN H. SAMMIS

Conclusion

"Work out your own salvation," (Philippians 2:12) for it's God that works in you. Has God worked in you? Are you saved? Let's bow in prayer. If there's not in your heart tonight a burning, passionate, blazing, wholesome, wholehearted desire to do the will of God, one of two things is true about you: you're lost, or terribly backslidden. If you're lost, you're going to die and go to hell. If you're backslidden, God is going to chastise you severely. Either way, the prognosis is not good at all. Either you're lost, or you're backslidden. Is there in your heart tonight a desire to do the will of God? If there is, it is because God has put it there. *"It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."* (Philippians 2:13) And when you say *yes* to what God puts in your heart, that's when the joy begins.

Father, I pray tonight that you'd help us all, with fear and trembling, to present ourselves to you as obedient children. In Jesus' dear name we pray. Amen.

How to Let Your Light Shine

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: February 20, 2000

Main Scripture Text: Philippians 2:12–17

“That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.”

PHILIPPIANS 2:15

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Introduction

Take your Bibles and find Philippians chapter 2, and in a moment we're going to look at verse 15. I don't know whether or not you realize it; but if you are saved, then you have been called to be a lighthouse. Now we could use a different figure of speech. We could say you're called to be a soul winner; you're called to be a witness; but whatever it is, God wants to use your life as a shaft of golden gospel sunlight into a dark world. Look, if you will, in chapter 2, and verse 15. Paul says, *“That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.”* (Philippians 2:15) And just say to yourself, “He's talking to me this morning.” *“Among whom ye shine as lights in the world”*: God made us to be lighthouses.

Now, stop complaining if you live in some dark place. Stop complaining if your job is in an ungodly atmosphere. Stop complaining if you live in a neighborhood where there don't seem to be many Christians. Friend, God put you there *“in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation.”* You don't take a lighthouse and put it in downtown Manhattan. You put a lighthouse out on some barren, craggy, rocky, windswept shore to give a warning and to give a beacon; to guide ships into the harbor of safety.

Sometimes people will say, “Oh, I’ve got the most wonderful, wonderful news! We have moved into a neighborhood, and everybody around us is a Christian!” Well, I’m happy for you if you live in that kind of a neighborhood. But wouldn’t it be wonderful to say, “You know, praise God, God put me in a neighborhood to be a light to shine for Him”?

I believe so many of our churches are sacred societies for the snubbing of sinners. And we have the idea that we’re just huddled together. We’re like a department store that locks all the doors, and then we begin to sell the merchandise one to another—the sales force. And we are just rejoicing in what we have in the Lord; and out there lost in the darkness, some poor, fainting, struggling seaman needs the light of the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Sometimes we will have a revival crusade. We’ll say to our people, “Invite your lost friends to come.” And they say, “Well, I don’t have any.” Well, why not? “Well, pastor, you taught us we’re to be separate.” Friend, we need to learn that separation is not isolation. We need to learn that we are lights, and we are to let our light shine. And so many churches are mutual admiration societies who gather together and wait for the next bus to heaven.

Now Jesus was crucified because He was a friend of sinners. And we’re going to get to our text in just a moment; but Jesus said, “*Ye are the salt of the earth... Ye are the light of the world.*” (Matthew 5:13–14) Now, friend, salt penetrates; and light illuminates. And that’s what we’re here to do.

Now with all of that in mind, let’s begin. Let’s go back to verse 12—Philippians 2, verse 12: “*Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Do all things without murmurings and disputings: that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain. Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.*” (Philippians 2:12–17)

Now we’re talking about letting our light shine. We’re talking about being a lighthouse. But let’s see if we can pick up a theme in this second chapter. And look, if you will, going back up to verse 8. It speaks of Jesus on the cross dying for us. And look, if you will, in verse 8: “*And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death.*” (Philippians 2:8) Now if you don’t mind marking in your Bible—and, by the way, *if you have a Bible that’s falling apart, then you probably have a life that’s not*—if you don’t mind marking in your Bible, then just underscore that

word *obedient*: “...and became obedient.” Now verse 12 is going to make more sense: “Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” (Philippians 2:12) Underscore the word *obey* again. What he’s talking about here is obedience.

Now, how are we going to let our light shine? Obedience. Why did we sing today, “I’ll say, ‘Yes, Lord, yes,’ to your will and to your way”? Because, friend, it is obedience that counts. We sing that song, “Trust and obey, for there’s no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey.” Listen. *Trust* and *obey* are the two feet upon which you walk the Christian life. *Trust* and *obey* are the two eyes with which you see the blessings of God. *Trust* and *obey* are the two hands that receive the promises of God. God’s work is never stopped for lack of resources. Don’t get the idea that, “Oh, the reason we can’t reach the world for Jesus is we don’t have enough money.” That’s a lie! Don’t ever get the idea that the reason we can’t reach the world for Jesus is we don’t have enough personnel. That’s a lie! The reason we’re not doing what we ought to do is because we do not trust and obey. God owns the world; He has it all. But God is waiting for us to trust Him and to obey Him.

Now obedience is not an optional thing—not in the Christian life. Some of you are very much like the man’s dog that I heard about. He said, “My dog is a very smart dog.” Another man said, “Well, how smart is he?” “Well, when I’m going somewhere, I say to my dog, ‘Do you want to come with me, or stay there?’ and he makes up his mind, and he does one or the other. He’s a very smart dog.” Now some people are kind of that way when you give what the Word of God says, and they say, “Well, I will,” or, “I won’t.”

Well, friend, you don’t know anything about the Christian life. We are to obey Him. If Jesus Christ became obedient upon the cross, then how much more do we, who are His servants, need to obey Him? You’re not going to shine as the light in a dark world until you learn five principles. And I want to give you these five principles right now. They’re found right in this passage of Scripture. We’re talking now about letting your light shine, making your house a lighthouse, and making this church-house a lighthouse. And these five principles are found right here.

I. The Principle of Responsibility

Number one is the principle of responsibility—the principle of responsibility. Look in verse 12: “Wherefore, my beloved, as ye has always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling”—“work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” (Philippians 2:12) What he’s talking about now is personal responsibility. It is your own salvation.

Are you saved? Are you? Then, what are you to do? You are to work out your own

salvation. Nobody can do that for you. Now Paul says, “You have obeyed when I was with you. Now in my absence—I’m going to leave you here at Philippi; I’m going to go—and as you obeyed when I was with you, now in my absence, work out your own salvation.”

You know the mark of maturity? What you do. Well, for example, children. Have you noticed that as your children get older, when they reach a certain stage, you can trust them? You can go away without a babysitter. But if they’re immature, then you don’t leave them by themselves. Now Paul is saying, “Look. Be mature. You obeyed when I was with you. Now in my absence, work out your own salvation.”

I try to be here in the services most every Sunday. I hate to miss a Sunday preaching in this pulpit. But did you know there are some dear people who if I’m not here on Sunday, then they won’t be here? You know, a wart ought to grow on your nose. You have obeyed in my presence. Obey in my absence. What is *maturity*? Maturity is accepting responsibility and obeying the Lord. And he says, “*Work out your own salvation.*” You don’t have to have somebody take you by the hand. You work it out.

Now he doesn’t say, “*Work for your salvation.*” He’s not talking about a *works* salvation. You’re not saved by works. Ephesians 2, verses 8 and 9: “*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.*” (Ephesians 2:8–9) He doesn’t say, “*Work for your salvation.*” He says, “*Work out your own salvation.*”

You can’t work out your curriculum until you enroll in college. You can’t work out your salvation until you have it.

Actually, the words “*work out*” are words for mining. A person might be *working out* a coal mine. He goes down into the earth. He owns the mine. But he has to *work out*. He has to get the ore out. He has to get the coal out. He has to get the gold out, and the silver—whatever happens to be in that mine. Guy King says, “I am to mine that which is mine.” It’s yours; but you have to go down deep and work it out. “*Work out your own salvation.*”

There’s this matter of personal reliability. And he says, do it with fear and trembling. How much of that do we have today? Are you a little nervous that you might miss God’s plan? You say, “Well, we’re not supposed to be afraid as Christians.” Well, Paul said we are. He said, “*Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.*” Put in your margin 1 Corinthians chapter 2. I’ll read it; you just look it up later on—1 Corinthians chapter 2, verses 1 through 3. Paul said, “*And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save*”—or, “except”—“*Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.*” (1

Corinthians 2:1–3) The great Apostle Paul said *weakness, fear, and trembling*. Why? Lest he depend upon the flesh. I've prayed over and over again this morning, "Dear God, I need you. I don't have what it takes." In that sense, I stay frightened.

We all should remember the weakness of the flesh, the ways of the world, and the wiles of the devil. And we work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. We have sort of a casual Christianity. Are you really interested in serving Jesus? Or do you think you've done God a wild favor by getting here this morning? This is not the service. We're just preparing you for the service. There is a responsibility.

*He wasn't much for stirring about: it wasn't his desire.
No matter what the others did, he was sitting by the fire.
Same old story day by day: he never seemed to tire.
While others worked to build their church, he was sitting by the fire.
At last he died as all must do: they say he went up higher.
But if he is doing what he used to do, he is sitting by the fire.*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

You don't work for your salvation. But, friend, if you are saved, then you will work. It's the birthmark of a believer; it's the principle of responsibility: Obey; work out your own salvation. That's the first principle in verse 12.

II. The Principle of Possibility

Now, here's the second principle: not only the principle of responsibility, but also the principle of possibility. Some will say, "Well, Adrian, that's all right for you to say. But I just don't have what it takes. I'm not equipped. I don't have a college degree. I don't have the resources. I don't have the health. I don't have the intellect. I don't have the personality." And you begin to tell God all the reasons why you can't do what He told you to do.

Listen to me. Behind every command is the omnipotent power of God to carry out that command. And don't you dare insult God by saying He can't use you. That's a black lie. It's a heinous, heinous, hellish lie. God made you, and God has equipped you. Look in verse 13. Now, watch it; look at it—verse 13: "*For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*" (Philippians 2:13) Now, you see, the responsibility and the possibility are inextricably interwoven. *Behind every command of God is the omnipotent power of God to carry out that command.* If God tells me to do something, then God will enable me to do it. That's the blessing of the Christian life.

This word *work*—"For it is God that *worketh* in you"—is the word *energeia*; it's the word we get our word *energy* from. You see, listen. Jesus is both the example and the energy for our obedience. He is the example. He is the enabler. It would be mockery for Him to tell me to do something that I cannot do. I can work out what God has worked in,

because it is God that works in me. And the life I live I live by the strength of the Son of God in me. And that Son of God is in you. And everything that He commands you to do, He will enable you to do—or God is not just.

Now that doesn't mean you can be passive. That doesn't mean you just sit around and say, "All right, it's time for you to start working." A man wanted a raise. He thought he was going to get a raise and he didn't get a raise at his job. And he went to his employer and said, "When does my raise become effective?" The boss said, "When you do."

We have our part. God has His part. It's like power steering in an automobile. The power steering is there; but you've got to move the wheel. When you move the wheel, the power steering takes over. You see, it's God that works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure. Both the desire and the doing come from God.

You say, "Okay, then it's not my fault, because I don't have any desire." Oh, you don't? You just told on yourself. You know what you need to do? There's nothing wrong with you that an old-fashioned revival or a good dose of salvation wouldn't cure. I'm telling you that if you don't have a desire—I mean, if there is not in you a desire to serve God—then check up. From the moment I gave my heart to Jesus Christ as a teen to this moment there has been a desire in my heart to serve Him. Is there a desire in your heart to serve Him? That desire is God working in your heart. *"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."*

And that responsibility is a possibility, because God Almighty will enable you to do what He wants you to do. Stop making excuses. Stop saying, "Well, I don't have what it takes." If you've got God, then you've got what it takes. And if you have no desire, then you need to be saved, and God needs to do an operation on your heart. A country preacher said, "Lord, help me to cooperate with you so you won't have to operate on me." One of the ways that you know that you're saved is that you have this desire to serve God.

III. The Principle of Availability

Now, here's the third principle: the principle of availability. Now if you have that responsibility, and you have that possibility, then you make yourself available to Him. Look, if you will, in verses 14 and 15: *"Do all things without murmurings and disputings: that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation,"*—or some read "generation"—*"among whom ye shine as lights in the world."* (Philippians 2:14–15)

Now what you do when you obey, you're to do it quickly and happily. He says there's to be no murmuring. Murmuring is a terrible, horrible thing. Murmurings—do you know what a murmuring is? Murmuring is a half-concealed, half-uttered complaint. Murmurers

in churches—oh, there ought to be some room that you could just put all the murmurers in together and lock them up.

You know, one pastor said, “I wouldn’t mind being swallowed by a whale. I just hate to be nibbled to death by minnows.” It’s like being stoned with popcorn.

Murmurers murmur. God told Moses in the Old Testament, “Those people are murmuring.” He said, “They’re not murmuring against you, Moses. They are murmuring against me, because I’m the One who gave you to them.” (Exodus 16:18) God ranked murmuring with idolatry. (1 Corinthians 10:7–10) And then he says, “...*without murmuring and without disputing.*” (Philippians 2:14) You see, murmuring always leads to disputing, and they are two ugly monsters that hold back our availability: murmuring and disputing.

Now Jesus is the example for this. And Paul started Philippians chapter 2 by talking about the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, “*who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant...*”—carried our sins to the cross—“...*and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*” (Philippians 2:6–8) And then he says, “Therefore, beloved, be like Jesus.” (Philippians 2:5) Jesus did not murmur, and Jesus did not argue on the way to the cross.

Now there’s to be no murmuring; there’s to be no misunderstanding, because God has a job for us to do. And how are we to do it? How are we to be available? Look again. Number one: We’re to be blameless. Do you see it? “*That ye may be blameless.*” (Philippians 2:15) Are you blameless? You say, “Well, pastor, nobody’s sinless.” I didn’t ask you if you were sinless. Are you blameless? If this church fails, will you be to blame? If your neighborhood is not reached, will you be to blame? If your children don’t hear the gospel, will you be to blame? You may not be sinless, but you may be blameless.

I used to pastor down at Cape Kennedy. One of those astronauts came in there and saw one of those missile engines being worked on. That man in white—with white gloves and everything lest a speck of dust get in that engine—the astronaut stood behind, and looked for a while, and knew that after a while he would be on top of that thing being hurled out into the heavens. And the astronaut said just somewhat kiddingly to the engineer, “I want you to be careful. I’m going to be on that thing, you know.” The engineer stood up and turned around, and looked him right in the face and said, “Mister, if it fails, then it will not be because of me.”

Wouldn’t you like to say that about Bellevue Baptist Church? Wouldn’t you like to say, “O God, O God, if my church is not what it ought to be, dear God, then at least it will not be because of me. I will be blameless.” And when you’re blameless, then you’re harmless.

People ask, “Well, you’ve got a big church, Pastor Rogers. How many of your members are active?” All of them: some are building, and some are tearing down. Some are helpers, and some are harmers. Everybody is either a helper or a harmer. And somebody is blameless or blamable. What are you? What are you? If every member of this church were just like you, then what kind of a church would this church be? If you want to know what’s right or wrong with this church, then go look in the mirror. Are you available to the Lord? Or is this World Mission Conference going to be something where you’re going to look around and say, “I wonder what they’re going to do”? It is the principle of responsibility. It is the principle of possibility. It is the principle of availability.

I appreciated the little vignette that we had. We sing that song, Brother Jim, “Let the lower lights be burning, send a gleam across the wave! Some poor fainting struggling seaman, you may rescue, you may save.” We’re to be “*holding forth the word of life*” (Philippians 2:16)—that’s what he says. And where do we hold it forth? “*In the midst of a crooked and perverse nation*”—or, “generation.” If I don’t let my light shine, then somebody may be shipwrecked.

I’m from Florida. Very near where I was raised is the Jupiter Lighthouse. I’ve seen it so many times. It’s about fifteen miles from my home, there at the Jupiter Inlet. There’s a story that’s based in truth, I believe, that in the early days in Florida there was a lighthouse keeper—whether in the Jupiter Lighthouse or in some other lighthouse, I know not. But I’ve heard this story several times about a man who in the midst of a hurricane had one of the panels in the casing for the light to blow out. He couldn’t get another piece of glass immediately to put in there, but he found a piece of tin. And he put a piece of tin up there in that window, in that lighthouse, and the lighthouse would shine in every direction except for one particular place. And there it was dark. And it so happened that because of that one dark place, a ship was wrecked and lives were lost. I’ve thought about that often. I wonder if there is something in my life, some piece of tin where there ought to be transparency, that keeps the light of the Lord Jesus Christ from shining.

Is there in your heart—is there in my heart—today some malfeasance, some habit, some attitude, some practice, or anything that would hinder the light of the Lord Jesus Christ? Are you available? Is there anything in your life that would hinder it?

IV. The Principle of Accountability

Let me give you the next principle—and that’s the principle of accountability. Look, if you will now, in verse 16 of this same chapter. And he says here, “*Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.*” (Philippians 2:16) Now he’s not talking now here about the present, but he’s talking about the future. He is saying, “There is coming a day of accountability.”

Do you realize that? Has that ever dawned upon you? That soon and very soon we're going to see the King? Soon and very soon you will stand before Jesus Christ. The Bible calls that *"the day of Christ."*

Now Paul changes the analogy, the idiom. He's not thinking now of a lighthouse. Now he's thinking of a runner, who would come to the judgment seat to receive his reward. We're going to give an account. Look at it again: *"Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ."* That is, when I come to stand before Him to give an account, I'm going to give an account. I'm going to give an account for this message this morning. I'm going to give an account for what I say. You're going to give an account for what you hear. And you're going to give an account for what you would have heard if you'd have listened. God holds us responsible. Have you ever thought about that? We're going to face Him one of these days. And Paul says, "I want to do it with joy."

We're talking about soul winning today. In Psalm 126, verses 5 and 6, the Bible says, *"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."* (Psalm 126:5–6) Paul said to the Philippians, "You're my joy; you're my crown."

I got this the other day, just last Sunday. Somebody handed me this card, and I think it's not without coincidence that this card has a lighthouse on it. I don't think the people who gave me this knew what we were going to be doing today. But on this lighthouse card it says, "Thank you, pastor." And here's what it says on the inside: "Thank you so much for leading us to Christ. We were not alive until the Holy Spirit filled our hearts and light chased the darkness away. We'll never be the same as we were. And we thank you and Jesus for that." I like that. That, my friend, brings me joy. That will bring me joy when these sweet people and I are there at the feet of Jesus. That's what Paul is talking about here. He's talking about joy.

Are you a soul winner? *"He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing."* There's no joy like bringing a soul to Jesus Christ—none! And if you dispute that, then it's because you're not a soul winner. I get more excited about seeing a soul come to Jesus Christ now than I did when I got saved. I get more joy out of that. I understand more about what is happening to them than I understood what was happening to me when you bring a soul to the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is coming a day of accountability. And is it going to be with joy or is it going to be with sadness when you meet the Lord? Listen to me. Listen! Listen! Listen! Listen! So far as I understand the Bible, all of the soul winning you will ever do, for all eternity, you will do in this lifetime. All of the soul winning you will ever do, for all eternity, you'll do in this lifetime.

"Must I go, and empty handed?"

*Must I meet my Savior so?
Not one soul with which to greet Him,
Must I empty handed go?*

—CHARLES C. LUTHER

Look up here and answer this question in your heart: Do you want to meet Jesus Christ never having brought a soul to Him? Paul says, “I want to rejoice”—“*Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.*” Now if you’re not obeying, then you’re running in vain and laboring in vain. What he’s saying is, the disobedient life is a waste of time. You’re drawing your breath and drawing your salary.

V. The Principle of Expendability

But now, here’s the fifth and final principle—and that’s the principle of expendability. Look, if you will, in verse 17: “*Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.*” (Philippians 2:17) What is he talking about? He’s saying, “Look, I want to serve you. I’m going to give an account one day. And so ‘*I be offered*’—that is, “sacrificed”; that’s what that literally means—‘*upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.*”

Now, listen. The test of your obedience is not how much you’re willing to take in terms of suffering, but how much you’re willing to give in terms of sacrifice. Now you may suffer, and you may suffer even unwillingly; but sacrifice is something that you choose to do. We’re going to ask you to make a World Mission offering. We’re going to ask you to commit to make your house a lighthouse. We’re going to ask you to make yourself expendable; to say, “Here’s my life.”

You see, listen. It was said of John the Baptist that he was a burning and a shining light—a burning and a shining light. Did you know that a lighthouse, the lights in those incandescent bulbs, or any other light, cannot shine unless it burns? Do you know why the sun shines? The sun burns. You see, in order to shine, you have to give. In order to shine, you have to burn. There can be no shining without burning. Now a lot of us would like to shine; but we don’t want to burn. We’re to be a burning and a shining light. That’s what Paul said. He said, “I offer myself upon the altar of sacrifice. I am expendable, dear Lord, for you.”

Look at us. What would happen if we were all burning and shining? What would happen if we took seriously what Jesus Christ says about being the light of the world? What would happen if we were all holding forth the word of life in the midst of a wicked and perverse nation? That’s why God put us here.

God saved me when I was a teen. I went to our Baptist Assembly in North Carolina. A man preached a message on soul winning. I can’t tell you anything that he said—not

one word! I don't know who spoke. I can't remember one word about it. But I remember the invitation. That man said, "How many here will promise to be soul winners? How many will promise, God helping you, to win souls?" Now I'm a new Christian. I put up my hand, and I meant business. I hardly knew any theology. I had no training in soul winning. I went back to West Palm Beach, where I was raised, still a teenage boy, with that in my heart: that God wanted me to be a soul winner.

It was a hot summer day. I was wearing a pair of Levis—no shoes, no shirt. I'd gone down to the corner store and gas station to get some kerosene to wash off some bicycle parts, as I remember. We dressed that way, without a shirt, to show off our muscles. And I'm just a teenage kid. And an old man came up to me. He had white whiskers and he had an extension cord in his hand. He said, "Son, would you like to buy this extension cord?" I said, "No, sir, I don't need it and don't want it." I said, "Why are you trying to sell it?" He said, "Well, I've been an old fool." I said, "Well, how? What?" He said, "I live on a pension check." He said, "When I got my check this time, I cashed it, and a so-called friend of mine, the two of us, we got drunk." He said, "I spent all of my check on whiskey. I've been an old fool." He said, "Now I don't have any more money." He said, "Now I'm having to sell some of my tools and things to get enough money to make it till I get another pension check." I said, "Well, mister, I don't have any money. I have about sixteen cents to buy this kerosene with. If I had some money, then I'd give it to you; but I don't, and I'm sorry. And I don't need an extension cord."

And I started to walk away. And God said, "Adrian, speak to him about his soul." I said, "God, I can't speak to him about his soul. I don't even have a shirt on." God said, "But you promised." I said, "But, God, he's a man, and I'm a boy." And God said, "Adrian, you promised." "But, God, I don't know how." He said, "But, Adrian, you promised." I thought I'd die if I did; I knew I'd die if I didn't. He wasn't speaking to me out loud—just in my heart. I turned around with what Paul said in this text: "*with fear and trembling.*" (Philippians 2:12) I turned to him and I said, "Sir, I don't have any money, but I may have something better than money." I said, "Sir, are you a Christian?" When I said that, the tears popped out of his eyes, and his chin started to quiver like that, and tears ran down through those canyons in his cheek and dropped off that white beard. He said, "No, son, I'm not a Christian." I said, "Sir, would you like to be?" He said, "More than anything in this world, if I only knew how to be." I said, "I wish I had a Bible." He said, "I have one." He reached into the lining—not the pocket, but the lining—of that old coat he was wearing and brought out a little Gideon New Testament and gave it to me. I found one verse, John 3:16—one verse—and I read it. And I told him about when God loved the world, and when God gave His Son, and when I believed God saved me. And I told him that if he would believe, then God would save him. You know, that's still pretty good, isn't it? Just that one verse.

He said, "What should I do?" I said, "Well, I'm going to pray for you. And then I want you to pray." And I started to pray for him, and I started to cry. Now, folks, in those days, I was ashamed to cry, even in front of my family, much less in front of a man on a street corner. I'd been in a lot of street fights right on that same corner before I got saved. And I started to cry, and I prayed for him. And I said, "Sir, you pray and ask Him to save you." And he started to pray, and he started to cry. And he asked Jesus to save him. And I said, "Well, did He do it?" He said, "I think He did." And I said, "Well, thank you. Goodbye." And I started to walk away. I knew nothing about follow-up—not even about anything. I just, you know, I'd done what I thought I needed to do.

He called me back. He said, "Young man, come here." Here's what he said. He said, "Young man, I'm an old man." He said, "I have been in almost every one of the forty-eight states." There were only forty-eight then. And he said, "You're the first person to ever speak with me about my soul. Thank you, young man. Thank you." When I walked home that day, I walked home *that high* off the sidewalk, leaping and dancing, praising God that God had given me the privilege of sharing Jesus.

Conclusion

There's no greater joy than to bring a soul to Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "*Ye are the light of the world.*" (Matthew 5:14) And, friend, it all comes down to obedience.

Trust and obey, for there's no other way.

—JOHN H. SAMMIS

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. Now we all can't be preachers, but we can all be reachers. We can't all do it the same way. We don't all have the same gifts. But would you pray, "God, in my area of life, would you make me a light to my neighborhood, a light to my family, a light to my school, or a light to my office? Lord God, make me a lighthouse"?

The Things That Really Count

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: April 23, 1978

Main Scripture Text: Philippians 3:1–9

“But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.”

PHILIPPIANS 3:7

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Introduction

The book of Philippians chapter 3. As we're preaching through Philippians, I don't know about you, but I'm having a good time in the book of Philippians. And we begin reading in verse 1. Do you have it? If you don't, then look on with a neighbor: *“Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe. Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision. For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he have whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.”* But now here's the key, and you watch it: *“But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count*

them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.” (Philippians 3:1–9)

We’re going to be thinking this morning on “The Things that Really Count”—“The Things that Really Count.” You will notice in verses 7 and 8 that Paul is talking about the things that really count. A lot of people today—and many of them church people—are spending time and giving energy in things that really don’t count. And a thousand years from now, and a million years from now, they will make absolutely no difference. And so today I want you to check up and see if you’re living a life that really counts.

Now if it’s a life of legalism, then it’s not a life that counts. The Apostle Paul had lived a life of legalism, and he’d had enough of it. The Lord Jesus Christ met him there on that Damascus road and saved him, transformed him, and he was born again. And he is going to fight legalism with every ounce and every inch for the rest of his life.

And so therefore the first three verses begin with a warning. The Apostle Paul says in verse 2, *“Beware of dogs.”* You’ve seen that sign before, haven’t you? *“Beware of dogs.”* And then he says, *“Beware of evil workers.”* And then he says, *“Beware of the concision.”* (Philippians 3:2) What’s he talking about? Who are these dogs? He’s talking about the legalists, the Judaizers. Those who were coming along after Paul would preach the gospel and they’d say, “Well, you’re not just saved by believing in Jesus: you’ve got to keep the Law of Moses. You’ve got to go through certain rituals. You’ve got to go through certain ceremonies.” And Paul said, “You beware of dogs.”

Now that’s awfully strong language, and the word here doesn’t mean a little house pet. He’s talking about those cruel, vicious, snapping, snarling, barking, biting, and filthy alley dogs—that’s what the word is here. And he says, “You watch for dogs.” That’s the way he characterized false religious teachers.

Now what Paul was telling us is this: that some of the meanest people in the world are in the world of religion. And Paul says, “Beware.” Don’t you think just because a person is religious, he’s nice. You will find more meanness in the world of religion than perhaps anywhere else. It was a religious crowd that crucified Jesus. And so the Apostle Paul says, *“Beware of dogs.”*

Now, don’t get fooled by people just performing religious acts. I heard about a missionary one time that was accosted by a lion. And the missionary was afraid the lion would devour him, and he was hoping for some kind of mercy when he saw the lion fold his big massive paws in front of him, bow his head reverently, and start to move his lips as though he was praying. The missionary said, “Can it be: a Christian lion?” But then the lion noticed that the missionary was looking somewhat relieved, and the lion said, “Don’t get your hopes up: I’m just asking the blessing before the meal.”

Now there are some people who may act very religious, but they’re very cruel and

very ferocious. And legalists are in that group. And so Paul says, “*Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.*” (Philippians 3:2) This word *concision* means “the mutilators.” He’s making a play on the word *circumcision*. They were the ones who were always preaching circumcision—circumcision. He calls them mutilators. He is saying that this legalism can save no one.

You know, Paul learned what I’ve learned and what I hope that you’ll learn this morning: that religion doesn’t save, and that the world doesn’t need religion; the world needs Jesus. Did you know that we’ve got a lot of religious folks who are lost—never been saved, never been born again?

I’ll tell you something that bothers me a little bit today. I’ll tell you what it is—and it doesn’t really bother me, but it really bothers me. Now, you’ll see why I said that in just a moment. There’s a term going around today: *born-again Christian*. They say, “Why thus and such a person is a born-again Christian. Charles Colson is a born-again Christian. Jimmy Carter, so they say, is a born-again Christian.” Friend, there’s no other kind. There’s no other kind. Don’t use *born-again* like a qualifying phrase to speak of a Christian.

Suppose I’m talking to a dentist, and I say, “What kind of dentist are you?” He says, “Oh, I’m a tooth dentist.” Big deal: a tooth dentist! Why, I mean, you say, dentist: that’s enough! You say Christian: that’s enough!

Now I don’t mind saying *born-again Christian*, because some people have the idea that you can be a Christian without being born again. Now I know that what people are saying is that you must be born again; but I think now we’re getting the idea that a born-again Christian is a special edition, maybe a guy with a little more spirit or something. Friend, listen. You can be as religious as you want; but if you’re not born again, then you’re not a Christian—you’re not a Christian! You must be born again. And so religion without Jesus Christ is a terrible thing. Religion cannot save anyone. The Apostle Paul was very religious, but he had just enough religion to keep him out of trouble. But he didn’t have enough righteousness to get him into heaven. And the Apostle Paul was very hard to win because he was so proud of his religion.

Now there are two classes of people that I’m going to be preaching to today. One class of folks is sinners—and they know it. And many of them may not come to Jesus, because they think they’re too bad and that the Lord can’t save them. There’s another class of folks who are self-righteous people. They won’t come to Jesus because they think that they’re too good. They think that the gospel is for the down and out.

I want to tell you—listen—sometimes it is harder to reach a religious person for Jesus than it is an out-and-out sinner. That’s the reason why Jesus Christ, when He looked at the Pharisees, who were the religionists of his day—that’s the reason why Jesus Christ said to them—and I know that it stung when He said it—“I want to tell you

something: The harlots and the publicans are going to heaven before you.” Why? At least they knew that they were sinners. (Matthew 21:31–32)

Do you know what most of the people in America are? They are egomaniacs strutting their way to hell, thinking that they’re too good to be damned. They don’t understand that they must be born again. And religious people sometimes are very hard to win to the Lord Jesus Christ—and it’s because they don’t think that they need to be. You know, some people may be lost because they drink; but other people are going to be lost because they never drank. They’re so good. You know, they’re such nice folks. And I’m not saying that you ought to drink, but I’m just saying that self-righteousness is a very deceptive thing. And Paul here is warning, warning, warning against self-righteousness. He is showing that religion cannot save. He’s showing that legalism cannot save. He’s showing that ritual cannot save.

And so Paul here begins to open the books. And he opened the book on his own life. And he tried to get a balance. And he looked at his life before Christ and he saw that he was bankrupt in spite of all of his religion. And then he found the Lord Jesus Christ, and he took stock again and found out that he was immensely wealthy. So therefore I want you to learn two things in the message this morning: first of all, the bankruptcy of the old man; secondly, the wealth of the new man.

I. The Bankruptcy of the Old Man

Now, first of all, I want you to notice the bankruptcy of the old man, beginning in verse 4. Are you ready? Paul was dealing with those who were bragging about how good they were. And Paul says in verse 4, “If you want to get into a bragging contest, then I’ll get into one with you. You think that you’ve got something to boast about? I’ve got more to boast about than any of you.” (Philippians 3:4) And then Paul goes on to tell about the things that he could boast about in the flesh. He goes on to talk about all of his achievements in the flesh.

Let’s notice the things that Paul might have been proud about.

A. The Pride of Ritual

First of all, there was the pride of ritual. Look in verse 5. He says here in verse 5, “...*circumcised the eighth day.*” (Philippians 3:5) Why, he had all the ritual performed on him, and it began with his circumcision when he was only just a little eight-year-old baby boy. And he was saying, “I’ve had the rituals. I know all about this.”

You see, there are some people who think that ritual will save them. Did you know that there are some people who think that they’re going to heaven just because they’ve been baptized? I picked up a man one time who was hitchhiking. The man was drunk, and he had a foul, filthy mouth. He was cursing. I don’t think I would have stopped and

picked him up, had I known that. But I thought, “You know, I could witness to him.” So I stopped and picked him up. So he got in there and gave some foul oath about how hot it was, and so forth. He reeked with liquor. So I turned to him and I asked him a question. I said, “Are you a Christian?” I wasn’t asking for facts. I was just getting the conversation started. I said, “Are you a Christian?” “Oh, yes,” he said, “I’m a Christian.” I said, “You are? Why?” “Oh,” he said, “I was baptized as a baby”—“I was baptized as a baby.”

B. The Pride of Relationship

I want to tell you that baptism, whether a spoonful or a tankful, can’t take you to heaven. The Apostle Paul had ritual. But not only did he have ritual; he also had the pride of relationship. Look in verse 5 again. He says again, “...*circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel.*” (Philippians 3:5) He came from good stuff. Oh, his family tree was a very fine family tree. He was from the Jewish aristocrats. He had a good lineage. But the Apostle Paul came to find something that I trust you’ll come to find: that God has no grandchildren, only children. And your mom and dad may be right with God, but that won’t make you right with God. You may come from the finest family in Bellevue. Your daddy may be a preacher. Your daddy may be a deacon. Your daddy may be the minister of music.

C. The Pride of Respectability

But I want to know, have you been born again? Your parents may be God’s children, but that doesn’t make you God’s grandchild. And here was a man who had not only pride of ritual, but he had pride of relationship. And then he had pride of respectability. He goes on to say here in verse 5, “...*of the tribe of Benjamin.*” (Philippians 3:5) Oh, what a great tribe was Benjamin! And when the other tribes had gone astray, not Benjamin. Israel’s first king came from the tribe of Benjamin. But what he is saying here is this: “Oh, listen. I don’t care with what respect you’re held. You may be in high respect; but you’re just as lost as the bootlegger if you’ve not been brought to the Lord Jesus Christ.” Family tradition cannot change a sinful heart.

D. The Pride of Race

And then, not only that, he had pride of race. Notice again in verse 5 he says, “I was a Hebrew of the Hebrews.” That is, “Look: I’m as pure as you can get. No Gentile blood mingled in my family. No sir. We didn’t take on the ways of the Greeks. No Hellenist is in our family. We’re just pure. We kept all of the rituals. I am a Hebrew of the Hebrews.” But he found out that race also was not enough. He had pride of race; but he found out that it’s not race, it’s grace, that gets a man to heaven.

E. The Pride of Religion

And so he goes on down. He’s just saying, “Now if you want to brag, then I could brag.”

He had pride of religion. Look again in verse 5. He says here that he was “*as touching the law, a Pharisee.*” (Philippians 3:5) Now, who were the Pharisees? These were the strictest sect, the most orthodox. You talk about religion, you talk about morality, and you talk about belonging to the right church: my soul, he did! He was intensely orthodox. Oh, and he had zeal. Man, he defended his religion! He persecuted the church, because he was standing up for his religion, standing up for what he believed, and yet all the time persecuting the church.

You know, people can talk religion, and be mean, as we’ve already said. I heard about a little boy who came running into the living room of his home one time and had a dead mouse by the tail. And he said, “Mama! Look, mama! I beat him with a broomstick. Then I ran over him with my tricycle. And then I stomped on him.” And then he saw that the minister was there, and he said, “And then the Lord called him home.” So religious, but mean. That’s the way that the Pharisees were; but they had the outward religion.

Oh, Paul is “*touching the law, a Pharisee,*” but also persecuting the church—persecuting the church—and religiously proud of his religion—the pride of religion.

F. The Pride of Reputation

But not only was there the pride of religion; there was the pride of reputation. Look again in verse 6, and he says, “*...touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.*” (Philippians 3:6) Had you followed the Apostle Paul, you would have said, “My, what a good man!” Now he wasn’t sinless. He had this much sense. He knew that he wasn’t sinless. But he’s saying, “I am blameless—not sinless in the eyes of God, but blameless in the eyes of men.” No one could have pointed a finger at the Apostle Paul and said, “He’s a thief,” or “He’s a liar,” or “He’s a pervert,” or “He’s an adulterer.” No sir—blameless! “They’re the commandments, and I live by them.”

Now you would say, “Well, if religion could get a man to heaven, then religion certainly would have gotten the Apostle Paul to heaven.” But Paul says, “When I took all of this—all of the accouterments, all of this wealth—and when I looked at it, it was zero.” Look in verse 7—look at it: “*But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.*” (Philippians 3:7) He said, “All of this was a total loss—a total loss, everything.” Oh, my dear friend, if we could only learn this: that these things don’t get us to heaven! Good works do not save; they cannot save.

I heard about a man who had recently filled out his income tax, and he tried to deduct his wife’s beauty parlor treatments. And the IRS agent said, “You can’t do that.” He said, “Why not? It was a total loss.”

Now that’s what Paul is saying here: a total loss. “The things that I counted as gain were loss. They didn’t do one whit to make me any more godly, or to bring me to the Lord Jesus Christ. And so we need to learn this lesson: that we’re not saved by the

works of the law. We're not saved by good deeds. People don't know that. You say, "Oh, Brother Rogers, everybody knows that." No, they don't. There are people listening to me on television that don't know that. You go down the streets of Memphis, Tennessee, and say, "I'm taking a survey: What do you do to get into heaven?" they'd say, "Well, do good; live right; keep the Ten Commandments; mind your own business; this thing or that thing; be a member of the right church; get baptized; and take the Lord's Supper."

It's amazing that people think that you're saved by good works, by self-righteousness. And these people are the hardest people to reach. They're the hardest people to reach, because they're satisfied. They're "good people." They think that the gospel is for the down and out, but not them. They don't understand, however, that they are the up and out. And,

*Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears forever flow,
All for sin could not atone;
Thou must save, and Thou alone.*

—AUGUSTUS TOPLADY

II. The Wealth of the New Man

And so, on the one side, I want you to see the bankruptcy of the old man, as Paul describes it—no matter how religious he is. And then, on the other side, I want you to see the wealth of the new man.

Continue to read now verses 8 and 9. Paul goes on to say, "*Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung,*"—that is, "refuse, garbage"—"*that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.*" (Philippians 3:8–9) Oh, dear friend, learn this lesson today—learn this lesson: that you're saved by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, notice the things that Paul had listed up here: his race, his religion, his self-righteousness, and all of this. These were not bad in and of themselves. He was not ashamed that he was a Hebrew—not at all—not at all! He remained grateful for that. He was grateful that he was a Roman citizen. And there's nothing wrong with trying to keep the Ten Commandments. I'm not against that; there's nothing wrong with that. But what Paul is saying—and I hope you can learn, and please pay attention, and draw close, and I want you to get this point; here's what Paul is saying—that even *a good thing is a bad thing if it becomes a substitute for the best thing*. That's what he's saying. A good thing is a bad thing if it keeps one from the best thing.

I'll give you an illustration. Suppose you are a camper, and you have a knapsack, and you put your canteen and your little Boy Scout knife with its spoon and fork and all of that in there. You've got your pork and beans and all that, and your little blanket back there. And you're on an airplane, and the airplane starts to go down. And rather than grabbing a parachute, you grab your knapsack, and jump out. Well, big deal! There is nothing wrong with a knapsack; but it's just no parachute, and it won't do you any good. And if you grab a knapsack rather than a parachute, the point of the matter is that that knapsack is to you but loss. It is loss.

You see, Paul said, "I count all these things but loss." And he wasn't saying that they were bad in and of themselves. But pay attention—listen to me: The worst form of badness may be human goodness when that human goodness becomes a substitute for the new birth—*the worst form of badness may be human goodness when that human goodness becomes a substitute for the new birth*. Now Paul had that human goodness, and he wasn't lying. He said, "You want to brag? I'll brag right along with you. I've got the pedigree: I'm a blueblood; I'm a religionist." But he said, "I count all of these things but loss, that I might gain Christ."

You see, it's so hard for people to admit that they're sinners—so hard! I believe Eddie Martin has been here to preach. We had Eddie Martin down in Florida to preach a revival meeting for us. And Eddie said that he gave the invitation and was standing down there at the front of the church, and a lady came forward and wanted to be saved. And so he took her by the hand, and she said, "Mr. Martin, I'd like to become a Christian." He said, "Wonderful." He said, "Pray this prayer after me: Dear God, I'm a sinner..." But she didn't say anything. He didn't think that she understood him. So he started again: "Dear God, I am a sinner..." But this time, he embellished it a little bit: "I'm a no-good sinner, a low-down sinner." She didn't say anything. He said, "What's the matter, madam? I thought you wanted to be saved." She said, "Well, I do. I want to be a Christian. But I'm no sinner." "Well," he said, "madam, the Scripture says that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." "Well," she said, "if I am a sinner, then I'm a good sinner." He said, "Madam, there are no good sinners. I don't think that you're sincere. I don't think that you really want to be saved. Go back to your seat." She drew herself up, turned around, and started back to the seat. And then suddenly she broke, and the mascara started to run, and she came back and said, "God have mercy upon me! I'm a no-good sinner!" He said, "Now you can be saved"—"Now you can be saved."

Now, folks, the worst thing with some folks is that they don't realize that they're lost. Many of them are religious. Many of them belong to good churches. Many of them give their money. Many of them have been baptized. They have their name on the church roll. But they don't have their name in the Lamb's Book of Life. They have never, never, never, never, never been born again. And Jesus told Nicodemus, a better man

religiously than any of you today, a better man morally than any of you here today, outwardly, that he had to be born again. And so do you. A born-again Christian is not just a special edition; he's the only kind there is.

But, you see, it's so hard for us to let go of these things. Yes, it's hard to let go of our sins, on the one hand. But, you know, it's also hard to let go of our righteousness, on the other hand, and say, "Lord, I don't have anything to offer to you. In my hand no price I bring; simply to thy cross I cling." Did you know that there is something about human nature that doesn't want to do that? We kind of want to strut in the presence of God and say, "God, look what a prize package you're getting!"

When I was a little boy, when we'd find something that didn't belong to us, we used to say, "Finders keepers; losers weepers." Did you ever say that? "Finders keepers; losers weepers." But you know what the Apostle Paul changed that to? Listen, friend: Keepers weepers; losers finders.

Now what he meant is this. Jesus said, *"For 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) That's what Paul meant when he said, "I count all these things but loss"—all of them but loss. Not only am I willing to turn from my sin; but I am willing to turn from my righteousness, which is in the sight of God as filthy rags. Paul said, *"If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."* (Galatians 2:21)

A. **The Knowledge of Christ**

And so, what did what did Paul gain? Now we've talked about, on the one hand—on the left-hand side—the bankruptcy of the old man. Now, look at the wealth of the new man—verses 8 and 9. Look. He says here in verse 8, *"Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ."* (Philippians 3:8) The very first thing that he gained as new wealth was the knowledge of Christ. Not knowledge about Christ; the knowledge of Christ: to know Him; to have fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. How wonderful that is!

This past week, Tommy Lane and myself were making a little call on a businessman who'd had some sickness in his family, and I said, "Tommy, we're downtown together. Let's go by and have some coffee with this businessman, a dear, sweet Christian." And he gave his testimony and told how the Lord saved him. But then he said something that really shocked me—boy, I just came up short! He said, "I used to believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross, that He was buried, and rose again." He said, "I don't believe it anymore." Oh, I was shocked. But then he said with a smile on his face, "I don't *believe* it anymore; now I *know* it—now, I *know* it." Oh, what a difference! What he was saying is, "It's not just not some things that I believe. Oh, I know Him!" Do you know Him? Is He real to you? Oh, He ought to be!

B. The Fellowship of Christ

And so, you see, not only did he gain the knowledge of Christ here in verse 8, but also in verse 9, he gained the fellowship of Christ. Look at it again in verse 9: “...*and be found in him.*” (Philippians 3:9) Now that’s a safe place to be, isn’t it? In Him! You see, it’s not that I’m just a church member; I am in Christ. I am in His Body, and He is in me. You talk about fellowship—never alone again! You may be alone, but never lonely, because the Lord Jesus Christ is in you, and you are in the Lord Jesus Christ, if you know Him.

You see, Paul exchanged a set of rules for a friend. Hadn’t you rather have a friend than a set of rules? Before this, he had the law. Now he has the Lord. And what a difference! And the Apostle Paul could say with those of us when we sing it or say it:

*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,
and the joy we share as we tarry there,
None other has ever known.*

—C. AUSTIN MILES

And can’t ever know until he receives Jesus, amen?

C. Righteousness Through Christ

You see, to be found in him, Paul says, is worth more than all of the religion, and all of the Phariseeism, and all of my culture, and all of my race, and all of my ritual. It is Jesus: not only knowledge of Jesus, and not only the fellowship with Jesus, but righteousness through Jesus. Look again in verse 9—watch it: “*And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.*” (Philippians 3:9) Now Paul says, “I’m tired of trying. I’m going to start trusting. I am tired of trying to work my way to heaven.”

Legalism is a terrible thing. What a taskmaster legalism is! We’re going to talk about it some more tonight, and don’t you miss it. Tonight, we’re going to be preaching on the life of liberty—the life of liberty. And I want you to hear it. “But, oh,” Paul said, “now I don’t have this self-righteousness, this works righteousness; now I have God’s righteousness, which is imputed to me.”

Do you know what the word *impute* means? Just keep your finger there in Philippians 3 and turn to Romans 4 for a moment, would you? And that’s a left turn, if

you don't know your Bible. All right, turn to Romans 4 and begin in verse 5. Oh, listen. You put a star by what we're about to read now if you want to have joy in Jesus. Paul started this chapter talking about rejoicing in the Lord; and the only way to rejoice in the Lord is to know that you're saved by the grace of God. Legalism doesn't bring joy; it brings bondage. But notice what Paul says here: *"But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."* (Romans 4:5) You know, Paul has been counting up things now. Remember we're talking about the things that count. *"His faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works."* (Romans 4:5–6) Now you know what that word *imputeth* means—*"God imputeth righteousness"*: that means "to put on your account." The next time that you go to Firestone to buy some tires, just say, "Impute that, would you, please. Just impute that to my account." That means "charge it; put it on my account." And so what he is saying is this: "Just simply impute it."

Now, what does he mean here? Look: When I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, apart from my works, apart from my baptism, apart from my church membership, apart from trying to keep the Ten Commandments and the Golden Rule; when I come to the Lord Jesus Christ and say, "In my hand no price I bring; simply to thy cross I cling; I believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," that moment, God makes me righteous. He just writes down *righteousness* to my account. That's great! Why aren't you saying *amen*? That's great! That's wonderful! That's glorious that righteousness is imputed! Look at it—look at it: *"Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin."* (Romans 4:7–8) Oh, I'm a sinner; but He doesn't impute it to me. I'm not righteous; but He imputes it to me. He just writes it down to my account.

An old washerwoman or maid who worked for a man who was cruel and mean finally got saved. And she was so happy. And he hated her happiness in Christ. And he tried to ridicule her and belittle her. Finally, he said unto her, "Betty, you say you're saved. You tell me, how does it feel to be saved?" She said, "Well, I don't believe that I can explain it to where you can understand it. But here's what it feels like to me. It feels as though I am standing in Jesus' shoes, and He is standing in mine."

A theologian couldn't have said it better. *"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."* (2 Corinthians 5:21) And I want to tell you this morning that as God looks down at Adrian Rogers, God sees me as righteous as Jesus Christ. Not because of my righteousness. You say, "Who do you think you are?" A Christian! That's who I think I am! Born again. Not me: *"Not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ."* (Philippians 3:9) The righteousness that is imputed—glory to God—

that's what Christianity is all about: when we see the bankruptcy of the old man—not just our sinful things, but also our good things—and we lay them all aside that we might gain Christ. Now the King James says, “*win Christ*,” but that word *win* is exactly the same word that is translated “*gain*” in verse 7. (Philippians 3:8) And he's not saying that we win Christ. Christ is not a prize at the end of the race. He's a gift so you can run the race. He begins the race. You see, you gain Christ. And how do you gain Christ? By faith—by faith! You believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

This past week a businessman came, sat in my study, and he said, “Pastor, I need to be saved.” I said, “Wonderful! Let's get on our knees.” And he got on his knees and he prayed, “God, I'm a sinner, and I'm lost, and I can't save myself. Jesus, you died to save me. You promised to save me if I would only trust you. I do trust you, Jesus. Now with all of heart, forgive my sins, and save me.” And right there God saved him—right on his knees! That's what it's all about. You see, it's so wonderful, and it's so easy, because the Lord Jesus Christ does it all.

But don't you think because salvation is easy and free that it is cheap. Jesus Christ died in agony and in blood that you might have it. And, oh, dear friend, on the one hand is your self-righteousness, your legalism, and your trying to be saved. On the other hand is the righteousness of God, which is by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and on the basis of His shed blood. Now, which do you choose? Have you this morning seen yourself as a lost sinner? Have you? I'm talking about self-righteous people; I'm talking about good people. Have you understood that you too need to be born again? I trust that you have; and I pray God today that there are two classes of people who are listening to me—that both of them will be saved.

On the one hand, there are some of you that may think that you're so sinful that God can't save you. I want to tell you, “*Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.*” (Isaiah 1:18) And I want to promise you on the authority of this book that I preach from, every blot, every blur, every blemish, and every stain that ever came across a human soul, the blood of Jesus can wash. And Jesus said, “*Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.*” (John 6:37) And if you think that you're too sinful to come, then you're wrong. You may be a murderer; but Jesus will save you—Jesus will save you.

But on the other hand, there are some who are listening to me today who are cultured, religious, moral, and well mannered, but you've never been born again. And you're somewhat proud of the life that you've lived. I want to tell you that you need to come to Jesus. You too need to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. If the Apostle Paul needed to be saved, then so do you. He's coming soon. And,

*When He shall come with trumpet sound,
Oh may I then in Him be found;
Dressed in His righteousness alone,
Faultless to stand before the throne.*

—EDWARD MOTE

The Things That Really Count

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: February 16, 1986

Main Scripture Text: Philippians 3:1–9

“Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.”

PHILIPPIANS 3:8

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Bankruptcy of the Religious Man
 - A. The Pride of Ritual
 - B. The Pride of Relationship
 - C. The Pride of Respectability
 - D. The Pride of Race
 - E. The Pride of Religion
 - F. The Pride of Reputation
- II. The Blessedness of a Redeemed Man
 - A. The Knowledge of Christ
 - B. The Fellowship of Christ
 - C. The Righteousness of Christ

Conclusion

Introduction

I want us to take God’s Word tonight and turn to the book of Philippians, please, the third chapter. If you didn’t bring a copy of God’s Word, look there in the pew rack before you, and most likely you’ll find a copy there of God’s Word. And turn to the New Testament toward the back, and you’ll find the book of Philippians. And then, find the third chapter, and we’re going to read in just a moment from God’s Word.

Somewhere long ago I heard of an art teacher instructing the students to paint. And they had selected a hill. Down in the hill was a valley, and there were some buildings in the valley. It was a pastoral scene, a farm scene, and the sun was setting. It was one of those exquisitely beautiful nights, and the sun in the western sky was painted as only God can paint the sky. And those artists were there trying to capture that scene. There

was one of these student artists who had been painting a barn, and he was laboriously painting the shingles on that barn. The instructor came up behind him and watched for a while. Then he tapped him on the shoulder and said, “My son, the sun is setting, and you are painting shingles on a barn.”

Now, dear friend, God’s sun is sinking low, and what we do, we had better get busy and do it. These are not days to waste. And I want to talk to you tonight about “The Things that Really Count.” Now I’m reading here in Philippians chapter 3, beginning in verse 1. By the way, Paul was a Baptist preacher, and when he said, “*Finally...*” he didn’t mean immediately; he had a lot more to say: “*Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe. Beware of dogs...*”—you didn’t know that was in the Bible, did you? You just thought that was on the front walk—“*Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision. For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.*” (Philippians 3:1–9)

Now the key word is found in verses 7 and 8, and it is the word *count*. “*But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.*” (Philippians 3:7–8) Paul is doing some counting. Paul is doing some bookkeeping. Paul is trying to figure out what really matters and what really does not matter. And he’s going to show you and he’s going to show me that so many things that we think are really important are not important at all.

And that is especially true—are you listening?—in the world of religion. Much that we think means so much to God in the world of religion, Paul says doesn’t mean anything at all. It needs to be counted as refuse—as dung! And he tells us what many of us already know: that some of the meanest people on the face of the earth are up to their ears in religion. Did you know that? Some people who are mean as a snake are very religious. And that’s what Paul is saying here in verse 2 when he says, “*Beware of*

dogs,”—they’ll bite you—“*beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.*” (Philippians 3:2) By the word *concision*, he means “these mutilators; these people who are religious, but lost.” I tell you, it’s a terrible thing to get around a person who is brutal but who uses religious language.

I heard of a little boy one time who brought a dead rat into his house and he it showed his mother. He said “Mama, look at that rat. I hit him with a stone, and then I took a stick and beat him with that stick. And then I stepped on him, and I stomped all over him.” About that time, he saw the preacher was sitting in the living room, and he said, “And then the Lord called him home.” That’s the way some of us are: We know how to use that religious talk. But Paul says, “You just watch these people: some of them have religion, but they don’t have righteousness.”

Now Paul is taking stock, and Paul remembered the time when he was religious but he was lost. He found out that in spite of his religion, and in spite of his legalism, he was bankrupt, blind, and bound for hell. Now Paul learned that religion without the new birth is absolutely profitless. And those of you who deny they’re religious, who have never been born again, I want you to listen to me. Religion without the new birth is profitless. Most people in America do not need religion. They need to turn from religion to Jesus Christ. I remind you that it was a religious crowd that crucified Jesus. Somehow we’ve gotten the idea that you can be religious in one way and not be saved, and somehow that’s acceptable to God.

We even have come up today with a term. We say, “born-again Christian.” Well, friend, that’s redundant to say “born-again Christian.” When you say “Christian,” there’s only one kind, and that’s a born-again Christian. If I were to ask a dentist, “What kind of a dentist are you?” and he says, “Well, I’m a tooth dentist,” dear friend, there’s only one kind of a dentist. You don’t have to say, “tooth dentist.” When you say “dentist,” you’ve said it. And when you say “Christian,” you’ve said—at least you ought to have been able to say—it.

God knows we have to qualify it today, because there are so many who call themselves Christians who have not been born again. And religious people so many times are the hardest to win to the Lord Jesus. Now since our time is very short tonight, I’m going to do something very unorthodox, and I’m going to preach a two-point message.

I. The Bankruptcy of the Religious Man

Now the very first thing I want you to see is what I am going to call the bankruptcy of the religious man. Look, if you will, in verse 4. The Apostle Paul says, “If you want to get in a bragging contest, I could brag with you.” Notice he says in verse 4, “*Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he*

might trust in the flesh, I more.” (Philippians 3:4) Now Paul said, “There were some things that I used to be so proud of,” and he goes to talk about those things.

A. **The Pride of Ritual**

First of all, he was proud of his ritual. Look in verse 5: “*Circumcised the eighth day...*” (Philippians 3:5) Paul had gone through the ritual of circumcision, and he found out that could not save him. There are so many people who have gone through the ritual of baptism today, and they think that can save them.

When I was a young preacher, and before Joyce made me promise to stop picking up hitchhikers, I picked up a young man. I picked up a young man when I was driving down the road going to a revival crusade. He really wasn't all that young, come to think of it; and he got in the automobile. I was going to witness to him. And he reeked of liquor, and he got in and he blasphemed the name of Jesus, and talked about how *blankety-blank* hot it was, and took our Lord's name and drug it through the sewer and so forth. I thought, “Well, if ever a man needed Jesus, this man does.” So I turned to him and I asked him a question. I said, “Sir, are you saved?” He said, “I sure am.” “Well,” I said, “tell me, when were you saved?” “Oh,” he said, “I was baptized as a baby.” What a tragedy!

B. **The Pride of Relationship**

Friend, I want to tell you, baptism, whether a spoonful or a tankful, will never save a soul. So Paul had the pride of ritual. And then he had the pride of relationship. He says, “...*of the stock of Israel.*” (Philippians 3:5) That is, he was a part of the Jewish aristocracy. He was a person who had the relationship with God's chosen people. And yet he was lost.

C. **The Pride of Respectability**

Not only was there the pride of ritual, and relationship; there was the pride of respectability. He says, “...*of the tribe of Benjamin.*” (Philippians 3:5) Now Benjamin was the youngest son of Jacob and Rachel. Benjamin was the only son born in the land of Palestine. Benjamin was the tribe out of which the first king of Israel came. And if you were a Benjamite, you were something very special. And Paul said, “I am of the tribe of Benjamin.” And so he had the pride of respectability. He had a family name and family tradition behind him.

D. **The Pride of Race**

And then on top of that, there was the pride of race. Look, if you will again. He says, “...*an Hebrew of the Hebrews.*” (Philippians 3:5) Not just a Hebrew, but a Hebrew of the Hebrews. Now, what did he mean by that? He meant that his bloodline was clear; there was no mingling of Gentile blood. He had not compromised at all with foreign customs;

he had been a pure Jew. And he was thinking, because of his race—certainly they were the chosen people—he was going to heaven.

E. The Pride of Religion

Then, not only the pride of ritual, relationship, respectability, and race; but also the pride of religion. Notice also, “...as touching the law, a Pharisee.” (Philippians 3:5) Now the Pharisees were the strictest sect of the Jews. They practiced morality of the strictest and the highest kind. They had a number of little particular rules that they kept. They would not even eat an egg that was laid on the Sabbath day. If they got a tack in their shoe, they would take it out before Saturday, lest they be accused of carrying a burden on the Sabbath day. If a flea were to bite one of them, they would not scratch it on the Sabbath day—I’m not kidding—lest they be accused of hunting on the Sabbath day. They would not put vinegar on a sore tooth on a Sabbath day, because that would be practicing medicine. They were the most religious of the most religious. And Paul said, “I was a Pharisee.” There was the pride of religion.

F. The Pride of Reputation

And then there was the pride of reputation. Notice in verse 6: “Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.” (Philippians 3:6) Nobody of that day could point a finger of blame at the Apostle Paul. Paul had a reputation that was blameless. Now, put it down. It was not sinless; he was blameless in the eyes of men. He was not sinless, however, in the eyes of God.

Now Paul looked at all of this. Paul looked at his ritual, relationship, respectability, race; and he looked at his religion. He looked at his reputation, and this is what he said about all of it—look at it in verse 7: “But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.” (Philippians 3:7) Paul looked at all of those things and he said, “loss for Christ”; “I thought they were so important, and yet they’re loss.”

I heard of a man who tried to deduct his wife’s beauty treatment on his income tax. Someone said, “You can’t do that.” He said, “Why not? It was a total loss.”

Now that’s the way the Apostle Paul was about all of these things. He said it was a total loss: “I counted it all but loss.” And then he goes on to say it was worse than loss. He says, “I...count them but dung”; (Philippians 3:8) “I count it is as refuse.” All of the things that we think are so good. Was it not the hymn writer who said, “Could my zeal no respite know, could my tears forever flow, all for sin could not atone; Thou must save, and Thou alone”?

Now sometimes we don’t really believe this. Sometimes we think that somehow we’re going to get some Brownie points with God because we have these things of race, or religion, or reputation, or whatever—a ritual. But, dear friend, I want to tell you, if you were to take all of the four and a half billion people on the face of this earth and

add to them all of those people who had gone before those people, and add to them all of the people who will come after those people; and then, if you were to take the best of all of those people and isolate them; and then, if you were to take the best characteristic of each of the best of those people and extract that best characteristic; and if you were to combine all of those best characteristics into one man, that one man would have to kneel at the cross of Jesus Christ in order to be saved. I want you to understand this. The Bible says, *“The flesh cannot please God.”* (Romans 8:8) The Bible teaches that in this flesh of ours there is no good thing. The Apostle Paul learned what I call the bankruptcy of a religious man.

II. The Blessedness of a Redeemed Man

Now, let's just turn it over very quickly and I want you to see what else he found. He found the blessedness of a redeemed man. Look now, if you will, in verses 8 and 9. It says, *“Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.”* (Philippians 3:8–9)

Now, listen, folks. I know what some of you are thinking. You are thinking that I think that righteousness and a good life and morality is bad. It's not bad. You see, the things that Paul counted as loss were not bad in and of themselves. They were mostly good. But pay attention now. A good thing is a bad thing if it keeps you from the best thing. That's what's wrong with self-righteousness: it keeps you from God's righteousness. The Apostle Paul said of his Jewish brethren, *“For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.”* (Romans 10:3)

Now, for example, a knapsack that you might wear on your back is not a bad thing. If you are going camping, it's a good thing. But if you are sitting in an airplane, and the airplane is going down, and you pick up a knapsack and strap it on your back instead of a parachute, by mistake, it then becomes a bad thing, because it's there as a substitute for the right thing. Do you understand what I'm saying? Good things are bad things when they become the substitute for the best thing.

The worst thing about outward morality is that so many people have taken it as a substitute for the new birth. And, dear friend, *the worst form of badness is human goodness, when human goodness becomes a substitute for the new birth.* That's what the Apostle Paul is saying right here. And so the Apostle Paul said, *“I count all things but loss.”* (Philippians 3:8) Not only did I have to turn from my sin to be saved; I had to turn from my righteousness to be saved.

Now, what did Paul gain? I want to point out three things that he gained, and I'll be finished. When Paul ceased from himself, when Paul turned from his self-righteousness, when he turned from that dependency upon the flesh and turned to Jesus Christ, he found three things.

A. The Knowledge of Christ

Number one: He found the knowledge of Christ. Look in verse 8: "*Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.*" (Philippians 3:8) Now, notice it was not the knowledge *about* Christ, but it was the knowledge *of* Christ. Do you know Jesus Christ? You see, before this Paul had religion; now Paul has relationship. You can be a Buddhist, and not know Buddha. You can be a Confucianist, and not know Confucianism. You can be a Muhammadan and practice Islam, and not know Muhammad. You can't be a Christian, and not know Jesus. You see, Jesus is real to me. Jesus was real to Paul. Jesus was someone that Paul knew personally.

This man sitting over here on my right and to your left, Neil Griffin, he's my neighbor. Neil, you said something to me one day, and it blessed my heart. You said to me one day, "Pastor, I've been blessed since I've been coming to Bellevue Baptist Church." You said, "Before I came to Bellevue Baptist Church, I was a believer." But then you said, "I no longer believe that Jesus died and rose again; now I know he did"—"I no longer believe it; I know it." That's what the Apostle Paul is talking about here in this passage of Scripture: the knowledge of Christ. I ask you, my friend, is Jesus Christ a bright, burning, living reality to you?

B. The Fellowship of Christ

Second thing: Not only did he have a knowledge of Christ, but he had along with that knowledge of Christ a fellowship with Christ. Notice in verse 9 he says, "*...and be found in him.*" (Philippians 3:9) I in Him, and He in me. Before Paul was saved, he had religion, but he didn't have Jesus. He had a set of rules, but he had no friends. Now he had Jesus, and he was in Christ; and therefore Christ was in him, and he could say, "He walks with me, and He talks with me, and He tells me I am His own."

And, friend, I don't need to brag about it, and I'm not trying to brag about it; but I want to tell you—and God knows it is true—Jesus Christ is a wonderful friend to me. I have such fellowship with my Lord, sometimes not saying a word to Him; just knowing He's there, knowing He's in me, loving Him, thinking about Him, meditating on the Lord Jesus Christ.

C. The Righteousness of Christ

Thank God for the Apostle Paul and what he found here: the knowledge of Christ, the

fellowship of Christ, and finally, the righteousness of Christ. Look, if you will, in verse 9: *“...and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.”* (Philippians 3:9)

Friend, it is not a works righteousness; it is an imputed righteousness. And I would share with you Romans chapter 4 for just one brief moment. I want you to see what kind of righteousness we’re talking about. Look, if you will, in verse 5, and ask yourself, do you have this kind of righteousness? Romans 4, verse 5, says, *“But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness.”* (Romans 4:5–6)

Do you know what the word *impute* means? It means “to place on your account.” The next time you go to Goldsmith’s and buy something, don’t say, “Charge it”; just say, “Impute it.” It means the same thing: “Put that on my account.” *“Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven,”—hallelujah for that—“and whose sins are covered.”* Bless God for that. But the best is yet to come: *“Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.”* (Romans 4:6–8)

Glory to God, when we get saved, we have the righteousness of Christ! God takes the righteousness of Jesus and puts that on my account. And now when God sees me, He sees me as the righteousness of God in Christ.

A Sunday School teacher asked a little girl, “Is there anything God cannot do?” And the little girl said, “Yes, teacher, there’s one thing God cannot do: God cannot see my sin through the blood of Jesus Christ.” *“Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.”*

Conclusion

There you have it: the bankruptcy of the religious man. There you have it: the blessedness of the redeemed man. Which are you?

Fix, Face, Forget, and Firm Up

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: April 9, 1997

Main Scripture Text: Philippians 3:10–14

“I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

PHILIPPIANS 3:14

Outline

Introduction

I. Fix Your Focus

II. Face Your Faults

III. Forget Your Failures

IV. Firm Up Your Faithfulness

Conclusion

Introduction

Well, take your Bibles, and let's look for a while as our Bible study tonight in Philippians chapter 3. And while you're turning, may I ask you a question? What is the highest, holiest, best ambition that any individual could possibly ever have? Would it be to live a holy life? Well, that would be a high ambition. Would it be to be a soul winner? What a great ambition! Or would it be to master the Word of God? Wonderful, wonderful ambition! But not the best, not the highest, not the holiest ambition. And, by the way, I want you to think right now about your ambition: what motivates you, what you're striving for. Everybody here is motivated by something and striving for something. Or let me just put it another way: Everybody's going somewhere; and when you get to where you're going, where will you be? You think about it. You're going somewhere. Now I'm not just talking about going to heaven; I'm talking about with your life. And when you get there, where will you be? Or let me put it another way: When you accomplish your goals, what will you have?

Now, think about it. Don't just think about a sermon now, or don't think about some Bible study. Let's personalize this. When I get to where I'm going, where will I be? When I achieve my goals, what will I have? What is the highest, the best, the holiest ambition that I could possibly have?

I want to say without any stutter, stammer, equivocation, apology, or having to

rethink it, I know what the highest, holiest, best ambition for me, for you, or for anyone could be—and it's right here in the Scripture: Philippians chapter 3 and verse 10. Look at it: *“That I may know him.”* That's it—that's it! You say, “Oh, that's not important.” Friend, that is it! That is the ambition of the greatest Christian who ever lived. His name was Paul. And he takes it and puts it in three words: *“That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.”* That is, “I need to lay hold on that for which He laid hold of me.” And then he says, *“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this...”*—now, notice—*“this one thing I do...”*—Paul had distilled it to one thing—*“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 3:10–14)

Underscore the phrase *“the high calling.”*

We're thinking tonight one step higher: the high calling of God. What is the high calling of God? What is the highest calling of God? To know the Lord Jesus Christ. Now there are so many who settle for so much less. Now he speaks here of *“the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.”* Do you know what that means? It causes us to ask this question: Are the things I am living for worth Jesus dying for? That's what it means to be conformed to His death. Are the things that I am living for worth Jesus dying for? In the light of Calvary; in the light of what Joyce just sang about, are the things I am living for worth the Lord Jesus Christ dying for? Now Paul saw that heretofore his goals had been unworthy; and now he brings his goals into one magnificent obsession.

Now this is Paul's secret of success. His life was molded, his life was controlled, by a magnificent ambition, an obsession: *“that I may know him.”* And very frankly, as I've looked at this scripture, it has challenged my own heart. I want to lay four things on your heart tonight as we look at this passage of Scripture; and really they are four principles that I pray that God will write indelibly upon your consciousness so that you will not forget them—four things we need to do. And these four things that we need to do are based on four principles.

I. Fix Your Focus

The first thing we need to do is to fix our focus—to fix our focus. Now, what is our focus? To know Him. Now to know Him—here's the principle—to know Him is more important than knowing about Him. To know Him is more important than knowing about Him. We are to know Him personally. We are to know Him intimately. We've been

talking about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and the Rapture of the Church. How sad it will be when the Rapture comes to rise to meet the Lord face to face that we do not already know heart to heart? Now I'm not asking tonight therefore, do you know doctrine? Do you know theology? I'm asking, do you know Him? You know, it's possible to know about somebody and not to know that person. *When we get to heaven, we should be meeting face to face somebody that we know heart to heart.* As I thought about this, do you know I was blessed to say to myself, "I do know Jesus. I don't know Him as I ought to know Him; but Jesus is more than a doctrine to me: Jesus is a person to me."

There's an old story that preachers love to tell about a social gathering. And there was an old man who preached the gospel for many, many years there, and there was a very famous orator, an actor, there. And somebody thought it would be a form of entertainment, I suppose, to hear from both of them. They said, "Let's have both of them recite something for us." The old preacher, who had preached for many, many years, was not learned; he was not educated, not eloquent, and not particularly gifted. And then there was this artist, this man who knew elocution. He knew acting. He'd been on the stage. He knew drama. He was well educated and very well trained. Somebody said, "Let's ask them both to quote the Twenty-third Psalm." So everybody thought that was a good idea.

And so, first of all, the actor quoted the Twenty-third Psalm. Oh, the expression! It was so magnificent. It was so beautiful. He knew exactly where to put the emphasis. Every word was perfect. And the people were just awestruck. And when he finished, they applauded. Then the old preacher stood up, and he quoted the Twenty-third Psalm entirely different. But he quoted those six magnificent verses. There was no applause, but there was not a dry eye in the place. And afterward somebody asked that actor, "You know, there was a dramatic difference between what you did and what the old preacher did. There was a difference. And you were both wonderful, but what was the difference?" The actor said, "I've thought about it, and I know what the difference is. I know the psalm; he knows the Shepherd." Amen? That's what we need to learn, friend. It's not merely the Word of God, but the God of the Word.

This is a man—this is the Apostle Paul who was a grizzled old warrior now in prison getting ready to die, and he's still talking about knowing the Lord Jesus Christ. And he doesn't think that he has already attained. He's not already perfect. He wants to know more and more about the Lord Jesus Christ. He wants that higher ground that Jim was leading us to sing about. So what we need to do very first of all is to fix our focus.

I think one of the great dangers that every seminary student faces and every Bible student faces is to have orthodoxy without the Holy Spirit—*you can backslide with a Bible under your arm*—to be Bible-taught and not to be Spirit-taught.

II. Face Your Faults

So, first of all, fix your focus. Fix your focus to say, “I want to know Jesus,” not know *about* Jesus. You have to know about Jesus to know Jesus; but you can know about Jesus and not know Jesus. For Him to be a bright, burning reality, what is the principle? It’s better, it’s far more important, to know Jesus than to know about Jesus. Number two: You have to face your faults. And here’s the principle: If you’re satisfied with your life now, you’re aiming too low. If you are satisfied with your life now, you’re aiming just simply too low. You have to face the fact that you are not what you ought to be. You say, “Well, Adrian, don’t you think I’m a good Christian?” Well, I think Paul was a good Christian. This was at the end of his life, and he said, “*That I may know him.*” (Philippians 3:10) He said, “This is what I’m striving for. This is the goal that I’m pressing toward with every ounce of energy in my spiritual body. I have this ambition, this burning ambition. I am focused on it.” He was not satisfied. If you’re satisfied, you simply have aimed too low.

Well, that brings a question. We say, “Paul, don’t you know Jesus? I mean, you’re the apostle. You met Him on the road to Damascus. You’ve written the epistles. You’ve suffered for Him. Don’t you know Him?” Well, you see, what he’s saying is there’s so much more to know.

We say that Columbus discovered America. Well, how much of America did he discover? I read somewhere that there are ten thousand unnamed lakes in Canada. How much did he discover? How much of Jesus do you know? “More about Jesus would I know.” Do you think that you know all there is to know about the Lord Jesus Christ?

No growing Christian is ever satisfied with his spiritual attainment—no growing Christian is satisfied. That doesn’t mean that you’re not satisfied with Jesus, but you’re not satisfied with yourself. You’re satisfied with your salvation, but you want to learn more and more about the Lord Jesus. Somebody told me about a cowboy who was wearing a pin that said something like this: “I ain’t what I ought to be, and I ain’t what I’m gonna be. But, thank God, I ain’t what I was.” He’s been saved, but he was not satisfied with his own spiritual condition. He’s growing in the Lord.

Do you think you’ve already arrived? One man was arguing with his wife, and he said to her, “I guess you think I’m a perfect fool.” She said, “Now, dear, nobody’s perfect.” I want to tell you, you are not perfect—I don’t care where you are. If the great Apostle Paul at the end of his life said, “I want to know more about Jesus; I want to know Jesus,” what a challenge that ought to be to me. Now, folks, if you are satisfied tonight, it’s simply because your goal is too low.

Now before Paul met the Lord Jesus Christ, he was satisfied. He boasted about the fact. He was a proud young Pharisee. He considered himself faultless. He was petted

and praised and flattered for his zeal. And after he met the Lord Jesus, he said, “I count all these things but dung”—“but refuse”—“that I might know Him, that I might gain the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Philippians 3:8)

Now the problem with many of us is this: We know people that we think we’re better than, and that gives us a sense of satisfaction. You may be a better Christian than most people you know. But I’ll tell you something, folks: You’re light years from what you could be and should be. We need to stop lying down in the gutter and stretching ourselves alongside some hypocrite, saying, “I’m a little longer than he is.” You compare yourself with other people and you’re going to have two dangers: Number one: You’re going to get proud, because you think you’re better than somebody else; or you’re going to get discouraged, because somebody else is better than you are.

Now, quit comparing yourself to other people. I’m going to tell you something, folks: There are people in this church who are smarter than you are. And there are people in this church who are richer than you are. And there are people in this church who are stronger than you are. But nobody can love Jesus better than you can. And you put it down: You can have all of Jesus you want. And I don’t know how much of Jesus you have; but you probably have just about all you want. And we need to just have a holy dissatisfaction. If you’re satisfied with your spiritual life right now, it’s simply because you’re aiming too low. You ought to be a growing Christian. You ought to be moving up one step higher.

III. Forget Your Failures

Now, fix your focus. Face your faults. Number three: Forget your failures. Now, look at this passage of Scripture again. Let’s begin again. Look at it—chapter 3. Look at it in verse 10: *“That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.”* (Philippians 3:10) He fixed His focus. Now, notice verse 12: *“Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect.”* (Philippians 3:12) He faced his faults. He knew. I mean, this greatest of all Christians knew that there was room for growth in him. But now, notice also he forget his failures. Look in verse 13: *“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended:”—* that’s his faults—*“but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind.”* (Philippians 3:13)

Now, what is the principle? The principle is you’re never a failure until you quit. Forget your failures. Forget those things that are behind. If there’s somebody here tonight who says, “Well, pastor, I am not the Christian I ought to be: woe is me,” well, all right, let’s put that in the grave of God’s forgetfulness then and forget those things which are behind. You’re never a failure until you quit.

I heard the great baseball manager Branch Rickey one time talk. And he came to

our college, and he talked about Ty Cobb. Some of you old coots, you remember Ty Cobb. Ty Cobb in his day was one of the great, great baseball players who's known for stealing bases, among other things—stole more bases than anybody else in baseball at that time. Branch Rickey said, “When Ty Cobb was on first base”—I remember him saying this; I was listening to him; he said—“the catcher would catch the ball and fake it to second, throw it to third, and then try and stop Ty Cobb as he slid in home.” That's the kind of a baseball player he was, and he was known for stealing bases. But what a lot of people don't understand is that Ty Cobb was thrown out more times than any man in baseball. The name Babe Ruth—we all remember Babe Ruth, the great homerun hitter—in his day, he struck out more than anybody in baseball. But, you see, these guys had enough sense to forget their failures and to go on and try.

I was reading that Caruso, the greatest tenor of his day, who had a voice that was absolutely, magnificently incredible, was told by his voice teacher, Brother Jim, that he should drop out of the music, because he could not hit certain notes with a steady quality—high notes. I read about Thomas Alva Edison, who invented and developed the incandescent light bulb, and I read that he had fourteen thousand experiments that failed before he succeeded. Albert Einstein failed in mathematics.

You say, “Well, pastor, I failed in my Christian life. I don't guess I can ever be the kind of a Christian God wants me to be.” Look up here and let me tell you something. Yes, you can; and, yes, you should. Yes, you can; and, yes, you should. I don't know where you are in your Christian life, but you need to fix your focus. You need to face your faults. And then, forget your failures. When I say face them, I mean admit them so that you know that you've got more room to grow.

But don't be hooked to that. The great Apostle Paul said—look at it in verse 13—“*I count not myself to have apprehended.*”—he faced his faults—“*but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind.*” (Philippians 3:13) We get ourselves in such a way of looking at ourselves, we say, “I'll never be anything else but what I am right now.” And if you're thirty, forty, fifty, sixty years of age, you have a locked-in likeness in your mind. You have already gotten an image of yourself, and you say, “This is who I am; this is what I am”—and you're hooked to that. And you need to get unhooked from it tonight. Forget your failures. You're never a failure until you quit. Don't quit. Don't stop growing.

IV. Firm Up Your Faithfulness

Number four: Firm up your faithfulness. Notice what the Apostle Paul did now. Look in verses 12 and 13: “*Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but*”—watch this—“*I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.*” (Philippians 3:12) And success is simply laying hold of

that for which Jesus Christ laid hold of you. He didn't save you, friend, for you to serve the world, the flesh, and the devil. He didn't save you for you to sit, soak, and sour. He saved you to know Him. Brethren, listen. He didn't save you even to be a soul winner. You ought to be a soul winner. He didn't save you to be a Bible student. But you ought to be a Bible student. He saved you, that you might know Him. That's the high calling. And he says—listen—*"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) He firmed up his faithfulness.

Now, sirs, men, gentlemen, guys, coots, if your wife gets onto you for watching sports, you just tell her that Paul did. Paul loved sports. You say, "How do you know, pastor?" You just read all the allusions. And he talks about wrestling. He talks, Joyce, about boxing. He talks about racing and athletics, the Olympic races. Paul was very conversant about all of these things, and what he is talking about right now is the Olympic race. He's talking about a runner pressing toward the goal.

Now, folks, I was on a track team: I know what it is to run in a race. I'm going to tell you one thing: When you're in a race, how many things do you have on your mind if you're a good runner? One! Isn't that right? One! I mean, every ounce, every inch, every nerve, every fiber, every sinew, all that is in you: that you are pressing toward that goal. If you don't, you are not going to win. The runner narrows all of his interests to one thing. And Paul said, "My one thing is"—what?—"to know Him"—"to know Him!" He is the goal. He is the One. That's why I'm running. *"This one thing I do."* (Philippians 3:13) A runner has no side issues.

Now, what is the principle here? The principle is that concentration is the secret of power—concentration is the secret of power. These lights that are shining on us tonight, they're defused. If they can concentrate enough, what do you have? A laser. It can burn through solid steel—concentrated light. When we were little boys—all little boys have done this—we would get a magnifying glass, go outside on a hot day, and do what? Set leaves on fire. It's getting those beams of that magnifying glass focused just right. Or else we'd wait till we had one of our friends that wasn't looking, and we'd put that on the back of his neck and watch him jump when it got hot enough. You see the guy that laughed? He's done exactly that same thing.

Now, let me tell you something, folks: Concentration is the secret of power. Now I'm not just talking to you. I'm not giving you a sales talk, if you're a salesman, though it will help you if you're a salesman. But let me tell you what Jesus said. Jesus said, *"No man can serve two masters."* (Matthew 6:24) Nobody can! Now He didn't say you couldn't have two jobs. He said, *"No man can serve two masters,"* because, you see, your master is the one who tells you exactly what to do, not part of the time, but all the time.

That's your master. You might have two bosses, but "*no man can serve two masters.*" Let me tell you what the Apostle James said. He said, "*A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.*" (James 1:8) Let me tell you what the Apostle Paul said. He said, "*This one thing I do.*" Let me tell you what a runner does. He puts his eye on the goal and with complete concentration looks at it. As he mentions here in verse 14, "*I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*" It's concentration.

You say, "Well now, pastor, that brings up a real problem. I've got to do my job. I've got to have my rest. I think recreation is legitimate. I believe I ought to have friends." And so do I. But listen to me very carefully now. Your job, your rest, your recreation, and your friends ought to help you toward this goal, or else they're wrong for you. Did you know that's the test of whether anything is right or wrong: whether or not it will help you to know Jesus? Any friend that makes it harder for you to love Jesus is not a true friend. Any job that you cannot do for the glory of God you have no business doing. Any vacation that you take that draws away your love for Jesus or dulls you is the wrong thing for you to do. Recreation needs to be what? *Re-creation*. It's a part of this one goal. All of these things are just funneling in till they come to this one burning focus.

Now, let me see if I can give you an illustration of that. The Apostle Paul said, "*All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not*"—what?—"expedient: *all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.*" (1 Corinthians 6:12) Do you know what that means? "I'll not be mastered by anything. I will not let anything master me." He's not talking about unlawful things; he's talking about lawful things. He's not talking here about bad things. He doesn't mean "adultery is lawful for me." He's talking about good things. He's talking about, "In the panoply of good things, they're all lawful for me, but they're not all expedient."

Now, what does that word *expedient* mean? Well, it reminds us of another word. What? *Expedition*. And the two words are connected. What is an expedition? It's a journey. And it's not just wandering around. An expedition is a journey going somewhere. Now, what is the Apostle Paul saying? He's saying, "There are a lot of things; but I can't let any of them master me that don't bring me to my goal. If it's not expedient, if it doesn't bring me on my expedition, then I can't do it. I'll not be mastered by it."

Now, for example, there are some of you—well, I don't know this for certain, so I can't judge you—let me ask you this question. Could it be that your highest ambition is making money, and that Jesus is there somewhere in the mix in your mind? Well then, money's your master, if that's your highest ambition. Isn't money your master? Of course! And you say, "Well, Jesus is my Master, too." No, He's not. You can't serve two masters. Now therefore, the making of money has to come and get in behind this one

thing—which is what? *“That I may know him.”*

There is nothing wrong with making money. Some of the godliest men I’ve ever known have been the richest; and some of the sorriest people I’ve ever known have been the poorest. It’s not always that way one way or the other. Don’t think that all poor people are godly and all rich people are ungodly. That’s not necessarily so. But I’ll tell you this: A poor man or a rich man who’s mastered by money has two masters, and he is in a mess spiritually. Paul said, *“All things are lawful unto me...but I will not be brought under the power of any”* —“I will not be mastered by anything that does not bring me on my goal, that is not expedient for me. It may be lawful. I mean, there may be nothing wrong with it. It may be totally, completely, innocuous as far as morals are concerned; but you cannot be mastered by it. What you have to do is to firm up your faithfulness. You have to learn that concentration—I have to learn that concentration—is the secret of power.

But, you see, a runner, not only does he have concentration; he has to have direction. Look at it—look at it here. He says, *“I press toward the mark.”* (Philippians 3:14) He puts his eye on the goal. That’s the reason why he said, *“Forgetting those things which are behind.”* (Philippians 3:13) You can’t run a race looking over your shoulder. You’ll fall. You surely won’t win. You have got to have determination, and you’ve got to have direction—steadfast direction—as well as discipline in your life.

I read what an Olympic runner said, and here’s what he said. Listen to it. This is really good. He said, “The only way to win a race is to forget all previous victories which would give you false pride and all former failures which would give you false fears. Each race is a new beginning. Pressing on to the finish tape is all that is important.” Is that not wonderful? You forget all past victories. That will give you false pride. Forget all past failures. That will give you false fear. And you put everything you’ve got into the race. That is, you keep your eye on that goal. You cannot run a race looking over your shoulder.

In Sunday School, talking about Lot’s wife and how she looked back and turned into a pillar of salt, a little boy said, “Well, that’s nothing. My mama was in the car, looked back, and turned into a telephone pole.”

You keep your eye on the goal. You fix your focus. You say, “This one thing I do: that I may know Him.” You face your faults. You say, “I’ve not already attained. I’m not perfect.” And you forget your failures. Next, you forget those things which are behind. And then, you firm up your faithfulness. Anew and afresh, you say, “I make it my goal, I am going to know the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Now he’s reaching forth. Look at it here. He says, *“I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind”*—now, watch this—*“and reaching forth.”* (Philippians 3:13) Underscore that. And then, look, if

you will, in verse 14: *“I press toward the mark.”* (Philippians 3:14) Did you know that both of these are the same? *“I follow after”* and *“I press toward the mark”* are the same word in the Greek language. He’s just simply saying, “I’m bringing it all just to one thing.”

Conclusion

Now, one last word and I’ll be finished. We’re talking about going one step higher. Do you know when Paul said this? I’ve already alluded to it. Philippians is a prison epistle. Paul is writing in prison. It’s near the end of his life. He’s about to step on over; he’s about to die. And he says, “Hey, I’m running for the goal.” Now here’s this squinty-eyed, humpback, bandy-legged old Jew. He’s been around all over. He’s been pickled in the Mediterranean. He’s been stoned and left for dead. He’s mildewed in prison. He’s been beaten with 195 lashes on his back. He’s spent a night and a day in the deep, shipwrecked. And, boy, he’s on the trail running.

He’s not like a lot of folks. I’m talking to some folks tonight, you know what your problem is? You call yourself “retired.” Say, “Boy, Mom, I just can’t wait till we retire. We’re going to get us a Winnebago and go over and watch the leaves turn colors.” Man, God didn’t save you just to watch leaves die. I mean, recreation is fine; but I want to tell you something, friend: You don’t quit serving Jesus, and you don’t quit growing in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you don’t say, “Well, I’ve done my part: now I’m satisfied. I’ve come to a place, and I don’t need to go any further.” I’m talking to some deacons, you say, “Well, I’ve served my time on the deacon board. Now I’m going to let some of these younger boys do it”—or the deacon fellowship: we don’t have a board here; the only board we read about in the Bible is the one Paul floated up to an island on after he was shipwrecked.

You say, “Well, I was on the deacon fellowship; I’m finished with that now. I used to teach; I’m not going to teach any more. I used to be in the choir. It’s now time for me to rest a little bit. I used to tithe. Boy, I used to study the Bible. I used to. I used to.” Friend, you’re sick. Your voice may not make the sweet notes that Joyce’s could make tonight. Maybe you don’t have what it takes to serve in the deacon fellowship. Maybe your eyes won’t let you read that print in the Bible anymore like you used to. Maybe your mind is not as clear as it used to be. That’s fine. But I’m going to tell you something: You never stop running for Jesus. You never stop growing. You never stop going. You never stop glowing. You just keep on keeping on, and keep on keeping on. Here’s the Apostle Paul, and at the end of his life he says, *“That I may know him.”* (Philippians 3:10)

Dr. Robert G. Lee was the pastor of this church for many years. Did you know this church has only had three pastors since 1927? Did you know that? Incredible! Dr. Robert G. Lee was the pastor of this church. And he was over in Oklahoma City, and he

had a heart attack over there. And he's up in his nineties—preaching all over in his nineties. I went to see him and visited and prayed with him. He was just about to step on over into glory and he called his friend Herschel Hobbs. He and Herschel Hobbs are both now up in heaven. Herschel Hobbs, former pastor of the First Baptist Church of Oklahoma City, came to see Dr. Robert G. Lee there in the hospital, Brother Joe.

Now Dr. Lee had had this massive heart attack, and they thought he was going to die. They didn't really expect him to leave the Oklahoma City Hospital. Herschel Hobbs told me later on, "Do you know what Bob asked me?" He called him Bob, Dr. R. G. Lee. He knew him well enough to call him Bob. He said, "Do you know what Bob asked me?" He said, "I came in there to see him, and he was there about to die with a massive heart attack, and I said, 'Bob, is there anything I can do for you?' He said, 'Yeah, Herschel, there is.' He said, 'There's a passage of Scripture over there in 1 Corinthians I've been wondering about. I wish you'd do an exegesis of that passage and come back and tell me. Explain it to me.'"

Think about it now. There he is. I mean, for nine decades he'd lived, and for many decades had preached the gospel of Jesus Christ, and, Brother Jim, about to step on over into heaven, saying, "I want to know more about Jesus, want to know more about the Word of God."

And, folks, that's the reason why we're having this campaign in our church: to say, "I don't care where you are: you can go one step higher—one step higher!" "*The high calling of God in Jesus Christ.*" (Philippians 3:14) And what is it? To know Jesus. "More about Jesus would I know."

Sanctified Ambition

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: December 1, 2002

Main Scripture Text: Philippians 3:10–14

“I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

PHILIPPIANS 3:14

Outline

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Introduction

Take God’s Word and turn to the book of Philippians chapter 3. For our ordination message tonight, I want to talk to you about ambition; not worldly ambition, but the title of the message is “Sanctified Ambition.”

Let me ask you some personal questions. Now I want you to answer these questions in your own heart satisfactorily; at least, make certain that you are answering them honestly: If you get to where you are headed right now, where will you be when you get there? Now, answer that question. We are all headed somewhere. When you get to where you are headed right now, where will you be when you get there? Second question: If you accomplish the goals of your life, what will you have when you get them? Third question—in the background of those first two: Is the life that you are now living worth the death that Jesus died for you?

Now true success is to lay hold on that for which God has laid hold on you. Now if

you want to know what the goal of the Apostle Paul's life is, look in chapter 3, verse 10—and he says this: *“That I may know him,”*—he is talking about Jesus—*“and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.”* (Philippians 3:10)

Now may I give you, Brother Jamie, a formula for success? It is not original with me. It has come from the Apostle Paul, directly from the inspired pages of God's Word. But I want to lay some factors on your heart tonight that will help you as a minister. And what I am saying to this individual, I am saying to the man who is speaking; and what I am saying to the two of us, I am saying to all of us. So I want you to listen. Here are some factors I pray God will write upon your heart.

I. Relationship Is More Important than Accomplishment

Factor number one: Relationship is more important than accomplishment—relationship is more important than accomplishment. Now the Apostle Paul says in this verse, *“That I may know him...”* (Philippians 3:10) This is the goal of his life. Paul wanted to know Him, and he wanted to know Him personally. He doesn't say, *“That I may know about Him.”* You could sit in church and learn much about Him, and still not know Him. *“That I may know him...”* It's one thing to recognize Him; it's another thing to know Him.

A. Paul Wanted to Know the Lord Personally

Now it is impossible to know someone intimately without spending time with that individual. When I get to heaven—and I am going to heaven—I want to meet someone—the Lord Jesus Christ—face to face that I already know heart to heart. We are to know Him personally: *“That I may know him...”*

B. Paul Wanted to Know the Lord Powerfully

Look at that verse again. We are to know Him powerfully, for Paul speaks of *“the power of his resurrection.”* (Philippians 3:10) Now, what was the power of His resurrection? That was the power of the Holy Spirit of God that quickened the body of Jesus and brought Him out of that grave.

Is the goal of your life to have power over sin, over self, over Satan, and over the circumstances of this world? God wants you to live powerfully with the same power—listen—that raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Paul said, *“I want resurrection power in my life.”* Do you? Is that the goal of your life?

C. Paul Wanted to Know the Lord Passionately

Paul said, *“I want to know Him personally. I want to know Him. I want to know Him powerfully.”* *“I want to know Him passionately.”* He speaks there—look at that verse: *“...and the fellowship of his sufferings.”* (Philippians 3:10) Now he is not talking about His Calvary sufferings. Now there is no way that you can participate in His Calvary

sufferings. He did that alone. Nobody can help bear that burden for Him. Alone He died on the cross; but He is still suffering today. His heart is grieved for the sins of this world. The Bible speaks in Ephesians 4 of the Holy Spirit having grief. (Ephesians 4:30) The Lord Jesus has a broken heart.

Now here is the question—I have to ask myself this question: Do the things that break the heart of Jesus, break mine? When is the last time you shed a tear over some soul that is mortgaged to the devil? When is the last time you have literally wept over the sins of this world? Paul said, “I want to know Him passionately.” Now Paul had a broken and compassionate heart.

D. Paul Wanted to Know the Lord Preeminently

Then, not only did he want to know Him personally, and powerfully, and passionately; but now, listen: Paul said, “I want to know Him preeminently.” “Pastor Rogers, why do you say that?” Because Paul said, “I want to be made conformable to His death.” (Philippians 3:10) That is, “I want to die with Him, that I might live with Him.” You will never know the power of His resurrection if you are not made conformable to His death, because there would be no resurrection without a death. What does Paul mean when he says, “I want to be made conformable to His death”? Simply this: “No to me, and yes to Jesus.” That is all it means: “No to me, and yes to Jesus Christ.”

You know one of the strange things, Brother Jamie, in our churches today? About the only sin that is preached any more is to feel bad about yourself. *Meology has replaced theology.* Now Paul said, “I want to know Him.” The whole point here is relationship is more important than accomplishment—relationship is more important than accomplishment.

II. Satisfaction in Life May Mean You Have Aimed Too Low

Here is the second factor I want to lay on your heart: Satisfaction in life—satisfaction—may mean that you have aimed too low. Now if you are satisfied with where you are tonight, you are probably in a sad state of affairs.

Now, let’s look, if you will, in this same chapter, in verse 12. Here is what the great Apostle Paul said; I mean, when he is inspired enough to write Holy Scripture, when he is the mightiest apostle, the greatest missionary, here is what he said about himself: *“Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.”* (Philippians 3:12) I want to lay hold of that for which He laid hold of me. When He saved me, He had a purpose. When He saved you, He had a purpose. When He saved Paul, He had a purpose. When He saved Jamie, He had a purpose. And Paul said, “Look, I want to know Him. And then, I want to lay hold of that. I want to apprehend that for

which He laid hold on me.”

Now he said, “I’m not satisfied now. I am not perfect now. I haven’t already attained.” Look at it again in verse 12: *“Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect.”* That is, “I have not stopped growing; I want to attain.” I have asked myself this question: “Adrian, after you have been in the ministry for half a century, have you put it in neutral and begun to coast?” Not at all—not at all! I am light years from what I ought to be, and could be, and by God’s grace will be. And I am like the old cowboy who said, “I *ain’t* what I ought to be, and I *ain’t* what I’m *gonna* be. But thank God I *ain’t* what I was.” I am still on my way, and God is not finished with me yet.

Now if you were to look at the Apostle Paul at this time when he said this, before He had met Christ, even he considered himself almost faultless. He was a young, proud Pharisee, petted, praised, and flattered for his zeal and his cleverness. But he says in Philippians chapter 3 and verse 7—look at it; what a wonderful verse: *“What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.”* (Philippians 3:7) “Those things that I had on the positive side of the ledger, I took them and I put them all on the negative side of the ledger.”

Now the problem with some people who are satisfied—and there may be some satisfied saints here tonight; the reason that you are satisfied is you have been comparing yourselves with other people, and not with the Lord Jesus Christ. Often I hear people say, “I am just as good as those folks down there at the church.” I am waiting for a man honest enough to say, “I am just as bad as those folks down there at the church.” Now *the church is nothing but a society of sinners who finally realized it and banded themselves together to do something about it.* And the best of us—the best of us—have much room to grow. You know that is true, don’t you?

Now, friend, I want to tell you something: If you are satisfied with you, then God is not satisfied with you. Now when you compare yourselves with other people, there are two great dangers: One is that you may lie down in the gutter alongside some old hypocrite, stretch yourself out, and say, “I am a little longer than he is.” But that is not the standard. Sin is the gap between you and the glory of God. *“All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”* (Romans 3:23) So we don’t measure ourselves by other people. There is one danger if you measure yourself by someone else: You may be satisfied. There is another danger if you measure yourself by somebody else: You may say, “I can never attain; I can never be like him.” Well, you don’t need to be like somebody else. When Paul said, “You be followers of me as I am of Christ,” he didn’t mean, “You follow Paul.” (1 Corinthians 11:1) Paul said, “I am following Jesus. You follow Jesus. You follow me as I follow Jesus. Follow Jesus like I follow Jesus.”

I listened to this couple sing tonight and I thought, “What incredible talent! I can never sing like Jamie.” But I will tell you one thing I can do as well as Jamie and

anybody else in this world; and it is the one thing that you can do as well as Adrian—and that is to love the Lord Jesus Christ. Nobody's cornered the market on love. Nobody was standing behind the door when the ability to love and serve the Lord, and to say, "Oh, that I may know Him, that I want to grow up and be a mature Christian," were passed out.

So here, don't be satisfied. God never wants satisfaction in the Christian life. You say, "Well, I thought we were supposed to be satisfied." Yes, satisfied with Jesus, certainly. We are to be satisfied with salvation, yes, but not satisfied with our present state. Every Christian ought to be a growing Christian. You deserve to have a pastor that is a growing Christian. *To cease to be better is to cease to be good.* And if you are not a better Christian today than you were yesterday, to that degree, you are backslidden.

III. The Secret of Power Is Concentration

Number three: The secret of power is concentration. Now, Jamie, listen to this. The secret of power is concentration. Philippians chapter 3 and verse 13: "*Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do,*"—underscore that phrase, "*this one thing I do*"—"forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before." (Philippians 3:13) Now Paul here is talking about running a race. He is talking about pressing toward the goal.

The two sports achievements in my life have been football and track. I know something about running a race. And I know this much: When you are in the starting block and you put those spikes on and you get set, you don't have any side issues. You say as you look at the goal, "This one thing I do." Every ounce, every inch, every nerve, every fiber, every breath, every corpuscle is moving toward the goal if you want to win.

Now concentration is the secret of power—to bring one's life into a burning focus. Jesus said, "*No man can serve two masters.*" (Matthew 6:24) James said, "*A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.*" (James 1:8) To be powerful, you narrow your interests.

Sometimes people say, "Don't put all your eggs in one basket." No, put all your eggs in one basket, and watch that basket. What is that one basket? "Oh, that I may know Him—that I may know Him! This one thing I do." Again, concentration is the secret of power.

Let water spread over the real estate—and you have a stagnant swamp. Channel it—and you can have a power dam. Diffuse light—and it spreads over this auditorium. Concentrate it—it becomes a laser that can burn through steel. Concentration—everything else has to become subservient to your master goal.

Now sometimes when we say, "This one thing I do," people mentally argue. They

say, “Now, wait a minute, pastor. I’ve got a job. And I need rest. And I need recreation. And I need friends. And I need food. I need all of these things. So, how can you say, “This one thing I do”? All of these things, friend, are subservient to that one thing. And any of these things that keep you from that main thing, for you, is an impediment.

Let me give you a verse that teaches that—1 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 23. Paul said, “*All things are lawful for me...*”—nothing wrong with friends, relationship, diet, vacation, job—“*All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient.*” (1 Corinthians 10:23) Now, what does that word *expedient* mean? Well, when you think of that word *expedient*, you think of a collated word, *expedition*. What is an expedition? An expedition is a journey. When you are on an expedition, you are going somewhere. Paul said, “There is nothing wrong with this thing, or this thing, or this thing. It may be lawful; but if it is not expedient, if it doesn’t bring me to my goal, then for me it is bad.” *Good things are bad things when they stand in the way of best things.* Every relationship, every ambition, every plan—all of it—if it does not help you to know Jesus Christ supremely, preeminently, passionately, powerfully, for you it is wrong.

You say, “Pastor Rogers, that’s narrow.” You are getting it—you are getting it! We are talking about power. Now if you don’t want power, that’s fine. But if you want power, you are going to have to say with the Apostle Paul, “*This one thing I do.*” (Philippians 3:13)

Have you ever done that? Have you ever brought all of your ambitions to one burning ambition? Many of us are just generalities floating around.

*To every man there openeth
A Way, and Ways, and a Way.
And the High Soul climbs the High Way,
And the Low Soul gropes the Low,
And in between, on the misty flats,
To rest drift to and fro.
But to every man there openeth
A High Way, and a Low.
And every man decideth
The way his soul shall go.
—JOHN OXENHAM*

The Apostle Paul here is concentrated in what he is doing.

IV. You Are Never a Failure Until You Quit Growing

Now, number four: You are never a failure, Brother Jamie, until you quit growing. When you quit growing, no matter how far ahead you are, you are a failure.

Now, remember the Apostle Paul is talking about a race. I want you to imagine a

man who is in the starting blocks. The gun is fired, and he starts out. And he is running, and he is yards ahead of everybody else. And then he quits. I can tell you, he is going to lose the race. I don't care how far ahead he is: if he quits, he is going to lose the race.

That is the reason Paul says this in Philippians chapter 3, verse 12: *“Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect.”*—“I haven't reached the goal yet”—*“but I follow after”*—*“I follow after.”* (Philippians 3:12) That word means, “I relentlessly pursue”; that is what the Greek word means. The idea is determination. His eye is on the goal. He is straining every sinew, every nerve. He doesn't have a take-it-or-leave-it attitude.

Now he is old. He is a battered old apostle. He is writing from prison. But he is still running. By the way, when I talk about running a race, some of you are saying, “Well, I am not young enough to run the race,” or, “I am aged,” or, “I am sick,” or, “I am inhibited.” You can run this race from a sickbed. You can be an all-star athlete when you are ninety. Anybody can run this race. You don't have to be in a great physical shape, financial shape, or intellectual shape to run this race. But you dare not quit. Here is the battered old apostle. He is in prison. But he is still running. He is near the end of his ministry. But he is still running.

Do you know what is wrong in modern-day Christianity? We have too many quitters. We have people in our church who used to serve the Lord, but they have quit. Now, do you know why they have quit serving Him? They got prosperous. They bought a house over on the lake somewhere, bought a condominium somewhere. And they used to be very faithful in the church. But now they think nothing of just taking the weekend to go do their thing. It is not the weekend; it is the Lord's Day. You say, “I need some recreation.” Yes, God wants you to have it. But you need to ask yourself this question: Is my recreation bringing me to my goal? Or have the blessings of God taken me away from the God who has given those blessings?

Thank God the Apostle Paul never stopped running. If you could see the Apostle Paul there in that prison—that scarred body because of the lictor's lash that had been laid on him; that body that showed the marks of fasting; that body that showed the marks of having fought with wild beasts; that body that was pickled in the Mediterranean as he was there for thirty-six long hours—a man who endured three shipwrecks, the man who had a prison record, the man who had 195 stripes laid on his back—and he is still running the race—running the race—he said, “I am not there yet; I am not perfect yet; but I am not going to quit.”

There are some of you who used to be deacons; but you have dropped out. Some of you used to be in the choir; but you have dropped out. Some of you used to teach Sunday School; but you have dropped out. Some of you used to tithe; but you have quit. Some of you used to be Sunday School workers; but you have quit. May God have

mercy on you! Never quit—never! You are never a failure until you quit. If you quit, you are always a failure. I don't care how far ahead you are: you stop running, you will lose the race. You can be halfway around the track when the others are coming out of the block; but don't you stop running.

V. Satan Binds You to the Past; But Jesus Frees You for the Future

Now, here is the fifth thing I want to say: Satan binds us to the past; but Jesus frees you for the future. Satan would like to keep you bound to the past. Philippians 3, verses 13 and 14: *“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind,”*—that's the past—*“...reaching forth unto those things which are before,”*—that's the future—*“I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”* (Philippians 3:13–14)

Put your eye on the goal, and keep it there, and forget the past. One thing I have learned about running a race: You cannot run a good race by looking over your shoulder. It's a good way to fall. Forget the past. Lot's wife looked back and turned into a pillar of salt. A little boy in Sunday School said, “Well, that's nothing. My mother was going to the grocery store, looked back, and turned into a telephone pole.” You can't drive a car looking back.

Now you can't run a race looking back. Paul said, *“Forgetting those things which are behind...”*

A. We Need to Forget Past Guilt

What are things that we need to forget in our lives? Past guilt. If you will look in this same chapter, look in verse 6. Concerning zeal, persecuting the church, Paul knew the things that he had done—and they were terrible. But he refused to be haunted by the ghost of guilt. He buried those things in the grave of God's forgetfulness.

B. We Need to Forget Past Glory

But not only past guilt; past glory. I mean, what things he had—incredible things; but look in verse 7: *“But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.”* (Philippians 3:7)

Again, when I was playing football, we would go to play against another team. Our coach would say, “Boys, put away your press clippings. That other team hasn't read them.”

C. We Need to Forget Past Grief

Forget the past failures, your past guilt, your past glory, and your past grief. In this passage, Paul talks about false brethren, people who had done him wrong; but he refused to be drinking the intoxicating cup of self-pity. Jamie, in the Christian life, there

will be those who will criticize you. Sometimes people say to me, “Oh, Pastor Rogers, we are just so blessed to have you as our pastor: everybody loves you.” I say, “You ought to read some of my mail: not everybody loves me.” I don’t want to be loved by everybody. Jesus said, “Beware when all men speak well of you.” (Luke 6:26) There are those who would give you grief. But you can suffer. You can have sickness and sorrow and financial reverse. Don’t sit around licking your wounds and drinking from that intoxicating cup. Paul said, “I forget that.”

D. We Need to Forget Past Grudges

Paul forgot past grudges. There is nothing that will stultify your Christian life more than carrying a grudge. Refuse it. Don’t let it get into your life. Tell Jesus on them, and let it go. Paul said, “I forget those things which are behind, and I am pressing forward.” (Philippians 3:13)

I have read somewhere that at the foot of the Alps there is the grave of an Englishman. He was climbing one of those Swiss mountains, an icy slope, and he fell to his death. And on his grave marker is this epitaph: “He died climbing”—“He died climbing.”

When he was in his nineties, Dr. Lee had a massive heart attack—the former pastor of this church. I quoted him this morning. He was in Oklahoma City. His long lifetime friend Herschel Hobbs came to see him. Herschel Hobbs, Brother Jim, is a great Bible scholar. You met and know Herschel Hobbs. Herschel Hobbs was in many ways called “Mr. Southern Baptist.” He came to see his old friend, Dr. Lee; he called him Bob. Most of us would not have called him Bob; but Herschel did. Most of us would not have called Herschel *Herschel*. But Dr. Hobbs came to see Dr. Lee—let’s put it that way. And he came to see this man with a massive heart attack. What do you think they talked about? Herschel Hobbs told me later. He said, “Dr. Lee looked at me when I came to pray for him. He said, ‘Herschel, there is a passage of Scripture that I have been thinking about. I want you to do me a favor. Would you do an exegesis on this passage of Scripture? Unravel that, and come back and tell me what it means.’” Here is a man with a massive heart attack. What did he want? “More about Jesus would I know. I want to die climbing. I want to be learning more and more about our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

VI. Conclusion

Now, friend, Satan chains us to the past. Jesus frees us for the future. Aren’t you glad that you can draw a line tonight, and you can step over that line, get in the starting block, and forget that, and say, “Now I am running this race; the burning goal of my life is that I may know Him personally; that I may know Him powerfully; that I may know Him passionately; that I may know Him preeminently; that I may know the Lord Jesus Christ;

and I am not going to stop running until I come to the end of the race and I hear Him say, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant’”? There is no thrill like being in the race, and there will be no greater joy than to have Him put a crown on your head and say, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

That I May Know Him

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: December 31, 1989

Main Scripture Text: Philippians 3:10–14

“That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.”

PHILIPPIANS 3:10

Outline

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- B. Paul Wanted to Know God Powerfully
- C. Paul Wanted to Know God Passionately
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- II. There Must Be a Single Desire
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Conclusion

Introduction

Take your Bibles and turn with me, please, to Philippians chapter 3. Now, let me ask you this while you're turning. I know many of us have thought about resolutions. You know, a resolution is something that goes in one year and out the other. I know we've thought about resolutions; but let me ask you this question: If you could take all of your New Year's resolutions—just take them all and put them in a paragraph—not just for this year, but for the rest of your life—if you could just write it all down and say, “This is what I want to be, and by the grace of God will be,” could you do it? And could you make it plain and concise?

Many people have a difficult time expressing themselves. I clipped this the other day. These are some quotes from actual traffic accident reports—at least, that's what this says. Here are some people now turning in a report as to why they had the accident that they had. One person said, “I've been driving for forty years when I fell asleep at the wheel and had an accident.” Well, I can understand that. Here's what somebody else said: “My car was legally parked as it backed into the other vehicle.” Here's what this guy said—maybe it was a gal: “The telephone pole was approaching fast. I

attempted to swerve out of its path when it struck my front end.” Listen to what this guy said. He said, “The guy was all over the road. I had to swerve a number of times before I hit him.” And then this person said, “I thought my window was down; but I found it was up when I put my hand through it.” Well, these are people who evidently did not express themselves exactly right. I mean, they didn’t have the power of expression. Could you concisely in a paragraph just say, “This is my heart’s desire”?

I believe that the two greatest people who have ever lived upon the face of the earth, excluding the Lord Jesus, were, number one, Moses, and, number two, Paul. I believe that: the two greatest individuals who ever lived, Moses and Paul. I want to take the latter of those, Paul, and I want to give you an insight into what made him the man he was. I mean, in the scripture that I’m going to give to you now, Paul puts in a paragraph, in a concise statement, what made him the man that he was, what motivated him. What was the resolution for the year and the rest of his life? Here it is. I want you to listen to it, found in Philippians chapter 3 and verse 10: *“That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. 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 3:10–14)

Now, what was the burning ambition of the Apostle Paul? Look at it in verse 10. Later on, he says, “It is the one thing I do; this is my burning, consummate goal,” and he says, *“That I may know him.”* (Philippians 3:10) Now he doesn’t say, “I want to know about Him.” That’s the problem with many people: they’re studying *about* Him. Dear friend, you can backslide with a Bible under your arm. Did you know that? It’s one of the great dangers of being in seminary: that you’re studying *about* Him. Paul said, *“That I may know him.”*

And how did Paul want to know the Lord Jesus Christ?

A. Paul Wanted to Know God Personally

Well, number one: He wanted to know Him personally—personally. You see, there are a lot of people we know about, but we don’t know them personally. When I get to heaven, when I see the Lord Jesus Christ, I want to meet somebody face to face that I have already known heart to heart, don’t you? Paul wanted to know Him personally: *“That I may know him.”* (Philippians 3:10)

B. Paul Wanted to Know God Powerfully

But not only did he want to know Him personally; he wanted to know Him powerfully. Paul says, *“That I might know him, and the power of his resurrection.”* (Philippians 3:10)

We get to thinking about that power, that incredible power, that raised the Lord Jesus Christ from the grave; and the Apostle Paul said, “That is the power I want in my life: power over sin, power over Satan, power over circumstances, power over self. You see, what did Paul mean when he said, “I want to know the power of his resurrection”? Why did he choose that? What Paul is saying is, “I want someone to rescue me from the deadliness of my old life and to turn every day into an Easter. I want to be seated with the Lord Jesus—risen and seated in the *heavenlies*.” (Ephesians 2:6)

C. **Paul Wanted to Know God Passionately**

But not only did he want to know Him personally and powerfully; He said, “I want to know Him passionately.” Look at it: “...and the fellowship of his sufferings.” (Philippians 3:10) “Lord Jesus, I want to share, I want to have the most intimate fellowship with you. I want to know the fellowship of suffering with you.” I doubt that very many of us have had that for a New Year’s goal.

Let me tell you something. When we have a joy in our life, we want to share it with almost everybody. I brought a perfect stranger in here the other day, somebody I’d never met before, and I said, “I want to show this place.” And, oh, we walked around. I’m so thrilled with this building. I thank God for it, because it’s a tool to reach people for Jesus. And I said, “Look at this, and look at that.” But, dear friend, we share our joys with almost anybody, but we share our sorrows with just a few, isn’t that true? I mean, if your heart is breaking—I mean, if you’re crushed, if some deep, deep, deep sorrow has come into your heart—you don’t just feel like telling everybody about it. You share your sorrows with the most intimate people.

Paul said, “I want to know that fellowship of Jesus.” What is he talking about when he’s talking here about “*the fellowship of his sufferings*”? He’s not talking about His sufferings on the cross. That’s not what he’s talking about. Those sufferings are gone, done forever. He’ll never suffer again. He has ceased from that suffering. The cross is behind Him. And the Apostle Paul could never help Jesus suffer for our sins, anyway. Such a thought is unthinkable. But I’ll tell you what: The heart of our Lord Jesus is breaking over a sin-cursed world today. His heart is broken over this city.

I wonder this—listen to me: Does what breaks the heart of God break your heart? Do the things that break the heart of Jesus, does that break your heart? Do you think adultery breaks the heart of Jesus? Then, can you sit in front of a television set and laugh and giggle over that which breaks the heart of Jesus? Is that where you get your jollies, your entertainment? That’s where this world gets its entertainment. Most all of the entertainment today is on what? Immorality! We’re laughing our way into hell. We ought to be weeping with a broken heart. The Bible says, “*Fools make a mock at sin.*” (Proverbs 14:9) Fools do!

D. **Paul Wanted to Know God Preeminently**

Paul said, “I want to know Him personally.” Paul said, “I want to know Him powerfully.” Paul said, “I want to know Him passionately.” Paul said, “I want to know Him”—listen to this—“preeminently.” Continue to read and see what he says here. He says this—he says, “[I want to be] made conformable unto his death.” (Philippians 3:10) What does that mean? It means, “I want to die with Him on the cross. I want to be crucified with Christ, so it will be no longer I, but Christ that now lives in me” (Galatians 2:20)—“I want the Lord Jesus Christ to be preeminent in my life. I want to be dead to sin and alive to God, and I want Jesus Christ to be preeminent.”

It may surprise you to know that Jesus Christ doesn't want a place in your life. He doesn't want prominence in your life. He demands and deserves preeminence in your life. Can you honestly say—I mean, honestly; you don't have to answer to anybody but yourself and God, but not to me—can you honestly, sincerely, say, “Jesus Christ is preeminent in my life”? Well, you say, “Pastor, I'm not certain whether I can or not.” That might be a good answer. I mean, at least it might be honest. You see, I'm going to show you in a moment that you have to be honest. You have to know where you are in order to get to where you need to be. Well, if you couldn't say, “Look, I am certain that He is preeminent in my life,” could you say, “I want Him to be”? That's a good start. Could you say, “My heart's desire is, my goal is, that the Lord Jesus Christ would be preeminent in my life”?

Now if these things are true of the Apostle Paul—and they were true—Paul told us what his ambition was, what his goal was, what his desire was, what motivated him, what conformed him, what impelled him, what drove him. He told us. Now then, he told us how he intended to get there: four steps right out of the Word of God. And would to God you would say, “Paul, I don't need to think any more about what my New Year's resolution will be: I already know. Mine, Paul, will be as yours. My heart's desire is to know Him as you wanted to know Him.”

Now, let me give you four steps to get there.

I. **There Must Be a Sincere Dissatisfaction**

All right, number one—number one: There must be a sincere dissatisfaction—a sincere dissatisfaction. Look in verse 12—look at it: “*Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect.*” (Philippians 3:12) You see, you have to see where you are in order to get to where you need to be. You see, even the Apostle Paul did not think that he knew the Lord Jesus personally, powerfully, passionately, and preeminently as he should. That ought to be an encouragement to us. You see, if the Apostle Paul said he needed to grow, then maybe we can say we need to grow.

You see, no growing Christian is ever satisfied with his spiritual attainment. I know

I'm not. I know you people get tired of hearing me say I want to be a better Christian. I know I keep saying it. But I do—I do! I am not satisfied with my spiritual life. I've been on the trail a long time, and I ought to be a better Christian than I am. And I'm ashamed that I'm not. But I'm like that old cowboy who said, "I ain't what I ought to be, and I ain't what I'm a gonna be. But, thank God, I ain't what I was." I am a growing Christian, and I intend to be a growing Christian, because I am so dissatisfied with myself. I'm not dissatisfied with my salvation. I'm certainly not dissatisfied with my Savior.

You know, the reason that many people don't grow is because they think they're fine just like they are. They're like the boy who drops out of school when he's fourteen years old, and he drops out of school—you know why? He says, "They can't teach me any more." He's probably right—he's probably right! They can't, because he thinks he already knows everything.

You see, the Apostle Paul was satisfied before he met the Lord Jesus, dissatisfied after he met the Lord Jesus. I mean, before he met the Lord Jesus, he considered himself almost faultless. He was a young, proud Pharisee, petted, praised, and flattered for his zeal and for his cleverness.

But you know why some of us are satisfied already? We're comparing ourselves with the wrong things. You know, the Bible says, "You are those who compare yourselves with yourselves? You're not wise." (2 Corinthians 10:12) What we do is lie down in the gutter alongside some old hypocrite and say, "I'm just as good as he is, or even better than he is." "Well," we say, "I'm just as good as those folks down there at the church." I'm looking for a person honest enough to say, "I'm just as bad as those folks down there at the church." I mean, *church is nothing but a society of sinners who finally realized it and banded themselves to do something*. You see, when you compare yourself with other people, there are two dangers: danger number one, you may be proud because you're better than somebody else; danger number two, you may get discouraged because you're not where they are. And, my dear friend, listen. If you would be a growing Christian tonight, there must be in your heart a strong dissatisfaction with you wherever you are in your spiritual growth.

I say, I don't believe there was ever a greater Christian, a greater man, than the Apostle Paul—certainly not in New Testament times! And when he wrote these words, he wasn't at the first of his ministry. These are not the words of a rookie Christian. I mean, the Apostle Paul is in that Philippian jail an aged old man waiting to die and go to heaven. And he says, "That I may know him." (Philippians 3:10) I say, "Well, my goodness, Paul! If you don't know Him, who knows Him?" Now Paul didn't mean, "I want to know Him in salvation." Paul had been saved for a long time.

You say, "Well, how could he know Him and not know Him?" Friend, there's so much more to know. Columbus discovered America, but there are still thousands of unnamed

lakes up in Canada. Did he know America when he discovered America? Sure, he did. But he was just standing there on the seashore.

Listen. The deepest Christian, the most knowledgeable Christian, has just gotten inside the door—just gotten inside the door! I don't care who you are; I don't care how much you think you know; dear friend, if you are satisfied with where you are, Jesus is not satisfied with you, I can tell you that much. There must be on this threshold of a new year an honest evaluation that says, "I am not already perfect; I have not attained; there's room for growth in my life." God forgive us for that complacency.

II. There Must Be a Single Desire

All right now, listen: a sincere dissatisfaction. Step number two: a single desire. Look in verse 13. The Apostle Paul says, "*This one thing I do*" (Philippians 3:13)—not two things. Now the Apostle Paul was a great preacher. And I want to tell you ladies something. Every lady in this building, I want you to listen to me right now, including Joyce Louise Rogers. The Apostle Paul loved sports. Now, guys, I'm helping you now. The Apostle Paul would have been familiar with football had he lived in this day and age. And he used sports to illustrate his sermons—boxing and running and wrestling—and right now he's using an illustration from the Olympic games.

That's what he's using right now, and he's saying, "My life is like the life of an Olympic runner." And he's saying that a runner, when he's running a race, has no side issues; he has one burning desire. I mean, it's tearing his lungs out. It's the one thing he does. If he doesn't do it, he'll never win, because there's somebody else alongside of him who wants to win. Every ounce, every inch, every nerve, every sinew, every fiber, every corpuscle, everything—"*this one thing I do.*" (Philippians 3:13) Nobody can win a race in the Olympics unless he gets that way. This is what he's talking about. Listen. He says here, "I haven't apprehended. I'm not there yet. But," he says, "*this one thing I do.*" There is a single desire.

Now, let me ask you a question: Are you single-minded or double-minded? Do you know what James said about a double-minded man? James said, "*A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.*" (James 1:8) Do you know what the Lord Jesus Christ said about it? Jesus Christ said, "*No man can serve two masters.*" (Matthew 6:24) Do you know what the Apostle Paul said? He said, "*This one thing I do.*" (Philippians 3:13) Concentration is the secret of power.

Do you know the difference between a mighty river and a swamp? It's concentration. A river is concentrated between two banks, and therefore it can run a dynamo. But a swamp just spreads out; there is no concentration. Many of us are stagnant swamps when we ought to be dynamos for Jesus, because we don't say, "*This one thing I do.*"

Now to be the kind of a man the Apostle Paul was, not only must there be a sincere

dissatisfaction; there must be a single desire. Everything else has to become the servant of your master goal. Now when you preach this way, some people think, “Hey, that guy is a fanatic, because he doesn’t think that I need to go fishing.” No, I think you do need to go fishing. I’ve already intimated you need to relax and watch some football. That’s twice. Sure, you do. You don’t need to overdo it. You need to sleep. You need to eat. You surely need to earn a living. *“If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.”* (1 Timothy 5:8) So you can’t quit your job and become a religious hermit or a recluse or whatever. I mean, you have all kinds of responsibilities. But you listen to me. Your friends, your family, your job, your recreation, your hobbies, everything else you do, has to come and get in line behind one master goal: that you’ll know Jesus Christ. And if any of these things—not some of them; any of them, or all of them—keep you from the master goal, they’re wrong for you.

You know what the Apostle Paul said? He said, *“All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient.”* (1 Corinthians 10:23) You see, recreation—your recreation—may be lawful, but it may not be expedient. You say, “What does that word *expedient* mean? That’s a dollar word. Give me a quarter word for it—about four quarter words.” All right now, listen. When you think of expedient, think of another word just like it: *expedition*. What is an expedition? An expedition is a journey, a trip. That is, an expedition is something that’s going somewhere. Now, are you going somewhere? Do you have a goal? Can you say, “This one thing I do”? Are you running a race? Are you on an expedition? Are you headed somewhere? Then, anything that keeps you from where you’re going, no matter how good it may be for you, is wrong.

Oh, it may be lawful. I told you a few Sundays ago I was down in Miami in a rented automobile on a superhighway listening to a stereo radio, obeying the speed limit, doing wonderful. Everything was fine except for one thing: I was headed the wrong way. I mean, good road, good driver, good music, good car—wrong direction. I wasn’t breaking the law; but the longer I drove, the better the road, the worse it was, because I was going in the wrong way. I was not doing anything unlawful, but I wasn’t doing much very expedient. *“All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient.”* (1 Corinthians 10:23)

You know another man who was a great man? And he runs a big third to me. And that’s David. David was a great man. You know what David said in Psalms 27, verse 4? *“One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after.”* (Psalms 27:4) Do you ever hear anybody say, “Don’t put all your eggs in one basket”? The Apostle Paul would say, “Put them all in one basket, and watch that basket.” Oh, my dear friend, *“this one thing I do”* (Philippians 3:10)—a single desire.

III. There Must Be a Strong Determination

All right now, watch: a sincere dissatisfaction, a single desire, and then a strong determination. Look, if you will, in verse 12. Look at the word in verse 12 here. He says, “*I follow after.*” (Philippians 3:12) Do you see that right in the middle of the verse? Then look, if you will, in verse 14: “*I press...*” (Philippians 3:14) Do you see that? “*I follow after.*” “*I press.*” It’s the same word in the Greek language. And what he’s talking about here is what I was talking about that a runner must do. The word “*follow after*” or the word “*press,*” both of them mean “to relentlessly pursue.” You can’t have a take-it-or-leave-it attitude, and you can never quit.

Let me tell you something about a race. I don’t care how far ahead you are: it doesn’t make any difference. You can be fifty yards ahead. If you quit before you reach the goal, somebody else is going to win the race. Did you ever think about that? I mean, it doesn’t matter how far ahead you are: if you quit before the goal, you lose. You can have a run in a 440. I mean, first time, wonderful; second time, wonderful; third time, wonderful; fourth time, you quit: somebody else is going to win, I don’t care how far out ahead you are.

Now the Apostle Paul, do you know where he wrote this? Paul was in prison. I mean, he is an old broken-down relic of a man. He’s in prison waiting to be beheaded, and he’s still running like this with all of his might. If you could have seen that body, stooped, squinty-eyed, baldpate, scars all over his body, 195 stripes laid on him. He’s been pickled in the Mediterranean a night and a day in the deep. He had fought with wild beasts. He’d been stoned and left for dead, let down over a wall in a basket, fasting—all of these things! There he is, the little old Apostle Paul, in prison. But he says, “I’m running for the goal. With all of my might, I’m running for the goal.” He’s still running.

Some of you think, well, you’re retired now. Mister, you haven’t retired from serving Jesus. And you’d better remember it. You don’t have to report in to work. That just gives you more time to pray. That just gives you more time to witness. That just gives you more time to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. “I follow after. I press on. I’m not going to let up.” “Paul, haven’t you run hard enough, long enough? Just take it easy, Paul.” Boy, I’m talking to some deacons. You were once deacons, but you just don’t *deac* much anymore. I’m talking to some soul winners. You were once soul winners, but you’re not a soul winner anymore. I’m talking to some tithers who were once tithers, but you’re not a tither anymore. I’m talking to some prayer warriors who were once prayer warriors, but you’re not a prayer warrior anymore. But I’ll tell you what you are: You’re a quitter—a quitter!

I’ll tell you what’s going to happen: You’re not going to win the race, either. I don’t care how far and how fast you ran, mister. No runner can rest on his laurels until the

race is over. And here's old Paul in prison, and I mean, he's picking them up and putting them down spiritually. And isn't that an encouragement? You say, "Well, I can't even go to church anymore: I'm sick." You can still run. You say, "Well, I don't have any money." You can still run. You say, "My body is weak." You can still run. I mean, here's the Apostle Paul in prison. Mister, I'm telling you, he's running a race—he's running a race.

IV. There Must Be a Steadfast Destination

One last thing: Not only must there be a strong determination; but there must be a steadfast destination—that is, you've got to keep your eye on the goal. Nobody can win a race unless he does. Look again in verses 13 and 14: "*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) Nobody can run a race and win who doesn't keep his eye on the goal. A steadfast destination: you've got to know where you want to go in the spiritual life in order to get there. You've got to fix your eye on the goal. You cannot run a race looking back over your shoulder.

Have you ever watched sprinters run, or milers, or anybody else? And they're running, and they can't see anybody else, and they kind of look over their shoulder; and at that moment they break their stride, and they lose the race by a millisecond.

I'm a has-been athlete with a capital *H-B*, but I played football. It's about the only game I was ever any good at. The reason for that: I have a very hard head. And the first football game when I was carrying the ball in my life, I got loose for a long run. And you talk about a thrill, folks—I mean, there's a thrill when you have practiced and practiced and practiced and practiced, and run those plays and so forth, and suddenly you find that thing in your hands! And you look down there, and there's the goal, and there's not another player in sight, and this is your big time. I mean, this was the first time that ever happened to me. I had that thing tucked under my arm, and there was the goal. And I wa running, lickety-split, and then I said, "I wonder how close they are back there? I wonder if anybody's about to grab me? I really don't know." And I looked over my shoulder and I saw him coming. And I said, "Boy, I'd better score." And I saw the goal line. So I put that ball in and I just dived over the goal line rather than running over it. It's the first time now; first time—just dived right over. There was just one problem with all of that: It wasn't the goal line; it was the ten-yard line. Your pastor—the ten-yard line! Whew! Now, what was my problem? Very simple: I took my eye off the goal, and I was watching those things which were behind.

Conclusion

Now, folks, I want to tell you, this past year and this past decade are going into the tomb

of time. And past glory, and past grudges, and past guilt, and past gain—all of it—that's gone. And the blood of Jesus will cleanse from any sin and put those things in the grave of God's forgetfulness. Say, "I want this year to be the best year I've ever known. I want the rest of my life to count for Jesus. And this one thing I do: I make it my goal to know Him personally, powerfully, passionately, preeminently." God give us that for a goal.

The Purpose-Centered Life: The Magnificent Obsession

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: September 7, 2003

Main Scripture Text: Philippians 3:10–14

“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

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Introduction

We’re thinking about the purpose-driven life—and that’s the title of the message this morning: “The Purpose-Centered Life: The Magnificent Obsession.” Take your Bibles and turn, if you would, please, to Philippians chapter 3, and look at a familiar verse, verse 13—Philippians 3 and verse 13: *“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do,”*—there it is, the purpose-driven life—*“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)

Ernest Hemingway was a remarkable man. He won a Pulitzer Prize. He won a Nobel

Prize. He was a young reporter—already a news reporter—when World War I began. And he went to the front and was wounded in Italy. He came back and had an exciting life as a big game hunter. He was a bullfighter. He was a sports fisherman who would fish for marlin. And when World War II came, he didn't want to be left out, so he took his fishing boat and rigged it with two fifty-caliber machine guns, bazookas, hand grenades, and would cruise off the coast of Cuba, hoping that a German U-boat would surface. If he could see the conning tower or the periscope, or if he could see the water breaking over that steel skin of that U-boat, he would move toward it, expecting them to surface and get a boarding party to come and board his ship. And he would remain about fifty yards away. And when it would come up and they would open the tower and come out on the deck, then he would increase speed and move toward them with machine guns firing hoping to lob a grenade down the conning tower into the U-boat and to sink it. A daring man!

He was in an airplane accident. He was hit by a taxi. He had all kinds of escapades. He was wounded in war. He lived in France. He lived in Italy. He lived in Cuba. He lived in Key West. He lived in Idaho. He was a man that did everything. But he abused himself with alcohol and became just a slave to alcohol. He went through four marriages. He said finally, at the end of all of this, thinking of his life—this great novelist, this great author—“It seems that we are ants on the end of a burning log.” Do you know how he ended it all? With a shotgun to his head. Ernest Hemmingway, he did so much, seeking everywhere adventure. You talk about a man who had a full life and an empty life at the same time! His life was filled with futility: no purpose. “We're like ants—ants on the end of a burning log.” An empty life!

Do you know what could be very sad? It would be a full church filled with empty people. Do you have a purpose for your life? I mean, do you really have a purpose for your life? Most folks don't. Most folks are plowing water and shoveling smoke. They're living to exist, and existing to live; but they do not have a purpose for life.

How different was the life of the Apostle Paul, who could say, “*This one thing I do!*” (Philippians 3:13) Let me ask you a question. Are you ready to answer it? Don't answer it out loud. But when you get to where you're headed, where will you be? That's a good question. Now, you answer it. When you get to where you are headed, where will you be? If you accomplish what you're trying to accomplish, what will you have? May I ask those questions again? If you get to where you're headed, where will you be? If you accomplish what you're trying to accomplish, what will you have?

You know, Peter, when he was preaching on the Day of Pentecost, he gave the invitation, and he said there in Acts chapter 2, verse 40, “*Save yourselves from this untoward generation.*” (Acts 2:40) Do you know that word *untoward*? That's a word we don't use very much: *untoward*. Do you know what that means? “Get off this merry-go-

round; it's not going anywhere." *"Save yourselves from this untoward generation."*

Well, we're going to be talking today about a purpose-driven life. And I want to give you some five thoughts that are in the passage of Scripture that we have before us.

I. The Motivation of a Purpose-Centered Life

First of all, I want you to think about the motivation of a purpose-driven life—the motivation of a purpose-driven life. Paul tells us his motivation in verse 10. And here it was wrapped up in the Lord Jesus Christ: *"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death."* (Philippians 3:10) There it is in a nutshell—one verse. That's the motivation. That's what impelled him; that's what drove him.

Listen. Paul's life was a purpose-centered life, but it was not a self-centered life. Now that's the main thing concerning which most of us are going to have to make a switch. Most of us, ninety-nine percent of the people in this world today—I'm drawing that out of the air; I really don't know what percentage; 67.2% of all statistics are made up on the spur of the moment—most people, I can say without fear of contradiction, are self-centered rather than Christ-centered.

A. Paul Wanted to Know the Lord Personally

Now Paul, the motivation of his life was the Lord Jesus Christ. He wanted to know the Lord Jesus Christ. And how did he want to know Him? He wanted to know Him personally: *"That I may know him"* (Philippians 3:10)—not *about* Him. You can know *about* somebody, but not know Him. Is Jesus Christ a friend to you? Is Jesus Christ real to you? I can say this—listen to me—I can say this: that Jesus Christ is real to me. I know Jesus Christ. I don't want to meet in the Resurrection someone that I recognize but do not know.

B. Paul Wanted to Know the Lord Powerfully

Paul wanted to know Him personally. Paul wanted to know Him powerfully. He said, *"the power of his resurrection."* (Philippians 3:10) That is, "The power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead: I want that power to be operating in me. I don't want to live as a victim. I want to have victory in Jesus. I want to have victory over sin, over Satan, over self, over the situation. I want to know Him personally. I want to know Him. I want to know Him powerfully. I want to know the power of His resurrection."

C. Paul Wanted to Know the Lord Passionately

"I want to know Him passionately"—that's what he says right here: "that I might be made conformable unto His death." (Philippians 3:10) Now, what does that mean: "conformable to His death"? It doesn't mean that you could die for sinners. He died

alone; nobody could do that for Him. But what it means is that when He died for me—listen carefully—I died with Him. His death had my name on it. And if I want to know Him, I have to say *no* to me and *yes* to Him. I have to die to myself. I have to die with Christ. I have to be buried with Christ that I might be raised with Christ. I want to know Him personally. I want to say *yes* to Christ and *no* to me.

Now, may I ask you a question? Those of you in the balcony, may I ask you a question? Are you willing today to say *yes* to Christ and *no* to self? If not, you don't have a purpose-centered life—not in a Bible sense. You have a miserable life. When self is on the throne, Christ is on the cross. When self is on the cross, Christ is on the throne. Now, what is a purpose-centered life? It is a life that is centered in the Lord Jesus Christ—and that is the motivation for a purpose-centered life.

II. The Evaluation of a Purpose-Centered Life

Now, secondly, think not only about the motivation of a purpose-centered life, but let's think secondly about the evaluation of a purpose-centered life. You have to evaluate your life. If you want to know where you need to be, you have to find out where you are right now.

Now, look in verse 12: *“Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.”* (Philippians 3:12) Let me read that verse again: *“Not as though I had already attained,”*—that is, “I'm not complete yet”—*“either were already perfect:”*—that means “mature”—*“but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.”* Paul is saying here that, “I want to attain what the Lord Jesus Christ saved me for.”

Now, look up here. If you're satisfied with your life today, you've aimed too low. Are you satisfied with your life today? No growing Christian is ever satisfied with his life. Here's the Apostle Paul, and he said, “Look, I need to grow.” Do you need to grow? Absolutely, you need to grow.

Now Paul was satisfied with a Savior; he was satisfied with his salvation; but he wasn't satisfied with himself. I like what a cowboy said who was saved. He said, “I *ain't* what I ought to be; and I *ain't* what I'm going to be; but, thank God, I *ain't* what I was.” That's the way most of us are. We know that we we've got to grow in the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Before Paul met the Lord Jesus Christ, he was very satisfied with himself. He was very self-confident. He thought of himself as almost faultless. As a matter of fact, he tells us that in the Bible. He was a young, proud Pharisee: petted, praised, flattered; full of zeal, and full of cleverness. He talked about all those things, and then he says in this same book of Philippians chapter 3, verse 7, *“But what things were gain to me, those I*

counted loss for Christ.” (Philippians 3:7) I thought of that, Jim, when the choir sang, “My richest gain I count but loss and pour contempt on all my pride.”

Now what Paul is doing is evaluating himself. He is saying, “O God, I’m not what I ought to be. Lord, let my purpose be to fulfill that for which you saved me.”

*I am satisfied with Jesus,
But the question comes to me,
As I think of Calvary,
Is my Master satisfied with me?*

—B. B. MCKINNEY

III. The Concentration of the Purpose-Centered Life

Now, here’s the third thing—and that’s the concentration of the purpose-centered life. The motivation is Jesus; the evaluation: “I’m not there yet; I’m not all that I ought to be”; but now the concentration. Look in verse 13: “*Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do...*”—underscore that—“*this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before.*” (Philippians 3:13)

Now Paul here is using the idiom, the illustration, of a race. Believe it or not, I used to run on a track team, and I know something about racing. I know one thing about racing. Friend, when you run a race, for that moment, there are no side issues. That is, if you’re going to win the race, there are no side issues—nothing else! There must be absolute, total concentration if you have any hope of winning.

Now no one is going to find his purpose in life unless he brings it all into a burning focus. “Pastor, are you sure about that?” Absolutely! Jesus Christ Himself said, “*No man can serve two masters.*” (Matthew 6:24) James said, “*A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.*” (James 1:8) People say, “Don’t put all your eggs in one basket.” No, you put all your eggs in one basket, and watch that basket.

“*This one thing I do.*” Concentration is the secret of power, whether you take a swamp, channel it to make a power dam, or you take diffused light, and concentrate it, and make a laser that can cut through steel—concentration! Now it doesn’t mean that you don’t do other things when he says, “*This one thing I do.*” Well, he made tents. He sailed. He ate. He slept. What he is saying is, “All of these things are subsets to my master goal.” Your job, your rest, your recreation, your friends, your diet—everything that you do has got to be a subset of God’s purpose for your life.

Now the Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians chapter 6, verse 12, “*All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient.*” (1 Corinthians 6:12) *Expedient*—what do we mean by *expedient*? What’s an expedition? You’re going somewhere. Paul says, “A thing may be lawful; but if it doesn’t bring me on my way; if it does not impel me in my

journey; if it does not help me in my purpose, for me it's no good." Some of you are doing things that are perfectly legitimate, except they're not expedient; they are not bringing you on your goal.

Have you ever brought your life into a burning focus? Psalm 27, verse 4: "*One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple.*" (Psalm 27:4)

When I was a boy, I heard a little poem. I'm not sure I can quote it correctly, but,

*To every man there openeth
A way, and ways, and a way.
And the high soul climbs the high way,
And the low soul gropes the low:
And in between, on the misty flats,
The rest drift to and fro.
But to every man there openeth
A high way and a low,
And every man decideth
The way his soul shall go.*

—JOHN OXENHAM

Concentration. Friend, "*save [yourself] from this untoward generation.*" (Acts 2:40)

IV. The Determination of the Purpose-Centered Life

Now, here's the next thing: Not only must there be that motivation; that evaluation; that concentration; but there must be a determination. Friend, you've never failed until you quit trying. Philippians chapter 3 and verse 12—Paul says, "*Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect.*"—but he didn't see himself as a failure—"but"—thank God for the *but*—"I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:12) The words *follow after* are a Greek word that means "to relentlessly pursue." The reason that many of us don't find the purpose in life is that we do not relentlessly pursue it; there is no real determination.

Now you can come and wallow through this purpose-centered life, these forty days of purpose, with sort of a take-it-or-leave-it attitude. But you're not going to get what you need to get out of this. Now when Paul wrote this, he wrote Philippians most likely from a prison. I want you to see that battered old apostle in prison. In prison now he's running. He's running a race. In prison, he's running a race. He said, "I'm pressing toward the mark." Some of you may be on a sickbed, some listening to me by television. Some of God's greatest athletes are on sickbeds running the race. And he is running with determination.

Paul had been whipped: 195 lashes on his back. Paul had been shipwrecked three times. Paul had been stoned and left for dead. Paul had been from prison to prison. Paul had been criticized, abused, misused, and neglected. But he did not stop. He wasn't like some deacons who used to deacon who don't deacon anymore. He wasn't like some teachers who used to teach who don't teach anymore. He wasn't like some tithers who used to tithe who don't tithe anymore. He wasn't like some faithful Sunday School attenders who used to attend, but they don't attend anymore. For whatever reason, they just kind of filter away. God have mercy on you!

You can tell the size of a man by what it takes to stop him. You put a prison in the path of the Apostle Paul, he'd go in one door and out the other. Under one arm he'd have the prison gates; under the other he'd have a convert. He's going on for the Lord Jesus Christ. Determination.

V. The Liberation of a Purpose-Centered Life

Now, here's the next thing: There must be the liberation of a purpose-centered life—the liberation of a purpose-centered life. Look again, if you will, in verses 13 and 14:

“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended:”—that’s his evaluation—“but this one thing I do,”—that’s his concentration; now, watch this—“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)

Now Paul refused to be bound by the past. A purpose liberated him from the past. Stop making excuses about your past. This is a new day. “This is the day the Lord has made.” (Psalm 118:24) Take your life, wherever it is—young or old, rich or poor, sick or well, whatever it is; forget those things which are behind. You can't run a race by looking over your shoulder.

In a Sunday School class they were talking about Lot's wife, who looked back at Sodom and turned into a pillar of salt. A little boy said, “Yeah, I know how that is.” He said, “My mama was going to the grocery store in her car. She looked back and turned into a telephone pole.”

A. Liberation from Past Guilt

A goal liberates you from the past. We all have things in our past. Some have past guilt. You may have done some terrible things. You may have been complicit in a murder, a rape, sodomy, abortion, narcotics—past guilt. I met a man this morning. He said, “I wrote you from prison. You wrote me back.” He said, “Now Jesus has saved me. I want you to meet my family and my children.” I met him here today. He's been unshackled from the past. God has given him a new future. *“Forgetting those things which are behind”* (Philippians 3:13)—past guilt.

B. Liberation from Past Glory

Past glory: you've done some great things. I'm so grateful. So had Paul, the greatest missionary statesman that ever lived. But that's in the past.

C. Liberation from Past Grief

Past grief. You've had some heartaches, some tears. We all have. Stop sitting around licking your wounds, feeling sorry for yourself. It does no good to you or anybody else. Forget it—forget it!

D. Liberation from Past Grudges

Past grudges. Has somebody done you wrong? Are you still eaten up with bitterness? Get rid of it. Forsake it. Tell God about it. Bury it in the grave of God's forgetfulness. Forgive them. If they won't accept it, put forgiveness in the bank for when they will accept it. But you upload it so they can download it when they need it. But don't carry it around. A purpose will liberate you from the past.

There's the liberation of a purpose-centered life. Here's the old Apostle Paul in prison. He's still reaching forth. He's still growing. He's still looking ahead. His eyes are on the goal. He is going on for the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the Alps there is a grave, and it is at the foot of the Alps. It's the grave of a man who endeavored to climb. He fell. He died. They put on his grave marker the date of his birth, the date of his death, and then they said, "Died climbing." Do you like that? "Died climbing."

I don't know when you're going to die. I don't know when I'm going to die. I thank God that He's given me these years of health and joy to preach the gospel. But when I die, I want to be climbing, don't you? That's what the old Apostle Paul did in prison, that emaciated, scarred body that had been pickled in the Mediterranean. But don't see him as an old humpback, bald, hollow-chested man sitting there writing this epistle. See him as an athlete. He's running. He's striving. He's going. His eye is on the goal. Isn't that a great way to go? Don't you want to cross the finish line with a torch burning, to say, "Forgetting those things which are behind, this one thing I do"?

Conclusion

The motivation for it all is Jesus. Friend, He's the only One worth serving. I love Jesus. *If I had a thousand lives, I'd give them all to Him.* I thought again of the song, Brother Jim, "Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all." A purpose-driven life.

The Quest for the Best

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: November 25, 1984

Main Scripture Text: Philippians 3:10–14

“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.”

PHILIPPIANS 3:13

Outline

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Introduction

Take your Bibles tonight and open them, would you, please, to the book of Philippians chapter 3. We’re going to begin reading in verse 10 for our devotional message before we take together the Lord’s Supper—Philippians chapter 3:10. Paul says, *“That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. 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 3:10–14)

I want to speak to you tonight on this subject: “The Quest for the Best”—“The Quest for the Best.” Now many of us are simply drawing our breaths and drawing our salaries, fighting to live and wasting our lives. And we’re going to find out that when we finish life

and we come to the end, it's all been a waste of time. It's going to amount to very little in the pure white light of eternity.

I believe that the Apostle Paul was one of the two greatest humans who ever lived. I believe the other one was Moses. I'm talking about purely humans, not putting them in a category with our Lord, who was both human and divine at the same time. And the Apostle Paul was a magnificent man, and this passage of Scripture gives us a penetrating insight into what made the Apostle Paul the man that he was. And I could say without fear of contradiction, equivocation, or repudiation that the Apostle Paul was a success.

Now success is nothing more, nothing less, than just simply laying hold on that for which God has laid hold on us. That is, it is just simply fulfilling God's will and God's plan for our lives. *Success is the progressive realization of the will of God for our lives.* And the Apostle Paul laid hold on that for which God laid hold on him. He apprehended that for which God had apprehended him, according to our text, according to our passage of Scripture. (Philippians 3:12) And there are five things here that I want you to notice that characterize what Paul did. And I want to be very honest with you tonight, brothers and sisters in Jesus, that as I'm speaking to you, I am speaking to Adrian Rogers. And as I looked at this scripture, it challenged my heart and humbled my heart, and I want to continue to prayerfully look at what I'm going to share with you tonight, because I know that in my life there is much land to be conquered.

Now, what are we going to do if we would have a quest for the best—not have a wasted life, but to live a life that is a life that would give glory to the Lord Jesus, a life of fulfillment, a life of the progressive realization of the will of God for our lives?

I. You Must Fix Your Focus

Number one: We must fix our focus. That is, we must bring things into a burning focus. What do we want? Now here's what the Apostle Paul wanted. Look, if you will, in verse 10. Here is the burning ambition of his life: *"That I may know him."* It all could be reduced just to that one sentence: "That I may know the Lord Jesus Christ." (Philippians 3:10)

Now, how did the Apostle Paul want to know Christ?

A. Paul Wanted to Know Christ Personally

He wanted to know Him personally. He doesn't say, "That I may know about Him," but *"that I may know him."* (Philippians 3:10) "Well," you say, "my goodness, Paul! Didn't you already know Him? Here you're writing part of the Bible: don't you already know Him?" Oh, yes, he knew Him; but what Paul meant was "I want to know more and more and more about Him."

Columbus discovered America, and yet there are still thousands of unnamed lakes in Canada. Did Columbus discover America? Yes, but there's so much more that

Columbus never discovered. And Paul knew Christ, but he wanted to know Christ personally.

Listen. Do you know it's going to be a sad thing at the Rapture? Many of us who are saved are going to rise in the Rapture to meet a Christ that we do not know. Oh, we'll recognize Him. Oh, we will belong to Him. But I wonder if we really will know the Lord Jesus Christ—I mean, know Him friend to friend. It's possible to know about someone without knowing that someone. When we get to heaven, we should be meeting face to face a friend that we've already known heart to heart. Paul's ambition was to know Him personally.

B. **Paul Wanted to Know Christ Powerfully**

Paul's ambition was to know Him powerfully. Look, if you will again, in verse 10: *"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection."* (Philippians 3:10) Now, what is Paul talking about? Paul is saying, "I want to experience power in my life over self, power in my life over circumstances, power in my life over sin, power in my life over Satan. I want the same power to work in me that raised the Lord Jesus from the dead. I want that power to raise me from the deadliness of my old life and make every day an Easter. I want resurrection power and new life in me. The Spirit of the Lord Jesus that raised up Him from the dead, I want that same Holy Spirit to quicken my mortal body." Paul's ambition was to know Christ personally: *"That I may know him."* His ambition was to know Him powerfully: *"That I may know...the power of his resurrection."*

C. **Paul Wanted to Know Christ Passionately**

Paul's ambition was to know the Lord Jesus passionately. Look again, if you will, in this verse: *"...and the fellowship of his sufferings."* (Philippians 3:10) Now, what is Paul talking about here? He's not talking about His Calvary sufferings. Thank God, those are over. Jesus, when He hung on the cross, bowed His head in agony and blood and said, *"It is finished"* (John 19:30)—"It is done; it is complete." Hallelujah! He will never suffer again for our sins. We can't put Him back on that cross. We wouldn't, if we could. We couldn't, if we would. Hallelujah! That's finished. But the Lord Jesus is still suffering. Jesus has a broken heart. Jesus weeps over the lost as He looks down upon a city that is bruised and bleeding.

And, dear friend, I want the things that break the heart of Jesus to break my heart. And I can honestly and literally say that this past week I have wept over this city, literally cried and called out to God for this city, that God would do something here in Memphis, Tennessee, that would change this city; that I might know the Lord passionately; that I might have the same fellowship of His sufferings; that what breaks the heart of my Savior would break my heart; that I might enter into those sufferings. You remember when the Apostle Paul was called by Ananias or spoken to by Ananias, the Lord said to

Ananias, *“I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake.”* (Acts 9:16) And, friend, if you think that you can be a Christian—a true Christian—and know Jesus without suffering, you’ve got another thought coming.

D. Paul Wanted to Know Christ Preeminently

Paul wanted to know Him personally. Paul wanted to know Him powerfully. Paul wanted to know Him passionately. And Paul wanted to know Him preeminently. Look again. He says, *“[I want to be] made conformable unto his death.”* (Philippians 3:10) Now Paul was not wishing for martyrdom here; that’s not what he meant. Paul was saying, “I want to come to this place where I reckon myself to be dead unto sin and alive unto God. I want the death of Jesus Christ on the cross to that old world to be true in my life. I want to say, *‘I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.’*” (Galatians 2:20)

Now I wonder, is that your ambition tonight? Think about it—think about it! That was the ambition of the Apostle Paul: not for money, not for fame, not for ease, not for luxury, not for all of the things that so many of us are grasping for. Paul said, “I want to know Him. More about Jesus would I know.” That was his ambition.

II. You Must Take an Honest Inventory

Now if you would have a quest for the best, the very first thing you must do is to fix your focus—to bring things into a burning focus. Now, the second thing you need to do is to take an honest inventory. Look, if you will, in verse 12: *“Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect:”—*the word here means “mature”—*“but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.”* (Philippians 3:12)

A growing Christian is never satisfied with his spiritual attainment. I am satisfied with my Savior; I am satisfied with my salvation; but I am not satisfied with Adrian Rogers. And I weep over my sins, and I pray over my sins and my failures. And I am so disappointed. I would think after all of these years that I would be a better Christian, a better prayer warrior, that I would know about the Bible. But I know that there’s so far that I must go, there’s so much that I can learn. And yet in a way, that encourages me, because I know that I’m not satisfied; and that to me is a good sign—not satisfied. Paul took inventory, and Paul—the great Apostle Paul—said, “There’s more, so much more, that I need to learn; so much more than I need to attain.”

A boy of fourteen quit school. Somebody asked him, “Why quit school?” He said, “Because they can’t teach me anything anymore over there.” He was probably right—probably right. He was a smart aleck. He knew all the answers. And there are some Christians today who think that there’s no more room for them to grow: they have arrived.

Now before the Apostle Paul got saved, he thought he had arrived. Paul, he

considered himself almost faultless. He was a young, proud Pharisee. He was petted and praised and flattered for his zeal and for his cleverness. But then he met the Lord Jesus Christ, and no longer is he satisfied. He's taking inventory. He's seeing the faults and the failures.

Friend, do you know what sin is? Do you know what sin is? Sin is the difference between you and the glory of God. *"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."* (Romans 3:23) That distance between your life and the glory of God is sin. That's all sin is. *"All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."* And if my life is not bringing glory to God, no matter how I seem to be to other people, there's sin in my heart and in my life.

III. You Must Narrow Your Interests

And so here's the Apostle Paul. First of all, he fixes his focus. He says, "I want to know Him." (Philippians 3:10) And then, he takes inventory, and he says, "O God, I'm not what I ought to be. I'm not what I could be. O God, I'm not satisfied. God, I haven't arrived. God, there's so much more in my life." (Philippians 3:12) And I would to God that every one of us tonight would take inventory before the Lord. Now, the third thing that you must do: You must narrow your interests. Look, if you will, in verse 13. Paul says, *"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do."* (Philippians 3:13) That's perhaps the most powerful phrase in all of this, other than *"that I may know him"*: *"this one thing I do."* (Philippians 3:13)

Now Paul is using the illustration of a race. He's talking about pressing for the goal, pressing for the prize. That's the illustration he's using in this scripture. And when a man is running a race, that's the one thing he's doing. A man running a race has no side issues. You will not be a success in any realm, whether it is spiritual, business, athletics, academics, or anything else, until you bring your desires into a burning focus and until you can say, *"This one thing I do."* Jesus Christ said, *"No man can serve two masters."* (Matthew 6:24) The Apostle James said that *"a double minded man is unstable in all his ways."* (James 1:8) The Bible says, "When your eye is single, then is your body full of light." (Luke 11:34)

A man said at a church conference the other day one of the most poignant things I think that I've heard a man say in a long time. He said that what the main job of the church is, is to keep the main thing the main thing—the main job of the church is to keep the main thing the main thing—and that is knowing and loving the Lord Jesus and sharing Him. To be successful, you've got to narrow your interests. You've got to bring things into a burning focus.

When you were a little boy or a little girl, did you ever have a magnifying glass, and would take it in the sun and get it focused just so where it would start a piece of paper on fire and bring the rays of the sun into a burning focus? That's the way we're going to

have to bring our lives: into that burning focus. We've heard people say, "Don't put all of your eggs in one basket." The Apostle Paul would say, "Put all your eggs in one basket, and watch that basket."

Now, listen: Just "*this one thing I do.*" Concentration is the spirit of power and the secret of power. I see preachers today, they have all kinds of side issues, they're doing all kinds of other things, and it's very little surprise to me that they have no power in their lives. The Apostle Paul had no side issues. The Apostle Paul said, "*This one thing I do.*"

You can take a river like the Mississippi and have it have no banks, and if it has no banks, it will no longer be a river; it will become a swamp. But you put a bank on this side and a bank on that side, and it becomes a mighty river. Now if you want power in your life, it's got to be channeled; it's got to be narrowed.

Dr. Samuel M. Zwemer said this: "The smaller the circumference of my thinking, the shorter the diameter of my mistakes." You think about that: "The smaller the circumference of my thinking, the shorter the diameter of my mistakes." What he was saying is this: "I need to bring my life into a burning focus." You see, everything else—when you see what Jesus wants you to do; when you say, "This one thing I do"; when you say, "My goal, my aim, is to know Him—to know Him—to be what He would have me to be," then you bring everything to that one thing.

You say, "Wait a minute: I'm a doctor. Wait a minute: I'm a lawyer. Wait a minute: I'm a mother. Wait a minute: I am a secretary." It makes no difference. You can't have two masters; you must have one. You cannot have two goals; you must have one. You must say—and the problem with many of us is we've never said it—you must say, "This one thing I do." That's what Paul said: "*this one thing...*" You say, "But wait a minute: I've got to have a job. I've got to rest. I've got to have recreation. I've got to have friends." That's true. You need a job. You need rest. You need recreation. You need friends. You need a proper diet. All of these things are true. They're all good. But, friend, you need to take all of these things and make them means to an end of knowing Him.

See, God is not against you having recreation. You need recreation. Recreation is a gift of God—real recreation. Now I'm not talking about what some people call recreation.

Be honest: Have you ever stayed up one night and watched one of those late movies? I mean, you were watching the news, and the news went off, and you flipped through the channel, and one of those things came on—generally it's an old thing like "*The Eggplant That Ate Chicago*" or something like that—and you sit there, and you intend to go to bed after a while, and you just keep on watching it and watching it: "Surely, it's going to be over after a while," or, "Let's see what happens here." And first thing you know, it's after midnight. And the thing finally ends, and you say, "Boy, what a fool I am to sit here!" Now, be honest. Don't look so holy. Have you ever done that? And

you'll sit there and look at that thing, and there's nothing edifying in it. It didn't build you up. It didn't strengthen you. It didn't help you in any way whatever. It just sort of left you drained. You missed a couple of hours of sleep that you should have had. You get up the next morning still feeling a little groggy. You've just wasted your strength and everything, and you're just drained.

See, that's not recreation. That drains you. That debilitates you. That diverts you. Real recreation releases you. Real recreation refreshes you. Real recreation reinvigorates you. Real recreation renews you. And God knows that you need that. God is not against recreation. God is not against family. God is not against you having a job. God is not against you having a home or anything else, so long as all of those things speed you to your goal of knowing Him.

You see, you can use all of these things as a means of knowing Him. They can be tools. That's what the Apostle Paul meant when he said in 1 Corinthians 6:12, "*All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient...for me.*" (1 Corinthians 6:12) Now, what does that word *expedient* mean? Well, it reminds us of another word: *expedition*. What is an expedition? It is a journey. What is a journey? It is going somewhere. Now, what does the Apostle Paul mean when he says, "*All things are lawful unto me*"? (1 Corinthians 6:12) My job, my friends, my family, my car, my clothes, my diet, my recreation—all of these things are lawful, but not everything is expedient.

What is something that is expedient? Something that is expedient is something that brings you to your goal. Now if it doesn't bring you to your goal, it's not expedient. Rather than being wheels, it's an anchor. Everything ought to bring you to your desired goal. And you take your friends, your family, your recreation, your fellowship—everything that helps you to know Jesus better, it's good for you. Anything that keeps you from knowing Jesus, it needs to go out of your life. I don't care what it is: "*All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient.*" (1 Corinthians 6:12)

And what I'm trying to say is, mister, that your job cannot be number one. Your family cannot be number one. Your health cannot be number one. Your so-called business cannot be number one. You must say, "This one thing I do." "*No man can serve two masters.*" (Matthew 6:24) "*A double minded man is unstable in all [of] his ways.*" (James 1:8) Now what you need to do is to fix your focus. Paul said, "*That I may know him*" (Philippians 3:10)—"I want to know Him personally. I want to know Him powerfully. I want to know Him passionately. I want to know Him preeminently. I want to know Him." And then Paul looked at his life and he took an inventory, and he said, "I haven't come to the place where I need to be. I'm not what I ought to be. And, O God, I want to be honest enough. God, I want to admit that I'm not what I ought to be. And now, dear God, this one thing I do. With every ounce, every inch, every nerve, every fiber, as much as in me is, O God, I want to know Him."

And I want to ask myself that question tonight. And I tell you, I'm preaching to me—I am! “Adrian, have you come to that place? Have you brought these things into a burning focus?” Now, dear friend, the Bible says in Psalms 27:4, “*One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after.*” (Psalms 27:4) Boy, what a text! “*One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after.*”

IV. You Must Discipline Your Life

Now, the next thing, the fourth thing: You need to discipline your life. I need to discipline my life. Look, if you will, in verse 13 and 14: “*Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind,*”—now, watch this—“*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)

Look at that word “*follow after.*” Look at that word “*I press.*” Now both of these words are the same words in the Greek. In verse 12, “*follow after*”; verse 14, “*press*”—both of them mean “to pursue with relentlessness.” That is, there's to be a discipline. If you've ever watched an athlete run a race—and most of us did in the '84 Olympics—we saw those men with their muscles strained, their eyes on the goal, every sinew, every nerve, in complete discipline. What I'm trying to say is this: that you cannot reach the goal with a take-it-or-leave-it attitude. So many of us have the idea that somehow, some time, we're supposed to be able to quit; that some time, somehow, we're not to maintain that discipline anymore. And I'm praying about discipline in my own life. And if you want to pray for me, pray, “God, give the pastor more discipline in his life.” Now I don't want that self-will; I want that discipline which is the fruit of the Holy Spirit in my life. But there must be this discipline, if we're going to reach the goal. You never saw an athlete without discipline in his life. And that's what I need. That's what you need. We need, dear friend, this discipline.

Here's the battered old Apostle Paul. He's writing the book of Philippians from a prison, and he's there in prison. He's an old man there. And, friend, it just makes my heart jump with joy to know that the old Apostle Paul is still pressing toward the goal. The old Apostle Paul is still straining. He's still on the track for the Lord Jesus Christ. He knows the meaning of determination. If we could have seen that scarred body there in that prison emaciated by days of fasting! The Apostle Paul fought with lions. The Apostle Paul spent days fasting. He spent thirty-six hours in the Mediterranean shipwrecked. He endured three shipwrecks. He had a long prison record. He had 195 stripes laid on his back for the Lord Jesus Christ. And if we had seen the old apostle there in the prison, we'd have probably said, “Now, Paul, take it easy now. It's time for you to quit. It's time for you to slow down. Paul, you've reached retirement. You don't have much of a place to retire; but, Paul, no longer.” Paul said, “Oh, no.” Paul said, “*I follow after.*” (Philippians 3:12) Paul said, “I'm pressing for the prize.” (Philippians 3:14) I

like that.

You know, some of the best athletes are on sickbeds. Some of you look around and you say, “Well, pastor, if I was as young as Ken Whitten, I’d just go ahead. If I were as good-looking as Jim Whitmire, I’d just go ahead. If I was as tall and handsome as what’s his name over there, old Babrick, boy, then I’d do it. But you don’t know me, pastor. My best days are behind me now. I’m just sort of sick and feeble and shut in, and I’m on a sickbed.” Listen, friend. There’s no time ever to let up. You’ve got to press on toward the goal. The Apostle Paul knows that the last part of the race is many times the most important. And he can see the wire right out there and he says, “I’m not going to stop; I’m following after; I’m pressing toward the goal, and I’m not going to quit.”

I pray God I’ll never retire. I may not be the pastor of this church—but I don’t want to be retired; I want to be re-fired. But I want to just keep on preaching the Lord Jesus. I see these preachers—one day they say, “Oh, I turned a certain age. Now I’m going to get me a mountain in the cabins, and I’m going to sit around and grow squash and corn.” There’s nothing wrong with that; but, dear friend, if souls are lost, I want to keep on winning souls with every breath. If Jesus is who He is, I want to be like the Apostle Paul at the very end of my life, saying, “The wire is out there. The tape is out there. And I’m pressing, I’m striving, toward the goal to know the Lord Jesus Christ.” And that takes discipline, dear friend; it takes discipline.

We could say, “Paul, you’ve been running long enough. Paul, it’s time for you to rest a little while.” I’m talking to some former Sunday School teachers. Some of you sitting in this building tonight, you could teach Sunday school. You used to teach Sunday school. You’ve got a lot of the Bible locked up in your head. But you say, “Well, let some of these younger folks do it now. I’ve done my time.” Some of you used to have a heart warm for souls; but you don’t anymore. You used to be soul winners. You used to give testimonies like Charlie Parker did tonight; but you don’t do that anymore. Some of you used to be preachers of the gospel. Some of you used to be tithers. But somehow you’ve become a quitter, a slacker, a shirker. God, give us that discipline that is the fruit of the Spirit. You must, dear friend, bring discipline into your life.

V. You Must Keep Your Eye on the Goal

Now, the fifth and the final thing: You’ve got to keep your eye on the goal. Look again at what Paul said. Paul says in verse 13, *“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize.”* (Philippians 3:13) Paul says, “I’m going to go for the gold. I’m pressing toward the mark. I want the prize.”

You put your eye on the goal and you keep it there, *“forgetting those things which are behind.”* No man can run a race looking over his shoulder. It doesn’t matter what

you've done. That's in the past. Forget it. It's tonight that matters. It's tomorrow morning that matters. And you need to keep your eye right on the goal. You can't run a race looking over your shoulder. You look over your shoulder, you're going to get in trouble.

In a Sunday School class they were talking about Lot's wife, who looked back and turned into a pillar of salt. A little boy said, "I know what you mean. My mama looked back and turned into a telephone pole." You cannot drive a car looking over your shoulder. You can't run a race looking over your shoulder.

The Apostle Paul says, "[I'm] forgetting those things which are behind." The Apostle Paul had past guilt. His life was stained with transgressions. He was there at the stoning of Stephen. But he refused to be haunted by the ghost of guilt that was under the blood. He had past glory. He was the greatest apostle and church-builder and missionary. But he forgot it. He had past grief. He had suffered, but he was not drinking from the intoxicating cup of self-pity. He refused to dwell with past grudges. He'd been mistreated by false brethren. But he left that. He's now in prison. But rather than resenting it, he's rejoicing, and he's saying, "*Rejoice in the LORD always: and again I say, Rejoice.*" (Philippians 4:4) And he's reaching forth. He's still growing. He's still looking ahead.

Do you know, when R. G. Lee was sick—Robert G. Lee, former pastor of this church—he was in Oklahoma. He had a heart attack there. They put him in the hospital. I flew over to see him. Herschel Hobbs, one of the great Bible scholars of the Southern Baptist Convention, came in to see Dr. Lee. They had him all wired up and all of this stuff that they put on a man that's had a heart attack. Herschel Hobbs came in there. Dr. Lee looked at him and he said, "Herschel, will you do something for me?" He said, "Anything I can do, Dr. Lee." You know, he thought it was one of these deathbed wishes. He said, "There's a passage of Scripture I'm interested in." He said, "Would you do an exegesis on it"—and that means a detailed study on it—"and bring back your answer to me in several days?" That's the way Dr. Lee was on his supposed deathbed: wanting to know more, wanting to learn more about the Lord Jesus Christ. When many of us would have been thinking about how many IV's we're getting, or when they're going to give us the next examination, he said, "I want to know more about God's Word."

That's the way the old Apostle Paul was right here at the very end: pressing toward the mark. He refused to let up. He's reaching forth. He's going for the gold.

Somewhere I've read of a tombstone in Switzerland and it's the tombstone of a mountain climber. And this young man had fallen off one of the precipices and his body had been crushed on the rocks. They put on his tombstone: "He died climbing!" That's the way I want to go. Every day I want to be growing in the Lord.

Conclusion

Now, folks, listen. Do you want to go for the gold? Do you want to quest for the best? Here's what you need to do. Fix your focus. Say, "That I may know Him." Then, take inventory and see where you are right now. Then, bring all of your life into a burning focus. Say, "This one thing I do." Bring that discipline into your life. Let God the Holy Spirit discipline you. And keep your eye on that one goal.

Worthy Ambitions

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: April 19, 1987

Main Scripture Text: Philippians 3:10–14

“That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.”

PHILIPPIANS 3:10

Outline

Introduction

- A. Paul Wanted to Know the Lord Personally
- B. Paul Wanted to Know the Lord Powerfully
- C. Paul Wanted to Know the Lord Passionately
- I. Face Your Faults
- II. Forget Your Failures
- III. Focus Your Faith
 - A. Desire
 - B. Discipline
 - C. Direction

Conclusion

Introduction

Would you open your Bibles tonight to the third chapter of Philippians. I want to talk to you tonight about “Worthy Ambitions”—“Worthy Ambitions.” Now all of us are ambitious, I suppose. But our ambitions lie in different directions. I want to ask you a very sobering thought tonight. It’s a simple thought, and I want you to think about it, all right? If you get to where you’re going, where will you be? Think about it. You’re trying to get somewhere. If you get there, where will you be? Let me put it another way. If you accomplish your goals, what will you have? Think about it. Evidently, you have something that motivates you. You have something that you’re working towards.

There came a time in the Apostle Paul’s life when he realized that his former goals were unworthy, and he traded them all in for one magnificent obsession. I want you to see what the Apostle Paul said when he distilled it. In Philippians chapter 3 and verse 10, he said, *“That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either where already perfect:”*—that is, “mature”—*“but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for*

which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.” That literally means, “that if I may lay hold of that for which God laid hold of me”; that is, “that I might fulfill the will of God for my life.” And then he says in verse 13, “*Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended:*”—that is, “to have achieved”—“*but this one thing I do,*”—notice, “*this one thing*”—“*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 3:10–14)

You have a worthy ambition. Now the Apostle Paul had this ambition, and it can be put in one simple three-letter word: *Him*—Jesus. “*That I may know him.*”

A. Paul Wanted to Know the Lord Personally

Now Paul wanted to know Him personally. Paul doesn’t say, “That I might know *about* Him,” but, “*That I may know him*” intimately. (Philippians 3:10) How sad it will be at the Rapture for you to meet a Christ that you may recognize but do not know personally! *When the Rapture comes, I want to meet someone face to face that I know heart to heart.* Paul wanted to know Jesus personally.

You know, there is a great danger—and it’s the danger of orthodoxy without the Holy Spirit; that is, to be taught by the Bible and yet not taught by the Spirit. You can know all of the facts about Jesus without knowing Jesus. The Apostle Paul said, “*That I may know him.*” “Well,” I say, “Paul, didn’t you know Him? Weren’t you saved when you wrote this?” Oh, Paul knew Him; but what Paul meant was, “I want to know more and more and more about Jesus.”

Columbus discovered America; yet there are still more than ten thousand unnamed lakes in Canada. Did Columbus discover America? Well, he touched on the shores of America. You perhaps touched on the shores of Jesus; but don’t you want to get deeper and deeper and deeper into the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ?

B. Paul Wanted to Know the Lord Powerfully

Not only did the Apostle Paul want to know the Lord Jesus personally, but he wanted to know the Lord Jesus powerfully. Look, if you will again, in this passage of Scripture: “*That I may know him,*”—he says; and then he says—“*and the power of his resurrection.*” (Philippians 3:10) The Apostle Paul said, “I want to live with the power in my life that raised Jesus from the dead. I want power over sin. I want power over Satan. I want power over circumstances. I want power over self itself. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead,” the Apostle Paul said, “I want to be rescuing me from the deadliness of the old life. I want every day in my life to be an Easter. I want to know the power of His resurrection.”

C. Paul Wanted to Know the Lord Passionately

But not only did Paul want to know Him personally, and powerfully; he wanted to know Him passionately. I want you to look again at this passage of Scripture where he says, “And I want to know the fellowship of His sufferings, the *koinonia*; I want to share the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Philippians 3:10)

Have you ever prayed a prayer like that? Have you ever dared pray a prayer like that? Or does it mean anything to you that Jesus still suffers? You say, “How can Jesus suffer?” Well, do you remember when we were preaching through Acts? And we are going to commence again, God willing, next Sunday. Jesus said to Saul, who later became the Apostle Paul, “Saul, why are you persecuting me?” (Acts 9:4) Now Jesus was already in heaven, but He is still being persecuted. You see, He’s the head, and we’re the Body. Can the body suffer without the head feeling it and knowing it?

Oh, my dear friend, when the body suffers, the head suffers. And Jesus is still suffering today. And I would to God that I could know Him so intimately that the things that break His heart would still break my heart; and that I could weep for Jesus and with Jesus; and that my heart would be a broken, compassionate, suffering heart for a lost humanity and for a bruised and battered world, and a church. We need to know the Lord Jesus Christ. And the Apostle Paul said, “This is my desire; this is my goal; this is my ambition: I want to know Him personally; I want to know Him powerfully; I want to know Him passionately. I want to know the power of His resurrection. I want to know the fellowship of His sufferings.”

Is that your desire? If it is—and I hope it will be—if it is, let me show you how to achieve that desire tonight. Let me show you what the Apostle Paul did. And I want to mention three things that I would to God that every one of us would do.

I. Face Your Faults

Number one: If you would know Him, face your faults—face your faults. Notice here in verse 12, the Apostle Paul takes inventory. He says, “*Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended.*” (Philippians 3:12–13)

Now, listen to me. Satisfaction is the deadly enemy of spirituality. It leads to complacency. If you’re satisfied with your present attainment, it is merely because your goal is too low. Many in this church this evening feel that you have arrived. And because you feel that you have arrived, you have ceased growing. There is not in you a burning, longing, yearning ambition to be more for Jesus.

I tell you with all of my heart and soul, God being my witness, I have a burning desire in my heart to be more than I am for Jesus. And as long as that’s there, I thank

God, because I know when it is there, I will be a growing Christian. But when it stops being there, I know at that moment I am going to stop growing for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Sometimes, a fourteen- or fifteen-year-old boy will drop out of school—and you know why, he'll say? "They can't teach me any more." And with that attitude, he's absolutely right.

Maybe there are some of you who feel that somehow you have arrived. No growing Christian is ever satisfied with his spiritual attainment. Before Paul came to know the Lord Jesus Christ, before he met Christ, he had considered himself to be almost faultless. He was a young, proud Pharisee. He was petted and praised and flattered for his zeal, for his cleverness, for his education. But when he saw the Lord Jesus Christ, then he saw himself, and he said, "Oh, that I may know Him! I'm not what I ought to be." And I know that I know that your pastor's not what he ought to be.

II. Forget Your Failures

Face your faults. Number two: If you are to have a worthy ambition, and fulfill that worthy ambition, not only should you face your faults, but you need to forget your failures. Now, notice in verse 13: "*Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark.*" (Philippians 3:13–14)

Now you cannot live life looking over your shoulder at your past mistakes and your regrets. It's one thing to recognize your faults, but it is another thing to be chained by your failures. Take your failures; bury them in the grave of God's forgetfulness; ask God to forgive you; ask God to unchain you; and ask God to let you go. Failure need not be final. The Apostle Paul had failed, but he said, "I forget those things which are behind." That doesn't mean that he was satisfied, but it does mean that he refused to be haunted by the ghost of guilt. He put that past in the grave of God's forgetfulness. Failure need not be final.

I was reading about some people who failed greatly in the normal world, and then succeeded. Babe Ruth, the home run king, struck out more times than any other man in baseball. We think about the home runs that he made; but he had the record for strikeouts. Caruso, the great tenor, because he could not hit those high notes, his voice teacher advised him to quit. He said, "Caruso, you'll never make it; you're a failure." Yet he became the greatest tenor of all time. Thomas Edison had a teacher who called him a dunce, said he was stupid, and he could not learn. His mother took him, and his mother said, "My boy's not stupid. I'll teach him myself." He tried fourteen thousand times to perfect the incandescent light, and failed and failed and failed. But he refused to be fettered by failure. Albert Einstein and Wernher von Braun both flunked mathematics in school, but refused to be fettered by failure. Henry Ford was absolutely

penniless and broke at the age of forty; but he refused to be fettered by failure.

Now what I'm trying to say is, all of that is in the physical, material realm; how much more for those of us who have the grace of God to give us a new start? Listen, my friend. What you need to do is, on the one hand, face your faults—you're not perfect; but on the other hand, forget your failures, and put them in the grave of God's forgetfulness.

III. Focus Your Faith

And then, number three: Focus your faith. Look, if you will now, in verse 12: *“Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended:”*—but now, watch this—*“but this one thing I do.”*

(Philippians 3:12–13) If you have your own Bible and don't mind marking in it, would you just underscore that: *“This one thing I do.”* What the Apostle Paul did was to bring his life into a burning focus till he could say, “I do one thing.”

Now he's using an illustration, and he begins to work an illustration in. And the illustration is of a runner. This is over against the background of the Olympics. Now, listen to it: *“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”—*that is, “I'm running; I'm straining toward the goal”—*“for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”* (Philippians 3:13–14)

Now, how do you run a race—how do you run a race? The Apostle Paul mentions three things, and all of this is under the heading now “To Focus Your Faith”; that is, to bring it into focus, the one burning desire.

A. Desire

Number one: You must narrow all of your interests. Write down the word *desire*. Notice in verse 13: *“This one thing I do.”* (Philippians 3:13) A man running a race has no side issues. If he does, he'll lose the race. Jesus said, *“No man can serve two masters.”* (Matthew 6:24) That's you, me: no one can serve two masters. If you've got two masters, you're going to be a failure. James said, *“A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.”* (James 1:8) The Apostle Paul said, *“This one thing I do.”* (Philippians 3:13) Have you ever said that?

“Well,” you say, “I think Christianity is nice. I think serving the Lord is nice. I want to mix that in with everything else I do.” Then, you're going to fail—you're going to fail! You say, “Wait a minute. A man's got to live. He's got a job. He's got to eat. He needs recreation. He needs rest.” I know that—I know that. But, you see, listen. When you bring your life into focus, when you focus your faith, all of these other things that are legitimate become the servant to that overriding goal. I need rest. I need recreation. I

need friends. I need a proper diet. I need to work. I need to do all those things. And so do you. All of those things are legitimate; all of them are necessary. But, my dear friend, all of them must become the slave and the servant to my one goal—and that’s knowing Jesus Christ.

Now a lot of folks don’t understand that. Some people have two goals, three goals, and their life is not concentrated. You see, concentration is the secret of power.

You take a river between two banks, and it runs a mighty power dam. But let it get outside of those banks and travel all over the land, and no channel to control it: it becomes a stagnant swamp.

You must bring your life into a burning focus. Focus your faith till you can say, “*This one thing I do.*”

Here’s what the Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians chapter 6 and verse 12: “*All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.*” (1 Corinthians 6:12) Now, what did he mean by that: “All things are lawful for me, but not all things are expedient”? What does that word *expedient* mean? Well, when you think of *expedient*, there’s another word very closely akin to it: *expedition*. What is an expedition? It is a journey. When you think of a journey, you think of someone who is going somewhere. And when you’re going somewhere, you’re headed toward a goal.

Now what the Apostle Paul said is, “All things are lawful for me, but all things do not bring me to my desired goal; therefore I’m not going to let anything master me that does not bring me to my goal.” “*All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.*” I will not let my recreation; I will not let my business; I will not let my friends; I’ll not let my diet I’ll not let anything, keep me from that goal. My goal is that I may know Him personally; that I may know Him powerfully; that I may know Him passionately.”

I want to know Him. I face my faults, yes. I haven’t arrived yet. I forget my failures, yes. God will forgive me for those. And now I focus my faith. I have one desire; one aim; one goal: “*A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.*” (James 1:8) Your ambition—I don’t care what it is for—is not worthy unless you can say with the Apostle Paul, “My goal, my desire, my aim, my burning ambition, is to know Jesus Christ.”

B. Discipline

Does that seem like fanaticism to you? It is not. It is Bible Christianity: desire, and then discipline—discipline. Look, if you will: Falling right on the heels of that desire is that discipline. Notice in verse 14. Paul says, “*I press toward the mark.*” (Philippians 3:14) Notice again in verse 12: “*I follow after.*” (Philippians 3:12) These two words are the same word in the Greek language, and what they mean is “to relentlessly pursue; to follow after; to press.”

Have you ever seen a person running for the goal? Do you watch athletics? Do you watch people race on television? Then you understand that when an athlete is running, every nerve, every sinew, every corpuscle, every breath, every muscle—all of it—is brought into focus and into discipline. No athlete can have a take-it-or-leave-it attitude toward running. Now you say, “Well, I’m not the athletic type.” You have to take what Paul is saying as an illustration and apply it in the spiritual realm.

When Paul wrote this, he was in prison, and he was an old man, battered and beaten. If you could have seen that scarred body, emaciated by days of fasting, scarred because he fought with lions. He had endured three shipwrecks. He had had 195 lashes—count them: 195 lashes—on his back, beaten almost to death. He had been stoned and left for dead. His eyesight is gone. His creaking old bones are there in a prison. And yet he says, “I am an athlete. I’m running. I’m pressing toward the mark.”

We’d say, “Paul, why don’t you quit? You’ve run enough. Why don’t you just rest a while?” He says, “Not me. The goal is out there, and I’m not quitting. I’m not going to be like some former soul winners, and quit. I’m not going to be like some used-to-be tithers, and quit. I’m not going to be like some former Bible students, and quit. I’m not going to quit. I’m an athlete. And I’m in the race. And I’m pressing toward the mark. I have a desire. And because I have a desire, I have a discipline.” An Olympic runner said this: “The only way to win a race is to forget all previous victories that would give you false pride and all former failures that would give you false fears. Each race is a new beginning. Pressing on to the finish tape is all that is important.”

C. Direction

One last thing—I’m still talking about focusing your faith. Number one: There’s got to be that desire. Number two: There’s got to be that discipline. And, number three: There must be that direction: you keep your eye on the goal. Notice in verse 14: “*I press toward the mark.*” (Philippians 3:14) “I’m reaching forth. I’m still growing. I’m still looking. I’m still learning. Jesus is my goal. His life is the standard of my life. I have my eye on the goal.” You cannot run a race looking over your shoulder.

Somewhere years ago I read of a cemetery in the Alps, a graveyard at the foot of the Alps. In that graveyard is buried the body of an Englishman who met death while trying to scale one of the high alpine mountains. On his epitaph are these words: “He died climbing.” That’s the way the Apostle Paul died: climbing.

Conclusion

You see, look. Face your faults: you’re not what you ought to be. Forget your failures: God will forgive those. And then, focus your faith with, my dear friend, a desire, and a discipline, and a direction, where you say, “This one thing I do, no matter what the cost.”

In Dallas a young lady, a debutante, was raised in a very wealthy family. Her daddy

had made a ton of money. And he was so proud of his daughter; he had such plans for his daughter. This girl was an accomplished pianist. When she had her coming out party, it was all just like her daddy had planned until something happened in her life: someone invited this young socialite to a revival crusade. And an old-fashioned preacher got up there and preached Jesus Christ, and the heart of that young lady was touched, and she gave her heart to Jesus Christ. When she came home, she went in to see her daddy and put her arms around her daddy's neck and said, "Daddy, something wonderful has happened in my life. Daddy, I have been saved."

When she said that, her rich Dallas daddy flew into a rage. And he said, "Listen. I'm not going to have you ruin your life with religion. And, especially, I don't want you having that kind of religion. It's all right to go to church every now and then; but if you're going to come around with that kind of fantastical stuff, I want you to know that I love you too much to let you ruin your life with religion, and I want you to go to your room and think about it. And I'm going to give you until ten in the morning to make up your mind."

But this man had been used to having his way—thought he could boss his daughter around—and said, "At ten in the morning, if you do not renounce this faith and this foolishness, then therefore you will be disinherited and disowned. You will no longer be my daughter, and you will have no part in my inheritance." The young lady went to her room and all night long she wept and prayed and wrestled with the Lord, agonized and thumbed through her hymnal that she had played so many songs from. At 9:55 the next morning, she came down that beautiful staircase in that lovely home. Her parents were there, her mother and her daddy. This young lady walked across that plush carpet and she sat down at that beautiful, beautiful piano. And she began to sing without saying any other words. She played and sang this:

*Jesus, I my cross have taken
All to leave and follow Thee.
Destitute, despised, forsaken
Thou from hence my all shall be.
Perish every fond ambition
All I've sought, or hoped, or known.
Yet how rich is my condition!
God and Heaven are still mine own.*

—HENRY F. LYTE

When her daddy heard that, the tears began to flow, and he walked over and put his arms around the lovely neck of the girl he loved so much and said, "Sweetheart, if Jesus means that much to you, I need to know Him too."

Now, friend, I want to tell you something: When we say it and mean it—"Perish every fond ambition, all I've sought, or hoped, or known"—when we bring it into a burning

focus; when we say with the Apostle Paul, “*That I may know him,*” then maybe people will begin to believe in the faith we profess. And I want to ask you this question one more time that I asked at the beginning of this message: Do you have a worthy ambition? Remember the question? If you get to where you’re going, where will you be? If you gain that which you’re seeking after, what will you have? Is yours a worthy ambition?

The Secret of Success

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: December 28, 1980

Main Scripture Text: Philippians 3:12–14

“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.”

PHILIPPIANS 3:13

Outline

Introduction

I. A Proper Assessment

II. A Prayerful Ambition

III. A Positive Attitude

IV. A Pointed Aim

Conclusion

Introduction

I want to talk to you tonight about “The Secret of Success”—or if you like it a better way, “How to Have a Prosperous New Year.” Now we wish everybody a Merry Christmas and a Prosperous New Year, but many times it’s simply a wish: it might be better if we put some suggestions with that wish to tell people how to prosper and how to succeed in the coming year.

Now I don’t want to hold myself as an example of someone who’s learned how to do it, but I want to hold myself up tonight as a fellow learner from the Word of God with you and let the Word of God speak through me to me and to you at the same time. So, would you turn, please, to Philippians chapter 3, and let’s look beginning at verse 12—Philippians chapter 3, and we begin in verse 12. I mentioned this verse this morning, and I felt impressed to preach about it tonight. The Apostle Paul says, *“Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect:”—*that is, “mature”—*“but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended:”—*that is, “I haven’t arrived yet”—*“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 3:12–14)

Now, in my estimation, other than the Lord Jesus Christ, the two greatest men who’ve ever lived were Moses and Paul—Moses in the Old Testament, Paul in the New

Testament. We're going to be talking about Paul today. I believe that Paul was an eminently successful man. And we need to learn what success is, and I think we're going to see in a moment that success is not spelled *m-o-n-e-y*. You can have plenty in your purse and little in your person. Success is not even a life of ease or even having a good time, full of pleasure. The poet said, "But pleasures are like poppies spread, you seize the flower, its bloom is shed; or like the snow falls in the river, a moment white—then melts forever." Anything that dissipates and disappears that easily is not really success. So I want us to understand what real success is.

Now Paul was a very fine preacher and a very fine teacher. In doing so, he was a master at the use of illustration. And one of the means and sources of illustrations that the Apostle Paul used was that he applied the Christian life to sports and athletics. Some women get onto their husbands about watching too much football. But I want them to know that Paul was a very fine Christian and he loved sports. Evidently, he did, because so many times he talked about the athletic endeavors. Paul, for example, talked about being a Christian as one who wrestled, and he said, "*We wrestle not against flesh and blood*"; (Ephesians 6:12) being a Christian as one who boxed, and he said, "*So fight I, not as one that beateth the air.*" (1 Corinthians 9:26) In other words, I'm not shadowboxing. And then again, Paul spoke of Christians as those who "*strive for the masteries,*" (2 Timothy 2:5) and he was speaking of the Olympic games. And here Paul uses the figure of a track meet. He uses the figure of a race. And so that tells me right away that being a Christian is something extremely exciting.

You know, I think it was Dr. Vance Havner who said, "There's something wrong with a Christian who will go to a football game and yell like a Comanche Indian and then come to church and sit like a wooden Indian." I think that's true. I think that we have something far more to get excited about than carrying a bag full of zipped-up air down a cow pasture. We are in something that is thrilling and exciting indeed: it's this thing called the Christian life. And so the Apostle Paul is likening his life, his service for the Lord Jesus Christ, as though he is on the field, as though he is running. He is a spiritual athlete.

I. A Proper Assessment

Now there are four things necessary as I look at this text and try to examine it tonight that would help me and help you to become successful in the true, good, wonderful sense of the word as we look at this passage of Scripture tonight, the first of which is a proper assessment—a proper assessment. We must see where we are, if we're to see where we need to go. No map is any good to you whatsoever, no matter how clearly it is delineated, if on that map you cannot find where you are: you'll never find where you need to get. First of all, you have to find out where you are; you have to locate yourself.

Now Paul had located himself. Paul had made a proper assessment of himself, and he says in verse 12, *“Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect.”* (Philippians 3:12) Now Paul realized that he had a lot of growing to do. There was a deep dissatisfaction in Paul’s life. And Paul had already achieved much. There was a lot of spiritual attainment in his life; but Paul had a deep dissatisfaction. Now he was not dissatisfied with his salvation. He was not dissatisfied with his Savior. But he was dissatisfied with himself. Paul knew that he was not yet sinlessly perfect, nor indeed ever would be in this life.

I’ve never been quite taken up with the doctrine of sinless perfection, although I hear that there are some people who claim to be sinlessly perfect. I heard of a man in a testimonial meeting who was testifying about the fact that he had reached sinless perfection. And he seemed to be doing a pretty good job of convincing the other brethren until a little lady stood up in the back and said, “Remember, John, I’m here.” It was his wife. He promptly sat down. Now I believe Paul’s wife would have stood up if Paul had gone around talking about the fact that he had already attained or were already perfect. No, Paul knew—even though Paul had attained so much—he knew there was so much more to attain.

You see, we might look at Paul and say, “Paul, where did you fail? What did you do wrong?” Well, I imagine, really, if we were not his wife, and if we looked at him, we’d say that he was perfect. I mean, he would seem perfect outwardly. And yet, at the end of his ministry, Paul said, *“That I may know him.”* (Philippians 3:10) That used to stump me when Paul would say, *“That I may know him.”* I thought, “Well, goodness, Paul, if you don’t know Him, who does know Him?” But what Paul meant was there’s so much more to know.

We say that Columbus discovered America: he did, but there are ten thousand unnamed lakes in Canada. You see, he just touched on America: there was so much more. And you have discovered Jesus. Perhaps you know Jesus. Perhaps you know Him well. But, dear friend, unless you make a proper assessment of yourself, and unless you see that there’s so much more room for growth, I feel sorry for you.

Now Paul, before he met the Lord Jesus, I imagine that he felt he had attained; I imagine that he felt he had already arrived. This young, proud Pharisee; this man who was petted; this man who was praised; this man who was flattered for his zeal and for his cleverness, he had it all. But after he came to the Lord Jesus Christ, he said, “I count these things but dung.” (Philippians 3:8) Now if you’re satisfied with yourself tonight, I’ll guarantee you that Jesus is not satisfied with you, because you haven’t arrived yet. I haven’t arrived yet. I don’t care who you are. You may be the finest staff member, the finest deacon, the finest Sunday School teacher, the sweetest Christian girl in the congregation tonight; but, friend, there’s more, oh, so much more, for me, for you,

tonight. But we'll never have it unless we have first of all this proper assessment. We have to see that we have not arrived yet. We're not already perfect.

You know, many of us have, I guess, a danger, and that is that we compare ourselves with other people. And if we compare ourselves with other people, we may think that we're getting along pretty good. For example, we may look at some other Christian and say, "Well, I'm not as bad as he is." Well, I've been looking for the man who will quit comparing himself and stretch himself out in the gutter by some old hypocrite and measure himself by that hypocrite, and just measure himself by the Lord Jesus Christ. I'm sure that Paul had the character of the Lord Jesus Christ in his mind. If I compare myself with someone else, I'm in danger of two things: one, either satisfaction, as I think I'm so much better than the other man; or, dissatisfaction and discouragement, as I think I could never ever be like the other man. And so I don't need to compare myself with other people. I just need to see me as me, and then say, "Dear Lord, dear Lord, help me to be what I ought to be."

But I'm saying, dear friend, that you will never ever be much more unless you make a proper assessment of yourself. Thank God for what you are. You don't have to put yourself down too much. Paul just said, "I know what I am. I am what I am by the grace of God." And he would thank God for the things that he had attained and for the goals that he reached; but he knew that he had not completely apprehended or laid hold of that for which God had laid hold of him.

II. A Prayerful Ambition

Number two: Not only must you make a proper assessment; but then, dear friend, you must have a prayerful ambition. You must bring all of your goals into a burning focus. Notice what Paul says again in verse 12. He says, "*Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but*"—notice—"I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." And then, verse 13: "*Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do*"—"this one thing I do." (Philippians 3:12–13)

He had a prayerful ambition. He brought everything into a burning focus. You see, he's thinking of someone running a race; and a man who is running a race has no side issues. I mean, he doesn't stop for a while and join the cheerleaders. He doesn't go up in the stands and sell popcorn. He says, "This one thing I do." And I keep asking my own heart, "Adrian, have you brought all the desires of your heart into a burning focus?"

Now I know right away when I start talking about this, you're going to say, "Well, Brother Rogers, that's just impossible. No one can say, 'This one thing I do.' I mean, I've got to get an education"; or "I've got to feed my family"; "I've got to run my business"; "I've got to take care of these other things; I've got a number of things to do."

But the Apostle Paul said, *“This one thing I do.”* And I believe that every one of us needs to keep bringing our lives into focus until we come not only to that sincere dissatisfaction, but to that which moves on to that strong and single desire till we have this prayerful ambition to say, “There’s just one thing I do.”

Now you might think that’s being unreasonable; but it’s not. Do you know what Jesus said? *“No man can serve two masters.”* (Matthew 6:24) Do you know what James said? *“A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.”* (James 1:8) Do you know what Paul said? *“This one thing I do.”* One! That’s all! Does that seem unreasonable to you? To you doctors, does that seem unreasonable? To you lawyers, does that seem unreasonable? To you college professors, does that seem unreasonable? To you athletes? To you school kids? *“One thing I do.”* Have you ever come to that? Have you ever brought all of your ambitions down to just one ambition? You see, to be successful, you have to narrow your interest. When a man is running a race, he’s doing nothing else but that. Isn’t that right? He’ll never win if he tries to do two things at one time. He is running the race. That’s all—that’s all! Now Paul is saying, “Your Christian life is like a race.”

Now we tell people—you know, we give our homespun advice—“Don’t put all your eggs in one basket.” I believe Paul would say, “Put all your eggs in one basket, and watch that basket.” Just bring everything into a concentrated power. You see, concentration—concentration—is the secret of power.

A river is powerful when it is concentrated; it stays within the banks. But when the river gets out of the banks, rather than being a river, it then becomes a swamp. And it’s the confinement—it’s keeping the river within the channel—that gives that river power.

Dr. Samuel Zwemer said this as he was talking about bringing his ambitions down into a burning focus—and I think it’s wonderful: “The smaller the circumference of my thinking, the shorter the diameter of my mistakes.” Now what he is saying is just simple: that as I concentrate, as I bring things into a burning focus, I become more and more successful. And so you have to have a master goal. Everybody has to have a master goal to be successful. Now, of course, if your master goal is anything less than pleasing and serving the Lord Jesus, it’s an unworthy goal.

I heard Bob Sorrell talk about a man—I mentioned this a while back—who spent all of his life trying to reach the top of the ladder; and finally he did, only to find out that it was leaning against the wrong wall. You have to have the right goal. It has to be a master goal. And it has to be brought into a burning focus. You see, that’s the reason why Paul said in 1 Corinthians chapter 6, verse 12, *“All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient.”* (1 Corinthians 6:12)

Now, what did he mean by that? When you think of the word *expedition*, you think of travel. And when you think of travel, you think of a destination. You think of a

destination, and you think of a goal. Now, what did Paul mean when he said, “*All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient*”? He said, “There are many things I could do that are not against the law, but I’m not going to do them, not because they are illegal; I’m not going to do them, because they don’t help me to my goal. This one thing I do.”

Did you know that when you have a master goal, then everything else must contribute to that main goal? Your job has to contribute to that main goal. Your rest has to contribute to that main goal. Your recreation has to contribute to that main goal. Your friends have to contribute to that one goal. Your diet has to contribute to that one goal. Your exercise has to contribute to that one goal. Do you have one goal? No wonder! You’ll never be a success if you don’t. “*A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.*” (James 1:8) “*No man can serve two masters.*” (Matthew 6:24) “*This one thing I do.*” (Philippians 3:13) See, Paul had a proper assessment. He saw that there was still room. But then, he had a prayerful ambition. He brought everything into a burning focus.

Now I feel sorry for people who are just going to meander through this new year.

*To every man there openeth,
A Way, and Ways, and a Way.
And the High Soul climbs the High Way,
And the Low Soul gropes the Low,
And in between, on the misty flats,
To rest drift to and fro.*

—JOHN OXENHAM

Is that where you’re going to be? Or is there going to be for you a burning goal, something that has become the same thing to you that the finish line is to an athlete?

And, incidentally, let me say this. There’s been a verse that has always intrigued me every time I read it. It’s Acts chapter 2, verse 40, I believe, where Peter is preaching on the day of Pentecost. And you know what he said to them? He said, “*Save yourselves from this untoward generation.*” (Acts 2:40) I’ve always thought about that word *untoward*. What does it mean? It means get off this merry-go-round that’s not going anywhere. Get off this route that you’re on that’s not going anywhere. This untoward generation: it’s not going toward anything. “*Save yourselves from this untoward generation.*” Get a goal in your life, fix it, and keep to it.

III. A Positive Attitude

Now, the third thing I want you to notice that Paul had: Not only did he have a proper assessment—he saw that he had room for growth; and not only did he have a prayerful ambition, where he said, “*This one thing I do*”; (Philippians 3:13) but he also had, to go with it, a positive attitude—a positive attitude. Look, if you will, please, in verse 12. He

uses the phrase *“I follow after.”* *“Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended.”* (Philippians 3:12) And then, look in verse 14: *“I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”* (Philippians 3:14)

Now, this word *“follow after”* and this word *“press”* in the Greek are the same word, and it means *“to relentlessly pursue”*—*“to relentlessly pursue.”* The idea is of strong, positive determination. That is, get the idea of an athlete with his eye on the goal. He’s leaning forward. His muscles are taut. Every sinew and every nerve is being stretched, and he is putting everything that he has into it. You cannot succeed in any kind of life, much less the Christian life, with a take-it-or-leave-it attitude. Here’s the Apostle Paul, who has a determination that will not stop. Such a positive attitude he has!

Now I want you to know that he wrote Philippians in prison. But he hasn’t stopped running. Here’s this battered old preacher in prison, but he’s still running. Now there’s not much room for him to run. But he’s not running with his legs. He’s running with his heart. He is running with his soul. And you couldn’t lock him up, because he’s on a course. And if his course led him through the prison, he’d just say, *“Praise the Lord.”* It didn’t stop him from running.

You can always tell the size of a Christian by what it takes to stop him. And if you could have seen this old man sitting in that prison; if you could have seen that scarred body; if you could have seen him after he had been shipwrecked, as I said this morning, in the Mediterranean, and spent thirty-six hours there; if you could have seen him as he endured three shipwrecks and long prison records, this man who had 195 stripes laid on his back... Now, don’t pass over that too easily. Can you imagine what it would be to take a cat o’ nine tails and lay it on your back just one time? It would leave scars the rest of your life. One hundred and ninety-five times, that fell across the back of the Apostle Paul. A hundred and ninety-five times, he had this. He had been stoned so that they felt he was dead. I mean, they left him for dead, just a heap on the ground.

And we would say, *“Paul, it’s all right, son. It’s time to sit on the bench. No need to run any more.”* Not Paul! Paul said, *“I haven’t reached the goal yet. I’m not quitting—I’m not quitting.”* Oh, he wouldn’t have been like some of us. Some of you people who used to tithe, you’ve quit. Some of you used to win souls, you’ve quit. Some of you who used to preach the gospel, you’ve quit. Some of you used to be Sunday School teachers, and you’ve quit. Not Paul! Paul wouldn’t quit. He wouldn’t give up. I’m sure there were a lot of times that he wanted to give up. I like these words:

*I want to let go, but I won’t let go.
There are battles to fight,
By day and night,
For God and the right—*

*And I'll never let go.
I want to let go, but I won't let go.
I'm sick, tis true,
Worried and blue,
And worn through and through,
But I won't let go.
I want to let go, but I won't let go.
I will never yield!
What? Lie down on the field
And surrender my shield?
No, I'll never let go!
I want to let go, but I won't let go.
May this be my song:
"Mid legions of wrong—
Oh, God, keep me strong
That I may never let go!"*

— AUTHOR UNKNOWN

A positive attitude, one that would not stop, one that could not be defeated: you're going to have to have it if you're going to succeed this coming year.

IV. A Pointed Aim

And then, the last thing that I notice about the Apostle Paul is that he had a very pointed aim. You see, not only did he have an ambition; but with that ambition came an aim, a goal. Look again, if you will, please, in verses 13 and 14: *"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)

Now, look at the phrase *"I press toward the mark."* Every athlete, when he runs, runs toward a goal. You must put your eye on the goal, and you must keep it there. That's what he meant when he said, *"Forgetting those things which are behind."* No runner can win a race looking over his shoulder. He can't look back; he has to look forward. If you look back, you'll get into all kinds of trouble.

A Sunday School teacher was talking about Lot's wife, who looked back and turned into a pillar of salt. A little fellow said, "Yeah, I know what you mean." He said, "My mother was driving the car. She looked back and turned into a telephone pole."

Now you cannot reach your goal looking over your shoulder. And Paul says, "I forget those things that are behind. I have a very pointed aim. I'm pressing toward the mark,

and I'm reaching forth." Here's the old man. Here he is in prison. But he's still growing. He's still looking ahead. He still has his eyes on the goal. He is still anticipating the prize. I like Paul. No wonder he was such a great man.

I was reading about a grave at the foot of the Alps where a mountain climber had fallen from one of the sheer mountain faces, the rock faces of one of those mountains, and plunged to his death. He loved the mountains so much they buried him at the base of one of those mountains. But they put this epitaph on his tombstone right there at the base of the Alps: "He died climbing"—"He died climbing."

Now, don't you want to go to heaven that way? Don't you want to die climbing? Don't you want to be with the Apostle Paul and say, "I haven't arrived yet. I'm not already perfect; but I tell you, this one thing I do: I bring it all into a burning focus, and I get my eye on the goal; I'm not going to look around; I'm not going to look back; I'm not going to shut up, let up, until I'm taken up; I am going to be what God will call me to be, has called me to be, and what He wants me to be"? There's no thrill like being in the race; there's no thrill like winning the race and hearing our heavenly Father say, "*Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many.*" (Matthew 25:21)

Conclusion

Now, I want to be very clear tonight as I close: Salvation is not a prize that you win at the end of the race; salvation is the gift that enables you to run the race. Jesus puts you into the race when He saves you.

The Politics of Pilgrims

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: February 14, 1999

Main Scripture Text: Philippians 3:18–21; 4

“For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.”

PHILIPPIANS 3:20

Outline

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Conclusion

Introduction

Take God’s Word and be finding Philippians chapter 3; and when you’ve found it, just look up here. Like you, I was interested in the trial when the Congress and the House impeached President Bill Clinton, and wondered if the Senate would have enough votes to remove him, though that was doubtful; and, indeed, it was not done. And so the president has been impeached, and he’s been impaired, but he hasn’t been removed. And so some people think it’s morning in America, and some people think it’s the morning after. And we are wondering, “What should we do? How should we feel? And what is our attitude?”

Now, very frankly, surprisingly, I am relieved. I’ve gone through three stages. First of all, I was peeved; then grieved; and now I am relieved. And I’ll tell you why I’m relieved: I am relieved because I have gone from the hope and foolish thought that help would

come from Washington—and I have refocused. And I am coming to you tonight not as a pessimist. I'm not coming to you with bitterness. I'm coming to you with a program that belongs to the saints of God. We need to refocus and realize that we're children of another world. So I want to talk to you about "The Politics of Pilgrims"—"The Politics of Pilgrims."

Beginning in chapter 3, verse 18, Paul says, "*(For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping,*"—that is, he had a broken heart—"that they are enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.) For our conversation..."—the Greek word there is the word we get our English word *politics* from—"our [politics] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." (Philippians 3:18–21)

Now Paul wrote this from Rome in prison. He was in a prison, many scholars think—and I agree—not that I'm a scholar, but that he was in a prison called the Mamertine Prison. I have visited that prison. It's across from the Roman Forum, if you ever go to Rome. It's a hole in the ground, really, where the Apostle Paul was kept; and many believe it was from there, or a prison like that, that he wrote this book of Philippians. And around him was Rome—Rome—with its politics. Rome was a city of gross immorality. Rome was a city of great hostility toward the gospel of Jesus Christ. It was a city ripe with paganism. And who was the leader? Who was the national leader? His name was Nero. He was the epitome of evil. And the Christians, when Paul wrote this letter, had no political power. They didn't have any citizens in the Roman Senate. They had no political lobby working in Rome. So Paul says, "Look: Our citizenship is in heaven."

Now what he's going to do, he is going to point out the politics of those once-born, and the politics of those twice-born. He's going to make a contrast.

A. The Contrast in Antagonisms

First of all, I want you to notice the contrast in antagonisms. Look, if you will, in verse 18: "*(For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ.*" (Philippians 3:18) Now we are enemies of an unseen spiritual world ruled over by Satan; but there's another world. And we may as well face it: they are enemies, absolute enemies, of the cross of Christ. Now they may not even think they're enemies; but Jesus said, "He who is not with me is against me; he who gathers not with me scatters abroad." (Matthew 12:30) The preaching of the cross of Jesus Christ to most of the people in this world is foolishness. That's what the

Bible says: “*The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness.*” (1 Corinthians 1:18) You might as well expect your dog to enjoy opera as to expect them to understand the message of the preaching of the cross apart from a divine revelation.

B. The Contrast in Appetites

So, put it down—we’re talking about contrast, first of all, their antagonisms. They’re enemies. Number two: their appetites. Look in verse 19: “*Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly.*” Now, what does he mean by that? That’s a euphemistic way of saying that they’re sensual. Drugs, alcohol, sensuality—they glory in these things. Notice what it says here in verse 19: “*...whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame.*” (Philippians 3:19) What this world glories in, they ought to hang their head; but we have a generation today that cannot blush. *Sin that used to slink down back alleys now struts down main streets*, and they are proud of their perversion. Paul says, “Their glory is their shame.”

C. The Contrast in Affections

So you see their antagonisms. You see their appetites. You see their affections. Notice their affections. The Bible says, “*...who mind earthly things.*” (Philippians 3:19) That’s where their mind is. They mind earthly things. Many people who have their name on church rolls are really just practical atheists. They’re not thinking about the sweet by and by. Their concern is for the nasty now and now. And James Carville was quite shrewd when he said, “The way to appeal to these people is to appeal on the basis of the economy. It is the economy, stupid!” What does that mean? Well, they just mind earthly things. And even many Christians who want America to turn back want America to turn back so they won’t lose their creature comforts.

D. The Contrast in Allegiance

And so Paul is giving a contrast now as he’s writing from prison. He talks about their antagonisms. He talks about their appetites. He talks about their affections. And he talks about their allegiance. Notice in verse 20 Paul says, “*For our [politics are] in heaven; from whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.*” (Philippians 3:20) Now there were those in Paul’s day who said, “Caesar is lord”—“*Caesar kurios.*” The Christians said, “No, Jesus is Lord.” We have a different Lord. He is our King. He is our Savior. He is king forever. We didn’t vote Him in, and we won’t vote Him out. And our allegiance will not belong to Caesar. Our allegiance belongs to Jesus Christ. We will render to Caesar the things that belong to Caesar, but we will certainly not render to Caesar the things that belong to God.

E. The Contrast in Aspirations

Now, notice also not only their allegiance, but notice their aspirations, in verse 21. Paul

is aspiring for heaven. He's looking forward to a day; he's looking forward to that day when Jesus comes; and, *"Who shall change our vile body, that it might be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."* (Philippians 3:21) And just underscore if you have your Bible, *"He is able."* Don't you worry, friend. There's no panic in heaven. And the Holy Trinity is not met in emergency session. I can guarantee you that. Paul is aspiring from this Roman cell. His aspiration is heaven. But there are others, in contrast, who are interested in this world and this world's affairs.

So therefore, what are the politics of the pilgrim? And, by the way, we are pilgrims. We're not vagabonds; we're not strangers. A vagabond has no home. A stranger is away from home. A pilgrim is headed home. We're pilgrims. And what is the politic of a pilgrim?

I. The Right Mandate

Number one: We must always remember our mandate. We must have the right mandate. Go on down to chapter 4, if you will, and look in verse 3. He says, *"And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel."* (Philippians 4:3) Now I have to be careful, and you have to be careful, that we don't fail to understand—we don't fail to remember—that our mandate is the gospel. It is primarily doctrinal, primarily spiritual, not political. The mandate of this church is still the Great Commission, preaching the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. *And to do anything else that runs around the gospel would be like trying to mop up a floor with water on it while the faucet is still running and the sink is still overflowing.* We have to preach the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And we have to begin with the house of God and the people of God. *We're concerned about putting prayer back in the schools. I think we need to get a little more concerned about putting prayer back in the church and back in our homes.* Our mandate is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Now I say that to say this: It's so easy to get skewed. When I came to this church, I told the deacons some twenty-five years ago plus now, "My ministry will be a gospel ministry. I will pay my respects to communism. I'm opposed to communism. I will preach against racism. I'm opposed to racism. I will preach against alcohol, liquor, pornography, and all of those things. But I refuse to be moved away from preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. And I want to be thought of as a gospel preacher."

Now I read something that bothered me a little bit. There was a woman who was a news reporter, and she had found forty preachers, forty ministers, who were active in the political arena. And so she interviewed them for a story that she was doing. At the close of that interview, she spoke with one man, and he asked her, "Did any of the forty that you interviewed share the gospel with you?" You know what she said? "What is the

gospel?” She had no idea what the gospel was, and she had been interviewed by forty ministers, preachers, who failed to understand what Paul knew: that our ministry is the gospel of Jesus Christ. And may this church never forget it!

II. The Right Method

Now we’re going to have the right mandate, or the right message. Secondly, we’re going to have the right method. Look in chapter 4 and verse 13, if you will here, this same chapter. He says, *“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”* (Philippians 4:13) What we do, we’re not going to do primarily with political power. I am not against political power. We’ll talk about that in a little bit. But, friend, if we substitute political power for our inherent power as Christians and believers in Christ, we have made a tragic mistake. For what does the Apostle Paul say in 2 Corinthians chapter 10 and verse 4? The Apostle Paul says, *“For the weapons of our warfare…”*—see, we have a different warfare—*“the weapons of our warfare are not carnal,”*—that is, fleshly—*“but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds.”* (2 Corinthians 10:4)

We have to understand that our ally is the Holy Spirit. Our source of supply is Almighty God. Our commander-in-chief is Jesus Christ. Our battle-axe is the Word of God. And we have to remember that. You see, we have incredible power; but that incredible power is Holy Spirit power. We’re trying to do everything. And the devil laughs, and he sneers, and he mocks. And he says, “You can have your rallies. You can have your marches. You can have your slogans. You can have your organizations. You can even have your church. You can have your Sunday School. You can have your deacons. You can have your pastor. You can have your organization. You can have your buildings—as long as you leave out the power of Almighty God that comes through fasting and prayer.” *Satan laughs at our schemes. He mocks our organizations. He sneers at our abilities. But he fears the power of God.*

Think of what we have in America today. We have churches in every hamlet, every corner. All over this city there are churches. You know what breaks my heart? Many of them are dark tonight. Many of them have closed up. If you pass the movie theaters, they’re not dark. The pleasure palaces are open tonight, and blazing. The stadiums are open on Sunday afternoon, and the ball fields and so forth. We have incipiently; we have out there in place; we have everything that we need, except for one thing—and that is the power of Almighty God. I think it is time that the church drops the H-bomb, which is the Holy Spirit, our secret weapon: *“The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds.”* (2 Corinthians 10:4)

III. The Right Mindset

Now I'm moving towards something. We have the right mandate and message. That's the politics of pilgrims. We have the right method and energy—that is, the power of the Holy Spirit. We then, finally, we need the right mindset. Look in chapter 4 now, and beginning, if you will, in verse 4: *“Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice...”* When I read that, I said, “I refuse to be discouraged about what a bunch of senators do or don't do.” God is on the throne. Paul is writing from prison, precious friends: *“Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.”* He didn't mean Jesus is coming soon. He is, perhaps; but that's not what he meant. He meant, “God's with me in this cell. He's at hand. The Lord is at hand.” *“Be careful for nothing...”*—“Don't worry about anything. Don't go around wringing your hands”—*“Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”* (Philippians 4:4–7)

It is so easy for us to go around with headline hysteria. It is so easy for us to lose our peace; to lose our joy; to begin to gripe and carp and to be bitter about what people are doing or what they're not doing about those sinners. Friend, let me tell you something. *Do you know what sinners do? They sin. You might as well get used to it.* I mean, that's what they do: they're sinners. *To try to change them without getting them saved would be like trying to teach billy goats not to butt.* And we get our eyes upon these people, upon the sins of those for whom Jesus died, rather than upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and fail to rejoice in the Lord.

I have made some observations, and I have made some resolutions—and I want to share them with you.

A. I Will Not Despair

Number one: I will not despair—I will not! Verse 4: I will rejoice in the Lord. (Philippians 4:4) You read the New Testament and you will find out there is not a negative note—not one negative note in the New Testament—after the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Now, you think about it: Why should you be negative? You say, “Well, look at all the problems America has.” Friend, the one who wrote this book of Philippians had a political situation that was ten times worse than our political situation. Homosexuality was rampant in the Roman Empire. There was human sacrifice, gladiators dying. The gospel of Jesus Christ was despised. Christians were on the lowest rung of the ladder. Here's what we need to understand: It may be possible for some earthly kingdom, like Rome, or the good ol' U.S. of A. that we love so much, to be in decline, and God's kingdom will be doing quite well.

I want to give you an example of that. In China, Red China, for the past thirty years in Red China, there has been vicious, vicious repression and persecution; and yet the church in China has grown exponentially. Millions and millions have come to Christ in a bad political situation. Now I'd rather have the good politics than the bad politics—I'll be honest with you; but that does not mean there are enough demons in hell or out of hell to stop a Spirit-filled church of God from spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ. I hope you believe that. And, friend, you're looking at a man, I said, I'm relieved. I've just refocused. I'm not going to go around with my head between my knees. I'm not going to go around in despair.

A man without a theological education was reading the book of Revelation, and a friend, who was rather sophisticated and erudite, looked at him and said, "What are you reading?" He said, "I'm reading the book of Revelation." He said, "You might as well stop reading that book. You don't have the training. You don't have the understanding to understand that book." "Oh," he said, "I understand it." He said, "You do?" He said, "Then, explain it to me." He said, "We win!" That's it, folks: We win! The kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ (Revelation 11:15)—and you can bank on it. And I've made up my mind I will not despair.

B. I Will Not Be Intimidated

Number two: I've made up my mind I will not be intimidated. Notice chapter 4, verse 1: "*Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord.*" (Philippians 4:1) Stand fast. Now I'm going to stand fast.

You know, I've been, at first, disconcerted by the polls. I said, "I can't believe these polls. I just don't believe this. It doesn't make sense." And do you know what? Suddenly, I'm not disconcerted by the polls; I'm encouraged. Do you know why I'm encouraged? Because, folks, we're in the minority, and that's where we belong—that's where we belong!

Back in 1979, when I was first elected President of the Southern Baptist Convention, Jerry Falwell got something started called the Moral Majority. Well, friend, no, it's not the Moral Majority; it's the Master's Minority. We're called the "*little flock.*" (Luke 12:32) There is a broad way. There's the narrow way. There are the many. There are the few. We are not of the many. We are of the few. Don't get discouraged that we're not a part of the many. If we were part of the many, there would be something wrong with us. It's kind of weird, isn't it? But, folks, we need to understand where we are, who we are. We are not the great majority. We are those who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. We're what they call the "*little flock.*" And so I'm not going to be intimidated. I'm going to stop trying to be popular—never have been, really, among some people. John 15, verse 18—Jesus said, "If the world hates you, you'll know that it first hated me before it hated you." (John 15:18) Jesus said, "The servant is not better than his master." (Matthew

10:24)

I'm grateful for some of the Republicans who decided to do what was right rather than do what the polls said or what was popular. I don't know what Henry Hyde's spiritual condition is; but I'll tell you, he said one thing that moved me, and I wrote it down. He said, "Equal justice under the law is what moves me and animates me and consumes me. And I'm willing to lose my seat any day in the week rather than sell out on those issues. Despite all the polls and the hostile editorials, America is hungry for people who believe in something. You may disagree with us; but we believe in something." I say, "May his tribe increase." That's Henry Hyde. Now I don't know what his spiritual condition is, and I'm certainly not holding him up as a saint or as an illustration of godliness; I'm just holding him up for somebody who said, "Look: It doesn't make any difference what the polls say; I'm going to take a stand for that which is right and let the consequences fall as they will."

C. **I Will Not Be Bitter**

I'm telling you, I will not despair. Number two: I will not be intimidated. Number three: I will not be bitter. Look, if you will, in chapter 4 and verse 8: "*Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.*" (Philippians 4:8)

Now, folks, you can put your mind wherever you want. You can be reading the newspaper and putting your head between your knees and saying, "Look how terrible it is!" or you can read the Word of God. You can find out what our blessings are in Christ. And I'm not talking about painting the clouds with sunshine and spraying lavender all over. I'm just talking about understanding what the Bible says. And we don't have to be bitter.

I found myself getting bitter. When I would find somebody voting the wrong way, I would kind of feel the hostility rise up in me. Friend, let me tell you something. Bill Clinton is not the enemy. The Senate is not the enemy. Some politician is not the enemy. Old smutty face, the devil, would love to get us to try to make enemies out of those people. They are not the enemy. The Bible says in Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 12, "*For we wrestle not against flesh and blood.*" (Ephesians 6:12) Last time I looked, all of those guys were flesh and blood—and some of them a lot of it. You see Ted Kennedy? "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places." Those people ought to be the object of our compassion—our compassion! If they don't know Jesus, they're blind and stumbling on their way to hell. And who would ever scold a blind man for being blind and not seeing? They ought to be more the object of our pity, more the object of our prayer; less

the object of our wrath and the cause of our bitterness. The Bible says, “The wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God.” (James 1:20) I will not be bitter.

D. I Will Not Compromise

I’ll tell you something else: I’ve made up my mind I will not compromise. God helping me, I will not. Look in chapter 4, beginning in verse 11. He says, *“Not that I speak in respect of want: I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”* (Philippians 4:11–13) He says, “I’m not going to change when times get hard. I’m not going to change when times get good. And, good or bad, I’m in it to the end.”

Now what they’re trying to do to us, folks, is to intimidate us into compromise. Some of them are saying, “We would have voted against the president except for those right-wing Christians. We don’t want them to think they got a victory.” It’s really, they’re afraid of you. They’re afraid of me, and people like us, because they say, “You know, they just won’t bend; they won’t compromise.” And you know what they say? They say, “They fail to understand that in America we have pluralism.” Come up close and I want to tell you something: They are hypocrites. They don’t believe in pluralism. They say they believe in pluralism; but they don’t believe in pluralism.

I can tell you how I can prove it. You go, as I went, to the governor’s inauguration here and lead in prayer and pray in Jesus’ name, and see what happens—which, I did pray in Jesus’ name. And I’ll pray anywhere. I’ve prayed in the Jewish Embassy in Jesus’ name. Why pray any other way? I’m a Christian. That’s the way Christians pray. I would have no respect—none whatsoever—if a Muslim prayed in Jesus’ name, or a Jew—because they don’t believe in Jesus.

Do you know what pluralism says? Pluralism says, “A Muslim prays the way he prays: to Allah.” Judaism says, though, “He prays the way he prays: to Jehovah.” Christianity says, “I pray the way I pray: to Jesus Christ.” Friend, that is pluralism. Do you know what this world wants? Syncretism—syncretism: that we just dumb everything down, mush everything together, blend it all together, homogenize it; a whole lot of everything, and not much of anything. Call it syncretism, and then everything will be fine. We must hold high the flag of Jesus Christ, the bloodstained banner of our Prince and King, and never, never, never compromise Jesus Christ. Paul was not ashamed of Christ. To the contrary, he said, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

E. I Will Not Drop Out

Next, I will not drop out. I will not do it. Look, if you will, in verse 22. He says here, *“All the saints salute you,”*—I love this—*“chiefly they that are of Caesar’s household.”*

(Philippians 4:22) Now this is an interesting thing. You know what God does is so funny. Here is mighty Caesar. And right in his household, some of his workers—maybe his valet, maybe his guard—were Christians. You see, what we need to do is just to honeycomb Memphis with the gospel of Jesus Christ. And we need to honeycomb Tennessee with the gospel of Jesus Christ. A wise man said, “It’s better to light a candle than it is to curse the darkness.” If it’s a dark night, I’ll tell you what will take care of it—and that’s the rising Son—amen?—and the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And what we need to do is not drop out, but to step in and march through this city with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Now we are political in the sense that we belong here. And don’t you ever stop voting. You ought to vote. Why? Because our government is a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. And, therefore, if it’s a government of the people, you should participate in it, because Jesus said, “Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s.” (Mark 12:17; Luke 20:25) I will get a candidate, and I will work for him. I will pray for him, and I will encourage him. And whether it’s a local office, or whether it is a national office, that is my right. Just because we are saved does not mean that we’re to be disenfranchised. Jesus Himself said in Luke 20, verse 25, “Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s; unto God the things that are God’s.” Don’t render unto Caesar the things that are God’s. Now America must be changed, but it will be changed from the inside out. I love this: saints in Caesar’s household.

There’s a story that has come down to us through the years. I suppose that it is rooted in history. Like most stories, it may have changed some. But Caesar had his wrestlers. Like today we have the NFL, there were wrestlers in the Greco-Roman world. And Caesar had forty wrestlers. They were tall, bronze, muscular, sun-crowned men. And they would go into the arena and wrestle for Caesar, who would sit in his velvet box. And they had a little chant, a little song, that they would chant to the emperor. And the emperor loved it. They said something like this: “We’re forty wrestlers wrestling for thee, O Emperor, to win for thee the victory, and from thee the victor’s crown.”

The people loved them. They were the most popular athletes in the kingdom. They were also soldiers. And there came a time when an edict went out from Rome that any Christians who were in the army should be excised from the army or executed. And so Vespasian, the Roman general, said to his troops—he made this announcement: “It has come—an edict has come—from Rome that you cannot be a Christian and serve in Caesar’s army. So should there be any of you who are Christians, I’m going to ask you to step forward. But know if you step forward, you will be put to death. If you remain in the ranks, you will have denied your so-called faith in this Messiah. So there it is. If you’re a Christian, step forward.” Vespasian, the general, was not prepared for what

happened: forty men stepped forward. All forty of those wrestlers had become Christians; had been twice born.

When Vespasian saw it, and knew that they were the emperor's loved and beloved and chosen, and that everybody in the empire loved them, he said, "Sirs, no! Step back! Renounce your faith! We'll forget the whole thing." But not a man moved. They all stood there—all forty of them. Vespasian hit upon a plan. He said, "I know, I know, men. I know that they will not follow through. I know how to get them to renounce their faith."

It was in the middle of winter there. And he took all forty of those men out on a frozen lake and built a bonfire on the thick ice on that frozen lake. And then he made those soldiers strip from their bodies their armor, their helmets, their breastplate, their trousers, their shoes—stripped absolutely naked—and said, "Now you're to be driven from this fire out on this frozen lake in the cold, and you will stay out there until you freeze to death. But if you come back to the fire, you will have renounced your faith, and you will live." He knew men. He knew it wouldn't be long before they would be coming back to the fire. He built the fire, and he waited.

And he heard something that amazed him. He heard these forty men as they began to chant—and this is what they chanted: "We are forty wrestlers wrestling for thee, O Christ, to win for thee the victory, and from thee the victor's crown." Vespasian said, "They will turn; they will quit." But he heard that chant as it got weaker and weaker. As the night got colder, these men became numb: "Forty wrestlers wrestling for thee, O Christ; forty wrestlers wrestling for thee, O Christ, to win for thee the victory and from thee the victor's crown."

Finally, they could hardly chant. And Vespasian looked through the light of the fire and he saw one coming across the ice—one of those soldiers—blue, numb, slithering like an animal across the ice, coming back to the fire. Vespasian said, "I knew it. I knew it. The others will be coming soon." But then he heard something. The chant picked up, and they began to chant: "We are thirty-nine wrestlers wrestling for thee, O Christ, to win for thee the victory, and from thee the victor's crown."

And according to the story, Vespasian took from his head his helmet, took from his chest the breastplate, took from his legs the brass, from his feet the shoes, and ran into the snow and the ice, and shouted at the top of his voice, "We are forty wrestlers wrestling for thee, O Christ, to win for thee the victory, and from thee the victor's crown."

Paul talked about the saints in Caesar's household—the saints in Caesar's household. I don't know about you, but I've made up my mind I want to be a wrestler for Jesus Christ. And I want you to be, too. Praise God!

Conclusion

You let the Congress make the laws. You let Hollywood run their garbage pit. You let

Alan Greenspan and the boys on Wall Street take care of the economy. And I'll tell you what we can do: Let's tell this world about Jesus! Tell them about Jesus—the Mighty to save. After all, it's soon going to be over with anyway, and we just need to go to heaven and take as many with us as we can. *“Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”* (Revelation 22:20)

Turning Your Prison into a Palace

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: November 27, 1991

Main Scripture Text: Philippians 4:4–7, 11

“Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.”

PHILIPPIANS 4:4

Outline

Introduction

- I. Rejoice in the Presence of the Lord
 - A. Continuous Joy
 - B. Conspicuous Joy
 - C. Contagious Joy
- II. Rely on the Power of the Lord
- III. Reflect on the Provision of the Lord
- IV. Rest in the Peace of the Lord

Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take God’s Word and turn to Philippians chapter 4 for our Bible study tonight, our Thanksgiving message. The scripture tonight is one that I think most of us probably already have underlined in our Bibles with notations by it. Indeed, it’s one of my favorites. But it’s a thanksgiving text, and I want to use it tonight—Philippians chapter 4 and verse 4.

Now, may I tell you, before we read it, the circumstances and the background? The Apostle Paul is in prison, and he is writing from a filthy, slimy, vermin-infested pit—a hole in the ground. Now if you think that prisons today are bad, prisons in Paul’s day were intolerable. He’s in prison. But as you open the book and began to read, it doesn’t sound like he’s in prison; it sounds like he’s in the Hilton. I mean, when you open the book, you don’t smell any dusty dungeon air. The breath of heaven just flows through the book of Philippians. Over eighteen times in this book, he says, “Rejoice” or something like “rejoice,” some cognate of the word *rejoice*: “Rejoice, rejoice, rejoice, rejoice.”

He’s in prison. But have you ever gotten a letter from somebody, gone to Hawaii,

and they show you where they are—or they’ve gone maybe to some ski resort; or they’ve gone to Florida; or they’ve gone to London—and down at the bottom they say, “Wish you were here”—just to rub it in, you know. “Wish you were here.” I almost expect Paul, writing from that prison, to say, “Wish you were here.” He’s having a wonderful time. Now I remind you, friend, he is in prison—in prison—and he can’t get out; and so he begins to remodel the prison.

I want to talk to you about turning your prison to a palace—turning your prison to a palace. You say, “Well, pastor, I’m not in prison, and I don’t intend to be.” Well, there’s more than one kind of a prison, isn’t there? There are some right here tonight who are in a dungeon of despair. Others are surrounded by walls of resistance. And you’re trying to break out and you’re not able to break out. There are others who are in chains of poor health. I’m looking into the face of some that I know are chained by poor health. Others are behind iron bars of disappointment. Some are in the bondage of circumstance. And, really, you can’t escape. There is no way out. Some have other things that restrain them, that bind them.

Now Paul, since he couldn’t get out, just decided he would remodel the prison; he’d turn it into a palace. And, you know, before I read the text, if you’ll just go a few verses beyond the text over to verse 11, he gives the secret of the whole thing. He says, “*I have learned, in whatsoever state I am,*”—“*whatsoever state I am in*”—“*therewith to be content.*” (Philippians 4:11) Now when he said “*state,*” he literally means, “I’ve learned in whatever *condition* I am; wherever I find myself, good times or bad times, I’ve learned to be content.” And the word *content* is not necessarily akin to our English word *content*. Well, it’s akin to it, but it has a far richer, fuller meaning. The word *content* that is used there in chapter 4 and verse 11 before we ever get to the text that begins in verse 4 is simply this: “I have discovered, no matter what my circumstances, to be self-contained.” That’s what the Greek exegetes and scholars tell us the word *content* means. It means “I don’t need any outside resource. I can take this prison. I can take these four gray walls, and I can find everything I need here. I don’t have to get out to be happy. I don’t have to bring anything or anybody else in to be happy.” “I have learned, in whatsoever condition I am, there to be self-contained”—not self-sufficient, but just like those men who are up there in that space shuttle, before they left, everything had to be on board because there’s no 7-Eleven. I mean, you had to have it all right there.

Now Paul is saying the same thing spiritually. Well, let’s look at the text. I love the way it starts. Now, remember, it’s in prison. “*Rejoice in the Lord always:*”—and in case you didn’t think he meant it—“*and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men.*” (Philippians 4:4–5) Now, by the way, when he says “*moderation*” here, he doesn’t mean namby-pambies; he doesn’t mean half-heartedness, mediocrity. He’s not talking about people who say, “I don’t drink a lot, but I’ll drink a little.” As far as I’m

concerned, *moderation is not the answer to the liquor problem; it's the cause of it.* I really believe that. If everybody that drank got skunk drunk, maybe we could do something about it. But he's not talking about that when he uses the word *moderation*.

The word *moderation* here, I read it in several different translations and so forth, but the best, the one that means the most to me, and the one I wish that I met more people who were this way, and the way I want to be, is this: "sweet reasonableness"—"sweet reasonableness." That's what he means: "*Let your [sweet reasonableness] be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.*" Now when he says, "The Lord is at hand," he's not saying the Second Coming is near. That isn't what this means. The Second Coming may be near, but that isn't what this means. He means that, "Jesus is right here with me. The Lord is right at my hands. I mean, He is here! I'm not alone in this prison cell. The Lord is at hand. I mean, hey, we're here together. The Lord is right here with me." That's what he's saying.

"*Be careful for nothing;*"—that doesn't mean be careless, but what it does mean is "don't worry about anything"—"*but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding,*"—as the old country lady said, "and all misunderstanding, too"—"*shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*" (Philippians 4:5–7)

Now in this text, thanksgiving is right in the middle of it. Now that's the reason I've chosen it tonight. And I want to give you four things that I really believe, if you will do them, no matter what kind of a prison, what kind of circumstance, you may find yourself in—what kind of restraint—I believe you can remodel it. I believe that you can turn your prison into a palace. And here are four things I want you to do.

I. Rejoice in the Presence of the Lord

Number one: Rejoice in the presence of the Lord. Rejoice in the fact that the Lord is at hand. That's the reason he says to rejoice. I mean, here's the basis of his rejoicing: the presence of the Lord. Look at it—verses 4 and 5: "*Rejoice in the LORD always: and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation*"—your sweet reasonableness—"be known unto all men. The LORD is at hand." (Philippians 4:4–5) What caused Paul joy? It was the presence of Jesus. Rejoice in the presence of the Lord.

Again, I want to tell you that the book of Philippians is a book of joy. Over eighteen times he mentions joy here. Now, what kind of joy is this? Well, look at it.

A. Continuous Joy

First of all, it is to be continuous joy. Look in verse 4: "*Rejoice in the LORD*"—what's the next word?—"always." (Philippians 4:4) You say, "Well, nobody can be happy all the time." He doesn't say, "Be happy all the time." He says, "Rejoice all the time." You wouldn't want to be happy all the time. You'd get sick and tired of being happy all the

time. It would be like having ice cream for every meal. You'd get sick of it after a while. Happiness and joy are two different things. Happiness depends upon what happens, and that's why we call it "happiness." If your hap is good, you're happy. If your hap is bad, you're unhappy. And happiness depends upon happenstance. It depends upon what happens. That's why we call it "happiness." But he doesn't say, "Be happy always." He says, *"Rejoice in the Lord always."* It is to be continuous joy.

Now, let me tell you, my dear friend, that joy is like a thermostat. Happiness is like a thermometer. Joy controls conditions. Happiness registers conditions. You see, the thermometer of your happiness can go up and down by what happens, but you regulate your life with joy. Joy is not a thermometer; it is a thermostat that you can set in your life regardless of what happens, no matter how bad your happiness or happenstance may be. By the way, happiness is not wrong; it's good to be happy. If you have a chance to be happy, enjoy it, because something else is coming later. Be happy. At this particular moment, I'm happy. You're looking at a happy guy, because I've got my grandkids here. I'm happy. But they'll leave. And I'll get unhappy about that. But I'll still have joy. You see, joy, my dear friend, is something different. It's a thing that regulates your life.

For example, all of the people are trying to say we're going to have a recession, a depression, whatever they want to call it; and if they keep talking about it long enough, sure enough it will be a self-fulfilling prophecy. And, you know, there are some who are bending heaven and earth to try to make that happen for political reasons, I honestly believe. But that's politics. I'll move on.

If times get tough, does that mean that you don't have any joy? No! Listen to what Habakkuk said. Oh, I love the book of Habakkuk! I know you do. Don't turn to it: it's too hard to find. I'll be finished before you find it. Let me just read this to you—Habakkuk chapter 3, verses 17 and 18. Listen to it. Now here's Habakkuk, and they were having an economic recession, depression, or whatever. And he says, *"Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls:"*—that is, "no cows in the barn"—"yet"—oh, I love that yet in verse 18—*"Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation."* (Habakkuk 3:17–18) Where was his joy? His joy was in the Lord, not in circumstances.

Now if you depend upon circumstances, you can't say, "Rejoice always," because circumstances change. You lose your job. You lose your health. You lose your friends. You lose your prestige. And if that's where you're getting your joy, then if that changes, then you can't say, "Yet will I rejoice." Habakkuk said, *"Yet...I will joy in the God of my salvation."*

Where are you getting your joy? You say, "Well, I'm getting my joy from the Lord." I hope you are. There's one way we can find out. Maybe you're getting your joy from your

job. The way to find out is take your job, and see if you still have your joy. Maybe you're getting your joy from your health. You say, "No, it's from the Lord." Well, let's take your health, and see if you still have your joy. You see, the only joy that anybody can say is always is joy that is in the Lord, because He never changes. Your job can be threatened if you get it anywhere else. It's not wrong to joy in your health. It's not wrong to joy in your job. It's not wrong to joy in these things. That's fine, but that's the kind of joy that can be threatened. But you need a joy that supersedes that. Psalms 16, verse 11: *"Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy."* (Psalm 16:11) And so, look: *"Rejoice in the Lord always."* (Philippians 4:4) It's to be continuous joy.

B. Conspicuous Joy

Number two: It is to be conspicuous joy. It ought to show up on your face. You see, look in verse 5: *"Let your moderation be known unto all men."* (Philippians 4:5) It ought to be conspicuous. There ought to be a sweet reasonableness that flows out of the joy of Jesus that's in your heart.

Don't you love to be around joyful people? I do. I love joyful people. And, you know, if folks are not joyful, well, we've got to love them. But I know folks who could brighten up a room by leaving it, don't you? I mean, they have no joy. I'm not saying that everybody ought to be giggling all the time. I've known people in the deepest, deepest, deepest sorrow and pain; and yet to be in their presence is to walk away with a blessing—isn't that true?—because they have joy.

C. Contagious Joy

You see, this joy is to be continual: *"Rejoice in the Lord always."* (Philippians 4:4) It is to be conspicuous: *"Let your moderation be known unto all men."* (Philippians 4:5) And when, my dear friend, it is continual and conspicuous, it will be contagious. You see, what the Apostle Paul here is doing is engendering and encouraging joy in other people. I get joy by reading this. I've caught joy from Paul, and you ought to catch it from me.

Joy is as much caught as it is taught.

They tell us that we've got a flu epidemic coming. Have you heard that? That's what they say. They say it's over here at Nashville and it's heading our way. I don't know whether that's true or not. I don't plan to catch the flu. Now I may; but I don't plan on it. If you plan on it, well, that's your business. Now you say, "Pastor, you didn't plan on it; but you got it." I may get it; but you know what I'm praying for? An epidemic of joy. I just want a holy contagion of joy to break out in our church.

The joy of the Lord, my dear friend, is to be continuous; it is to be conspicuous; it is to be contagious. That's step number one: if you're just remodeling your prison, just rejoice in the presence of the Lord; not in circumstances, in the presence of the Lord. I don't care where you are. I don't care how bad it is. It makes no difference. Jesus is

there with you. Can't you rejoice in Him? *"The Lord is at hand."* (Philippians 4:5) Are you telling me that God is not near you in your problem? My dear friend, He's especially near you in your problem—especially near you. *"The Lord is at hand."*

II. Rely on the Power of the Lord

All right, step number two—look: Not only rejoice in the presence of the Lord, but rely on the power of the Lord—rely on the power of the Lord. Look, if you will, in verse 6: *"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."* (Philippians 4:6) And, my dear friend, there's a God who can fix it, and you need to bring your problem to Him. Tell Him about it, and refuse to worry. Look at it: *"Be careful for nothing."* That is, don't worry about it. Jesus warned against worry.

You go back and read Matthew chapter 6 if you're a worrywart—Matthew 6; start about verse 25 and read on through verse 34. Don't do it tonight. Just read it when you get home. Oh, what a good time on Thanksgiving Eve, perhaps, just to read that! Maybe you ought to read it around the dinner table tomorrow if you're prone not to see your many blessings. And in this passage Jesus taught that worry is worthless. He says, *"Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?"* (Matthew 6:27) As a matter of fact, four times in that short passage He says, "Take no thought," "Take no thought," "Take no thought," "Take no thought." Jesus is not warning against planning when He says, "Take no thought." He's not saying, "Live a haphazard life." It's not forethought; it is foreboding that our Lord says just don't worry about tomorrow, because, He says, it doesn't do you any good. It's like a rocking chair: it gives you something to do; but it doesn't get you anywhere. The best thing you can say about worry is that it is absolutely useless.

Now when I was a kid, somebody gave me these words, and I've never forgotten them: "For every evil under the sun, there is a remedy, or there is none. If there be one, try and find it. If there be none, never mind it." Now, what does that mean? Don't worry. If there's something that you can fix, fix it. If you can't fix it, worry is not going to fix it, anyway. Or as one country theologian said, "If it's gonna happen, worry ain't going to stop it. And if it ain't gonna happen, there ain't no need to worry." Pretty good sense: "If it's going to happen, worry ain't going to stop it. And if it ain't going to happen, no need to worry."

Now the best you can say about anxious thought is that it's useless. But, you see, worry is harmful. The very word *worry* means "to divide." *"A double minded man is unstable."* (James 1:8) Hope gets hold of one hand, and fear gets hold of the other hand, and you're just divided. Worry, my dear friend, is wasteful. Worry is wicked. Worry is worthless. You say, "Why do you say it's wicked?" Worry is an insult to God. Worry is

a way of saying, “God, this problem is beyond you,” or, “God, you’re going to forsake me,” or, “Lord, you’re not going to take care of me.” Worry flings an insult into the face of God. Worry is faith at 180 degrees. That’s what worry is. It’s wicked. As a matter of fact, Jesus, when He gave this message on worry and told us not to worry, He said, *“For after all these things do the Gentiles seek.”* (Matthew 6:32) And do you know what He meant by Gentiles? Pagans. What He was saying is, worry is pagan. That’s the way pagan people who don’t know the God of Israel act. You know the Lord.

So, what do you do now if you want to transform your prison? Well, you rely on the presence of the Lord. What is the cure for worry? Look at it in verse 6: *“Be careful for nothing;”—*you say, “Big order!” Yes, but he tells you how—*“but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.”* (Philippians 4:6) Don’t worry about anything. Pray about everything.

Now I don’t want to just give you a little pop psychology and say, “Well, it might not happen; so don’t worry about it.” You say, “Yeah, but it might happen, and I will worry about it.” And you’ve got a point. Psychology will never cure worry except on a temporary basis. It might even cause you to stuff something that bothers you down into your subconscious where it will do you more damage than if you thought about it. I’m not talking to you about little gimmicks or saying, “Maybe it won’t happen.” Paul is in prison now. I mean, he’s got problems—waiting, perhaps, to be executed. But what he is saying is this: “Don’t worry, but pray. Rely on the power of God.” Prayer is not just some exercise to take our mind off our problems. That’s not what Paul is saying, either. Paul is saying that prayer brings God into that situation. You say, “Well, I don’t want to pray about everything. I don’t want to bother God. I just pray about the big things.” Oh? Can you think anything is big to God? Pray about everything. If it’s a concern to you, it’s a concern to God.

I wrote these words down. They’ve been a blessing to me:

*I met God in the morning
When my day was at its best,
And His Presence came like sunrise
Like a glory in my breast.
All day long the Presence lingered,
All day long He stayed with me,
And we sailed in perfect calmness
O’er a very troubled sea.
Other ships were blown and battered,
Other ships were sore distressed,
But the winds that seemed to drive them*

*Brought to us a peace and rest.
Then I thought of other mornings,
With a keen remorse of mind,
When I, too, had loosed the moorings
With the Presence left behind.
So I think I know the secret,
Learned from many a troubled way;
You must seek Him in the morning
If you want Him through the day.*

—RALPH CUSHMAN

III. Reflect on the Provision of the Lord

You can turn your prison to a palace if you'll rejoice in the presence of the Lord. Rely upon the power of the Lord. Third thing: Reflect upon the provision of the Lord. Look again, if you will, in verse 6: *"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving."* (Philippians 4:6) Now he puts a number of words here concerning prayer. First of all, there's the word *prayer*. Do you see the word *prayer*? That refers to the contemplation of God: just getting quiet, getting still, and knowing that the Lord is at hand. And then, *supplication*: that's asking God, saying, "God, I need this," or, "I need that. Do this," or, "Do that." That's specific requests. But then, thanksgiving is saying, "Lord, thank you for who you are and what you have already done." Now if worry is the opposite of faith, thanksgiving is the expression of faith. Thanksgiving is the highest expression of faith. *Think* and *thank* are related words.

You say, "Well, I don't know, pastor, if I have as much to thank God for as some people." Well, are you in prison waiting to have your head cut off? That's Paul. You see, God has blessed you. The reason that you may not think God has blessed you is, you know how you measure blessings? Health, wealth, and happiness. You say, "Oh, those are blessings." It may not be. Some people are cursed with wealth. Some people don't know how to use health, and happiness keeps some people from seeking the Lord. My dear friend, let me tell you what blessings we have. Psalms 68, verse 19: *"Blessed be the LORD, who daily loadeth us with benefits."* (Psalms 68:19) God has loaded you down. He's loaded your wagon. You say, "When?" Every day—every day! And if you're too blind to see it, I feel sorry for you.

Lamentations chapter 3, verses 22 and 23: *"It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed"*—by the way, you say, "God might take my life." Oh, my dear friend, He doesn't have to take your life; all He has to do is stop giving it. You live day by day as He gives you life. *"It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning."* (Lamentations 3:22–23) Every day

you wake up to blessings. Thank Him for spiritual blessings, and thank Him for simple blessings. You walk down one of these halls, and stop at one of these water fountains, and bend down and take a drink of good, clear, cool, sanitized water. Then you'll think perhaps that in most places in the world it's not food that is the major problem, just getting water that won't give you dysentery and disease. The simple things! We are so blessed.

Well, let me say this: that I have noticed as a pastor that unthankful people are never happy people, and they're always filled with bitterness and fear and negativism and selfishness and self-pity. God help them!

IV. Rest in the Peace of the Lord

Last thing and I'm finished. Look: What are we saying? How do you remodel a prison? Well, you rejoice in the presence of the Lord. My dear friend, you rely upon the power of the Lord. You carry things to Him in prayer. You refuse to worry. Number three: You reflect on the provision of the Lord. You do everything with thanksgiving. And number four: You rest in the peace of the Lord—you just rest in the peace of the Lord. He gives you these three verses, and then he sums it up in verse 7. And he says, *“And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”* (Philippians 4:7) I love this. You don't keep this peace; this peace keeps you. It says, *“And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding...”* It doesn't make sense. Logically, it doesn't make sense, because the world says—the intellectual says—that peace is the absence of problems, but Paul is in prison, and he's talking about peace.

In the Bible, *peace is not the subtraction of problems from life; it is the addition of power to meet those problems*. And you don't keep this peace; this peace keeps you. The word—look at it: *“And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts.”* Do you see the word *keep*? The word *keep* means “to surround,” as soldiers would surround a fortress. Some translations give it this way: “And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall garrison about your hearts and minds.” That is, God puts His peace soldiers all the way around you so that none of these things can get to you, and God's peace just keeps shooting them down.

This past decade, the decade of the eighties, has been for me a very tumultuous decade. I've served two terms as President of the Southern Baptist Convention. We've built a fair-sized church building. As a matter of fact, I had a preacher friend come stand up here the other day and say, “You could put a lot of hay in here.” I have known some heartache in my family and gotten some criticism for some stands I've taken for the Word of God. But you know what? People have told me, “Adrian, I've been praying for you.” And, you know, I know that's true. And I've been praying for me, too, by the way.

But it seemed to me that every sling and arrow that Satan has sent has been stopped by one of God's peace angels—here and here and here and here. And I don't say how great therefore I am, because I'm not. But I am so grateful for the peace of God. I am so grateful for the peace of God. The peace of God, it just surrounds me.

Now, you see, the Apostle Paul was being guarded when he wrote this. He was in prison. He's got these guards who are all around him, and he looks at them and he laughs. He says, "You're guarding me, but it's the peace of God that really is guarding me. You're guarding me because you think I'm an important prisoner, but God's peace angels are guarding me because I am the apple of His eye."

Conclusion

Now here's Paul. He is in prison—I mean, a filthy prison—and he says, "*I have learned, in whatsoever state I am...to be [self-contained]*" (Philippians 4:11)—"I rejoice in the presence of my Lord. I rely on the power of my Lord. I reminisce and reflect on the provisions of my Lord, and I rest in the peace of my Lord." So if you can't get out of your prison, why don't you just remodel it?

How to Control Your Thought Life, Part 2

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: October 30, 1988

Main Scripture Text: Philippians 4:4–8

“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”

PHILIPPIANS 4:8

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Introduction

Find in God’s Word, please, Philippians chapter 4, and in a few moments we’re going to begin reading in verse 4. And what we have now is the second part of this morning’s message, “How to Control Your Thought Life.”

They put on cigarette packages that “Smoking may be hazardous to your health.” And I want to tell you, dear friend, that wrong thinking can also be hazardous to your

health. And so tonight we're going to have a check-up from the neck up. We're going to find out if you have been guilty of bad thinking. And I want to give you tonight a spiritual formula for dealing with the wrong kind of thoughts: depression, self-pity, worry, fear, anger, and all of these many things. "Ha," you say, "preacher, what do you know about it, anyway? I mean, you've always had it easy all of your life. You've never had any problems; so who are you to tell me about these things?"

Well, the truth of the matter is I want to tell you what someone else said—his name was Paul—and what he wrote in a slimy hole called the Mamertine Prison as a sufferer and a prisoner for preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, okay?

Now I want you to hear what the Apostle Paul had to say, and I begin in verses 4 through 8: "*Rejoice in the Lord always...*"—who said that? Paul. When did he say it? In prison—"*Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.*" Thank you, Jim, for singing those great choruses tonight on joy and "peace like a river." "*Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus*"—now, remember we're talking about controlling your thought life—"...*the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep*"—and the word *keep* means "guard; shall guard your thoughts"—"*your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.*" (Philippians 4:4–8)

Now the Bible says, "As a man thinketh, so is he." (Proverb 23:7) And I want to show you tonight how to guard your thought life. Now, just let me give you a recapitulation and a synopsis of this morning's message. We said that an unsaved man has a blinded mind. The god of this world has blinded the minds of them that believe not. By nature, we have what the Bible calls a carnal mind that is at warfare with God.

And so we said, in order to control your thought life, first of all, what? The carnal mind must be converted. But then we showed you also that a converted mind may be corrupted. Paul essentially said, "I have a concern, lest Satan corrupt you through his subtlety from the simplicity which is in Christ; that your minds be corrupted." (2 Corinthians 11:3) Satan can come in and seduce us, and even a Christian's mind can be drawn away. Satan can build into that heart and into that mind what the Bible calls a "stronghold."

And so we said then that a corrupted mind must be conquered. You must take that ground back. And we showed you how to do that. Then we said that a conquered mind

must be controlled, and that the Lord is to be in charge of our new mind. I said—and I hope that you will remember—that you can choose your thoughts like you choose your friends.

Now we talked about the fact that you have to have some sort of a standard to know what kind of thoughts that you can allow into your mind and what kind of thoughts you can say “no trespassing” to. That’s what I’m going to talk about in the message tonight. Paul, when he’s getting ready to give this standard, first of all, builds sort of a context in which you can do what I’m talking about. And let me give you three or four things that he says just to set the stage.

A. You Are to Find Your Joy in the Lord

He says, first of all, in verse 4, that you’re to find your joy in the Lord. Now he doesn’t say, “Rejoice always.” That would be silly if he just said that. But it’s not silly when he says, “*Rejoice in the Lord always.*” (Philippians 4:4) Rejoice in the Lord. Find your joy in the Lord.

Every Christian who is controlling his thought life will have a conscious joy; he will have a continual joy; he will have a conspicuous joy; and he will have a contagious joy, if he finds his joy in the Lord.

Did you know that I stay busy? I have been very, very, very busy the last two or three years. And I work long hours. Even when we have time away, as we recently had, I still find myself very, very busy. But I have found the secret of strength. I really have. The joy of the Lord is my strength. Really. That’s not a slogan; it’s not a song; it is a downright reality.

There are times when I leave my office to come up here to preach and I find my body getting weary and I find my mind getting tired. I just stop and I say, “Jesus, I love you. I thank you for who you are and what you mean to me.” And I’ll quote this verse: “*The joy of the LORD is [my] strength.*” (Nehemiah 8:10) And, folks, I feel power and strength that comes into my mortal body. “*The joy of the LORD is [my] strength.*”

You see, we are to rejoice in the Lord. Jesus said in John 15, verse 11, “*These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.*” (John 15:11) And, by the way, it’s only joy in Him that remains. If you get your joy any other place, something can take it away. I’m glad Paul didn’t get his joy in his freedom, because if he got his joy in his freedom, he wouldn’t have had it when he was in prison.

Don’t get your joy out of circumstance. Don’t get your joy out of amusements. Don’t get your joy out of business. Don’t get your joy out of friends. Don’t get your joy out of your health only. Those things can give you joy, well and good; but don’t let them be the ultimate source of your joy. “*Rejoice in the Lord always.*” Joy in him is full, and it is

complete.

B. Remember That God Is Near

Now, the second thing—we're just setting the stage now: Find your joy in the Lord, okay? We're talking about how to have a healthy mental attitude. Secondly, always remember that God is near—always remember that God is near. Recognize his presence continually.

Look, if you will, in verse 5: *“Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.”* (Philippians 4:5) Now he doesn't mean that Jesus is coming soon. He is coming soon; but that's not what he meant by that. What he meant by that is, “Hey, He's right here with me in this prison cell. The Lord is at hand.”

Jesus said, *“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.”* (John 14:16) The way to have a healthy mental attitude is to find your joy in the Lord and to constantly practice the presence of the Lord. You see, when you can do this, the wonderful thing about it is that your problems are His problems. Paul said, “I'm here in prison; but so is the Lord Jesus.” He didn't come to get you out of trouble; He came to get into trouble with you. Isn't that wonderful? And Paul said, “I'm in prison; but He's in here too. The Lord's right here with me.”

I was reading about some prisoners back in Stalin's day when they were really persecuting Christians and putting them to death. There were thirty Christians who were meeting in a building. Stalin's crash troops came in there to persecute these Christians, and they were making a list and they counted them. And one of the officers said, “One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine—there are thirty in this room.” And one of them spoke up and said, “No, you're wrong. There are thirty-one. Jesus is here with us. Jesus is with us.”

C. Refuse to Worry About Anything

All right now, the third thing: first of all, just find your joy in the Lord; secondly, recognize His constant presence; thirdly, just refuse to worry about anything. Look in verse 6: *“Be careful for nothing.”* (Philippians 4:6) Now this word *careful* here, the Greek word, means “to be pulled apart.” That's exactly what worry does. Worry just pulls you apart. Over here is fear; and over here is hope; and you're just being pulled between the two. Paul says, “Hey, don't worry about anything.”

1. Worry Is Worthless

You know what Jesus said about worry? Jesus said it's worthless. No one can add a cubit to his stature by worry. (Luke 12:25) Worry never solved a problem, lifted a burden, or dried a tear. It's worthless.

2. Worry Is Wasteful

But not only is it worthless; it's wasteful. You know, it just takes energy that doesn't do

any good. If it's worthless, it's bound to be wasteful. *Worry doesn't take the sorrow out of tomorrow; it takes the strength out of today. It's just pulling tomorrow's clouds over today's sunshine.*

3. Worry Is Wicked

Not only is it worthless, and is it wasteful; it's wicked. In Matthew chapter 6, verse 32, Jesus said, *"After all these things do the Gentiles seek."* (Matthew 6:32) These are the things that pagans think about. Why, don't be like them! God watches over us.

So Paul here is getting ready now to tell us how to guard our thought life. But he's just setting the stage, and he's just giving us an atmosphere.

D. Bring Every Need to God in Prayer

Just find your joy in the Lord. Recognize that He's present with you. And refuse to worry about a single thing. You say, "Well, how do you do that?" Well, he goes on to tell us how to do that in verse 6: *"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."* (Philippians 4:6) Bring every need to God in prayer—every need!

1. Pray About the Big Things

Now surely we ought to pray about the big things. Do you have anything that you really think is a big problem? I want you to think about the biggest problem you can think of right now; I mean the absolute biggest. Have you got the biggest problem in your life right now? Have you got it in your mind? All right now, double it. Make it twice as big. Now, is it in your mind? Now I want to ask you a question: "Is that big to God?" See it in the light of God. The Lord says, *"I am the LORD...is there any thing too hard for me?"* (Jeremiah 32:27)

2. Pray About the Little Things

Well, surely then you can pray about the big things. What about the little things? You know, the danger is not that we fail to pray about the big things; the danger is that we fail to pray about the little things. He says, *"In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."* (Philippians 4:6)

E. Develop a Thankful Spirit

All right now, next: Not only bring every need to God—verse 6—but develop a thankful spirit. All of this is just getting you ready now to check these thoughts at the door, whether or not you're going to let them into your heart and into your mind—just a thankful spirit. Notice again: *"Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."* (Philippians 4:6)

You know, sometimes we complain when we ought not to complain. I was sitting in

an automobile with a man. We were driving cross-country. And I had all of my children in private schools. Some were in college, and some were in Christian school. And, boy, Joyce and I were just paying out the money. And I was dying of *mal-tuition*. And I was complaining a little bit to this man, and I was talking to him about the great cost of sending a son to college. And he looked at me and said, “I’d give anything in the world if my son would go to college.” I thought, “Oh, what an ungrateful spirit I’d had! He had a son that was rebellious and a son that was a hellion and a maverick.”

You know, do you ever complain about dirty dishes? You know, there are lots of folks in Bangladesh who’d like to have some dirty dishes. Did you know that? I mean the dirty dishes are a sign that you’ve had something to eat. Listen: *“In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.”*

Now all of that, he just sets the stage. He sets the stage now to tell you how to guard your thought life. Remember I said that’s kind of like going to the airport; and you have to pass through that security gate, and that security gate has a sensor on it. And there are certain things that are contraband. There are certain things that you are not to let through.

Now the Apostle Paul also gives us a checklist; and I want you to look at them right now in verse 8, and we’ll get right into the heart of the message: *“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”* (Philippians 4:8)

All right now, here are the tests as to whether or not you will admit anything into your mind.

I. The Reliance Test

First of all is what I want to call the reliance test. We will let all these start with the letter *r*, so you can remember them. The reliance test—the reliance test: Is it true? Can you bank on it? Can you rely on it? *“Whatsoever things are true...”* (Philippians 4:8) Do you know that we live in a generation today that doesn’t ask, “Is it true?” We ask, “Does it work?” Don’t let anything come into your thought life and consciously dwell there. Don’t absorb it into your heart, into your philosophy. Don’t dwell on it; don’t let it be a part of your thought patterns if it is not true. And, of course, the Bible is the prime source of truth.

II. The Respect Test

Now, secondly: Not only the reliance test, but the respect test. The second question is, “Is it honest?” *“Whatsoever things are true...”*; and then he says, *“whosoever things are*

honest...” (Philippians 4:8) Now the word *honest* here literally means “honorable”—things that are “honorable.” Do you let dishonorable things get into your mind? Are there things that are not worthy of your respect, things that are not worthy to really occupy your time? Some things are not bad because they are vile; they’re bad because they’re inane—just silly, stupid, and not worth it.

III. The Rightness Test

All right, here’s the third thing: Not only the reliance test, and not only the respect test; but the rightness test. Look again here. He says, “*whatsoever things are just...*” (Philippians 4:8) And the word *just* here means “straight” as opposed to “crooked.” Don’t let any *crooked* thinking come into your mind. Do you think straight? Do you think on a straight line?

In my Bible study, in my preaching, and in my devotional life, I try to think in a straight line. I think many of us let things that are crooked come in. I mean, we don’t lay down a measuring rod by what we do. We just kind of go this way and that way a little bit. Now Paul says that there are certain things that are not going to get through the gate. Anything that is unreliable, disrespectful, or not right should not come through the gate. The rightness test: Is it right?

IV. The Reverence Test

Now, here’s one. He mentions also, “*whatsoever things are pure...*” (Philippians 4:8) Now the word *pure* here means “free of contamination.” What it was used for is to ask, “Is this animal, or is this object, is it good enough and is it pure enough to be used in worship? That is, could it be offered to God?”

So the next test is what I call the reverence test: “*Whatsoever things are pure.*” That is, is this something that I would not be ashamed to offer to the Lord? Could I take this story; could I take this movie; could I take this friendship, and could I say, “Lord, I worship you with it”? “Well,” you say, “you’re not supposed to worship God with everything.” Oh, no, you are supposed to worship God with everything. The Bible says, “*Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*” (1 Corinthians 10:31) Is this relationship a relationship I could say, “Lord, I offer it to you?”

Now last week I was in a Bible conference in Knoxville, Tennessee. And we had a chance to go up into the Smokies and see those gorgeous leaves. And I found myself—Joyce and I were there together—I found my life just overwhelmed with praise to God, and joy was coming up in my life. And I said, “Lord, this is such a beautiful experience; it’s just a time of worship. And I just offer this to you. I just offer it to you, just this good time. Just this joy, just this beauty, I offer it, Lord, to you. It is pure. It is worthy.”

Anything that you’re doing that cannot pass the reverence test—that is, that you

could not offer up to God—any relationship, any activity, any meal, any recreation, or any business deal, don't let it into your mind.

V. The Relationship Test

And then, next of all, the relationship test. He says, “*whatsoever things are lovely...*” (Philippians 4:8) Now the word *lovely* here doesn't mean “beautiful.” But it literally means in the Greek language “causing you to love.” Does it cause you to love? If there's something that comes into your mind that causes you to criticize unjustly, or brings division between human beings, then it is wrong.

This word *lovely* is a combination of two words which actually mean “toward love”—“toward love.” Does this thought move you toward love? You say, does that mean I have to approve what other people do? Absolutely not! I watched television this afternoon. I got so perturbed with Sam Donaldson. Boy, but I love him. That's one of the great proofs I'm saved. I mean, does it move you to love? The relationship test.

VI. The Refinement Test

And then, finally, the refinement test. Look, if you will here, as he goes on to say, “*whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report...*” (Philippians 4:8) Actually, this word means things that are “high-toned”—“high-toned.” That means that it sounds good. It is refined.

You know, I have people in every church I've ever pastored who are gossips. You know, I think gossip is a form of insanity—really! I'll tell you why I think it is a form of insanity. I've never met a gossip who knew they were a gossip. And this is what they say: “You know me: I don't gossip.” And then they start to gossip. Well, if a person's doing something, and they don't know they're doing it, I think they must have rooms to rent upstairs unfurnished. I mean, it's a form of insanity. They love to listen to things that are not of good report.

People use their ears for garbage cans. They say, “You know, I don't know why people always come and tell me these things.” I know why they tell you those things: they know you want to hear them. You know, they know that you will allow them to track mud on the carpet of your mind. They know that—if you're one who has all the latest news about everything. You know those kinds of folks? I mean, buddy, if it's bad, they've got it. I mean, it just comes to them. They say, “You know, well, I don't start all of these rumors; just the ones I tell them to, they're the ones who start them.” But the refinement test: these are things that you ought to put up at the gate of your mind, and do not allow them to come in.

Conclusion

Now Paul is running out of time. He's already said, "Finally," like some preachers, but he doesn't mean immediately. Then he just kind of wraps it up and says, "*If there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.*" (Philippians 4:8) Folks, it is so simple, and it is so wonderful. You can absolutely take back that conquered ground, and you can say, "I'm only going to let these thoughts in my mind." And you don't have to think on anything you don't want to think on.

But now, listen. You must be thinking something. You cannot control your thought life by keeping your mind in neutral. You will think something. And if you're not thinking something right, you're going to think something wrong. If you're not thinking something good, you're going to think something bad.

And the way not to think bad thoughts is not by trying not to think bad thoughts. Try not to think of a submarine right now. Are you sure you're not thinking about a submarine right now? All right, the only way not to think about a submarine is not by trying not to think about a submarine but by thinking about something else. People who are trying not to think about a submarine are thinking about the submarines they're trying not to think about, isn't that right? Sure!

You see, the Bible says, "*Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*" (Romans 12:21) Just let these thoughts come into your mind. And just keep your heart and mind stayed upon Him. "*Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.*" (Isaiah 26:3) "*We have the mind of Christ.*" (1 Corinthians 2:16) Learn to think God's thoughts after Him. And use Paul's standard here in Philippians 4 as the grid through which everything must come before it finds lodging in your mind.

Seven Steps to Mental Health

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: August 26, 1984

Main Scripture Text: Philippians 4:4–9

“Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.”

PHILIPPIANS 4:4

Outline

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Conclusion

Introduction

I want you to take your Bibles, please, and turn to Philippians chapter 4. We're going to look at a very, I suppose, familiar passage of Scripture. I hope it will be, anyway, by the time I finish preaching about it. But I think, in my mind, it is one of the key devotional passages in all of the Bible. We spoke this morning about rejoicing in the Lord regardless of the circumstances—and that was from the Old Testament. And I just want to pick up in the New Testament and continue the same theme tonight. I'm going to entitle the message “Seven Steps to Mental Health.” And that's going to sound very clinical, but I'm going to make it really, very spiritual: “Seven Steps to Mental Health”—that is, to get your thinking correct.

You see, wrong thinking can be hazardous to your mental health. The Scripture says, “As a man thinketh, so is he.” (Proverbs 23:7) I have a good friend now who is the Vice President of the Southern Baptist Convention, whose name is Zig Ziglar. Zig has a way of saying that most people's problems come from “stinking thinking”—and I believe

that Zig is exactly right.

Oh, we're going to show you how to deal with things like depression; and things like self-pity; and things like worry, and fear, and anger, and all of these things. Now you say, "Well, Brother Rogers, you just don't know the situation that I'm in; and if you knew the situation that I'm in—if you were in the same situation—you'd be depressed, also; you'd be afraid, also; you'd be angry, also; you'd be frustrated, also." Well, perhaps so. But I didn't write the scripture that I'm going to read to you tonight; Paul wrote it. And I want to tell you where he wrote it. He wrote it from prison. You know what he's waiting for? To have his head taken off, okay? So if you think you've got problems, just put them aside now and listen to what God says through the Apostle Paul. And here are seven steps for a positive mental attitude; here are seven steps to mental health.

I. Find Your Joy in the Lord

Number one: Find your joy in the Lord. Look in verse 4: "*Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.*" (Philippians 4:4) Now, find your joy not in circumstances, not in things, but in the Lord. That's what I tried to preach to you this morning: that your joy is to be in the Lord. Jesus said in John 15, verse 11, "*These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.*" (John 15:11) It's in Him that you're to have the joy that remains.

"*These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you.*" If you get your joy in circumstances, and the circumstances change, then your joy is going to change. You get your joy in amusement, and then the amusement runs out, then your joy is going to change. If you get your joy from your business, and your business goes bad, then your joy is going to change. If you get your joy from your friends, and your friends fail, then your joy is going to fail. If you get your joy from your health, and your health gets broken—as it will, sooner or later—then your joy is going to go. But if you have your joy in the Lord Jesus, He does not change. "*I am the LORD, I change not.*" (Malachi 3:6) He is the same yesterday, today and forever. (Hebrews 13:8) And joy in Him is full, because the Bible says in Him we are complete. (John 15:11; Colossians 2:10)

Let me give you another verse—Psalm 16, verse 11: "*Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy.*" (Psalm 16:11) Have you learned this yet? Have you learned to get your joy in the Lord? Have you learned that the Lord Himself is your joy, and "*the joy of the LORD is your strength*"? (Nehemiah 8:10)

II. Practice the Presence of God

That's step number one: Find your joy in the Lord. No one can have continuous, positive mental attitude and mental health, in my estimation—at least the way as God has

intended for them to have it—unless first of all he finds his joy in the Lord. And, secondly, practice the presence of God. Look in verse 5: *“Let your moderation be known unto all men.”* That is, your self-control; that is, your strong mental attitude—let that be known unto all men. *“The Lord is at hand.”* (Philippians 4:5)

Now sometimes preachers preach that to mean the Second Coming of Jesus Christ is near. But I don’t think that’s what Paul meant at all. I think he meant that the Lord is right here with us; the Lord is near. And if you would have a fine, strong mental attitude, if you would know biblical mental health, know that God is with you every moment, every day: “I will never leave you; I will never forsake you,” is what the Lord said. (Hebrews 13:5) Remember the promise He gave there of the Holy Spirit in John 14, verses 16 and 17: *“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.”* (John 14:16–17)

“The Lord is near.” How near is the Lord? Well, He’s nearer than the skin on these bones. He is nearer than the air that I breathe. He is here; He is present.

Now I want you to learn something very wonderful. You see, your problems are His problems. *The Lord Jesus Christ did not come to get you out of trouble; He came to get in trouble with you.* I mean, He says, *“In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”* (John 16:33) “I am with you; I will never leave you, never forsake you.” (Hebrews 13:5)

There were some Christians who were persecuted in Stalin’s Russia. And the secret police came in there and they were worshipping. And the secret police counted and said, “There are thirty Christians in this place,” as he made his list. And one of them who was very bold said, “No, there are not thirty here; there are thirty-one here.” He was talking about the Lord Jesus. He is here with us. Now just everywhere, every moment, be aware that Jesus is your joy and that He’s present with you. He will never leave you, nor forsake you.

III. Refuse to Worry about Anything

The third thing. Number one: Find your joy in the Lord. Number two: Practice the presence of the Lord. Number three: Refuse to worry about anything. Look in verse 6: *“Be careful for nothing.”* (Philippians 4:6) Now this word *careful*, it literally means “to be pulled apart.” Don’t be pulled apart by anything. It comes from a Greek word which means “to divide.” You see, a person who worries is on the fringes of schizophrenia. I mean, he’s divided; he’s being pulled to pieces. On one side is fear, and on the other side is hope. And so sometimes he turns this way, and sometimes he turns that way; and he’s really being divided. Now our English word *worry* means “to strangle.” So

whether you're being divided, or whether you're being strangled, it's not good. And Jesus warned us against worry. Jesus forbade us to worry.

A. Worry Is Worthless

Jesus said that worry is worthless: *"Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature."* (Luke 12:26) The best thing you can say about worry is it doesn't do any good. That's the best thing you can say about it. But, you see, not only does it not do any good; it is absolutely harmful and deleterious to our faith and to our strength.

B. Worry Is Wasteful

But not only is worry worthless; worry is wasteful. Jesus said, *"Take...no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."* (Matthew 6:34) That is, there is a divine ecology. God has engineered it that you will have some trouble. God wants you to have trouble. As I said before, *He's not here to keep you out of trouble; He's here to get in trouble with you.* He wants you to have trouble. The trouble is there to keep you dependent upon Him. So every day, God gives you some trouble. *"Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."* God gives you your sufficient amount of problems. He knows how much you need today. And then, along with those problems, God gives you a sufficient amount of strength. And there is divine ecology.

Now when you reach out into tomorrow and you take tomorrow's strength and try to use it today, that's what worry is. *Worry is borrowing tomorrow's strength to solve today's problem.* And when you do that—when you meet tomorrow—then you're out of breath, because you've already expended tomorrow's strength on today's problems. Worry is wasteful. It doesn't take the trouble out of tomorrow; it just takes the strength out of today.

C. Worry Is Wicked

But not only is worry worthless, and worry wasteful; it's wicked. Jesus said, *"After all these things do the Gentiles seek."* (Matthew 6:32) When a person worries, they're acting as though God is dead. Worry is an insult to God.

If, when I had little children in my home, I would come home and find my children nervous and crying and biting their fingernails, and frustrated, and sitting in a corner trembling, I'd say, "What's wrong, darlings?" And they would say, "Daddy, we're just all concerned." "Why?" "Well, we may not have a place to sleep tonight. We may not have food to eat tonight. We may not have clothes to wear to school tomorrow. Daddy, we're just afraid." "Well," I'd say, "children, Daddy's going to take care of you." "Well, Daddy, we're just afraid that you're not going to be able to do it." How do you think that would make me feel as a father? Oh, how it would grieve my heart to see my children believe

that their dad couldn't take care of them! Now I'm only human; and perhaps sometimes, under some circumstances, I might not have been able to take care of them. I believe, as long as I trusted the Lord, I could, because David said once, *"I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."* (Psalm 37:25)

But how it must grieve the heart of God when we act as though God cannot take care of us! Worry is an insult to God. Worry, dear friend, is worthless; worry is wasteful; worry is wicked. Absolutely refuse to worry; refuse to worry about anything. Verse 6 says, *"Be careful for nothing."* (Philippians 4:6)

IV. Bring Every Problem to God in Prayer

All right, and then, next: Bring every problem to God in prayer. Look in verse 6: *"But in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."* (Philippians 4:6) Learn to pray about everything. Don't just pray about the big things; pray about the little things, also. Now, pray about the big things. He says, "I am the Lord thy God. Is there anything too hard for the Lord?" (Jeremiah 32:27) I don't care how big your problem is: carry it to God. But also, tell God about the little things. He wants to hear about those little things.

Today, we called our children in Florida. We called Steve and Cindi, and we talked about all kinds of things. Now they might not have been important to anybody else; but they were important to Steve and Cindi, and they were important to Adrian and Joyce. Now the things that you don't think are important, God thinks are important. And don't think that you're bothering God with little things. You're His child. He loves you. Every detail is important.

When a girl goes out on her first date and comes back in, the mother says, "Now, honey, where did you go? What did you order? Did he pull the chair out for you?" She wants to know all those little things, because she loves that child and she's interested.

And, you know, sometimes people say, "Oh, I just don't want to bother God with all those little things." G. Campbell Morgan said, "Can you think of anything that's big to God?" I mean, everything is little to God. I mean, He's a big God. So don't worry—don't worry, dear friend—about bothering God. In everything, just listen—listen. Get your joy from the Lord. Practice the presence of the Lord. Absolutely refuse to worry. Learn to carry everything to God in prayer: *"In every thing by prayer and supplication."*

Now many of us have learned to carry the big things to God in prayer, but we haven't learned to carry the little things. I think I told you about a missionary—a story I heard about a missionary—who was out in the jungle, and a ferocious man-eating lion attacked him, and he prayed and said, "O God, O God, deliver me from this lion"; and by a miracle, he was delivered. He praised God, thanked God, and went home that

night to the missionary compound to sleep. All night long, there was a mosquito buzzing in his room; and he got up, and would light the light, and would try and find the mosquito. And, you know, I don't know where they go; but, you know, they evaporate when you turn on the light. And then he turned the light back off, and the mosquito buzzed. And all night long he fought that mosquito. When he awakened, the Lord rebuked him and said, "Now you prayed and asked me to take care of the lion—and I did. But you thought you could handle that mosquito by yourself."

And I think there are many of us who are the same way. I mean, we carry the big things to God. But the Bible says, "*In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.*" (Philippians 4:6)

V. Develop a Thankful Spirit

Now, number five: Develop a thankful spirit. Every person that I've ever seen that I felt had an unbalanced mental capacity or attitude was a person who did not have a genuinely thankful spirit. Look again in verse 6: "*Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.*" (Philippians 4:6) You see, I think when you learn to thank God in all things, that is the highest expression of faith.

Yesterday I went to the hospital to visit a man who has cancer. And this cancer, according to the doctor, apart from a miracle, is inoperable and incurable—if God doesn't do something. That man who is a member of our church and a dear brother in Jesus looked me in the face, and those other preachers who were with me of our church staff as we were there to pray for him and to pray over him, said, "Gentlemen, I want you to know I don't understand it all; but I give God thanks." And those were not mere words. And had you been in that hospital room, you would have seen the victory on that man's face. Now I tell you, I've been in a lot of hospital rooms where there was not that victory. But here was a man in the midst of those circumstances who was practicing what the Scripture says, "*Be careful for nothing;*"—"don't worry about anything"—"*but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.*"

"Well," you say, "how can you be thankful in everything?" I'll tell you how: Romans 8:28—"For all things work together for good to those who love God, who are the called according to his purpose." You don't have to understand it. As I preached this morning, Habakkuk didn't understand it; but God had a plan, and God knew exactly what He was doing. That's a good place to live, is Romans 8:28.

I took a friend to breakfast in Charlotte, North Carolina, a while back. He was an old college chum. And Richard and I sat down and talked for several hours about the things that happened in college. And we just rejoiced in the Lord. And I said, "Richard, I'll just

pay the check.” And I took the bill. And since I was staying in that hotel, I just signed my name to it. And I signed “Adrian Rogers,” and then underneath I was supposed to put the room number, but I wrote “Romans 8:28.” I am so used to signing my name, “Adrian Rogers, Romans 8:28,” and so I just signed it, “Adrian Rogers, Romans 8:28,” and took it up to the cashier. And the cashier looked at it, looked at me, and looked at that again, and said, “Mister, we don’t have a Room 828.” I said, “Oh, dear lady, that’s not a room; that’s a verse out of the Bible: for *“all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”* (Romans 8:28)

That’s a good room to stay in, 8:28, isn’t it? I tell you, dear friend, we just need to live there; we need to camp there. *“In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”* (1 Thessalonians 5:18) Develop a thankful spirit.

VI. Practice Positive Thinking

And then, next, practice positive thinking. Look, if you will, here in verse 8: *“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”* (Philippians 4:8)

Now, you know, Norman Vincent Peale has talked so much about the power of positive thinking that some of us who are fundamentally evangelical preachers tend to shy away from it—a little bit like somehow you tend to be something less than an evangelical, fundamental man or a preacher if you mention positive thinking; like maybe there’s something wrong with positive thinking. Friend, there’s nothing wrong with positive thinking. The Bible absolutely, totally, teaches that we’re to think positively. You see, it is your mind that controls your actions. And you need to get control of your thought life, and you need to practice positive thinking. You see, the Bible says in Isaiah chapter 26, verse 3, *“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.”* (Isaiah 26:3) You need to get a lock on the Lord and just keep your mind on the Lord.

Now you remember the little proverb, “You sow a thought, and you reap a deed; you sow a deed, and you reap a habit; you sow a habit, and you reap a character; and you sow a character, and you reap a destiny.” It all begins in the thought life, because as we told you in the book of Proverbs, “As a man thinketh, so is he.” (Proverbs 23:7)

Fifteen prominent college professors took this challenge. Here’s the challenge that these professors who worked in human psychology and motivation took; here’s the challenge: If all the books on the art of moving human beings into action were condensed into one brief statement, what would that statement be? That is, if you were to take all of these motivational books, all of these things that are going to show people

how to motivate other people, or to be motivated themselves, what would that statement be? Now they deliberated; they pooled their resources and their minds; they wrote, and they rewrote a statement. And this is what these fifteen prominent professors came up with. Are you ready for it? I'm going to talk to you now about the power of the mind, the power of positive thinking. What they said is this: "What the mind attends to, it considers." Now, what does that mean? Well, it just means that if you hear something, or if you think about something, you've got to consider it. I mean, when you give your attention to it, you're going to consider it, no matter what it is. "What the mind attends to, it considers."

Now, secondly, "What it does not attend to, it dismisses." If you do not keep your mind on it, you're going to lose it. There's no way to hold it without keeping your mind on it. "What the mind attends to, it considers. What it does not attend to, it dismisses. What the mind attends to continually, it believes." That is, if you attend to something, mind open, with things that are not true, things that are not honest, things that are not just, things that are not pure, things that are not lovely, things that are not of good report, where there's no virtue, where there's no praise, refuse to listen to these things. Listen. There are a lot of people who are going around spreading filth and discouragement and gloom and doom and gossip. Don't let them make a wastebasket out of your ears. Refuse to hear it.

One little girl, repeating the model prayer, said, "And, Lord, forgive us our trash baskets." Now we need to be forgiven for that. We need to just let the right things come in.

And that's the reason that it's so important that you have a quiet time with the Lord: because all of these things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtue, praise—all that—is just a string of pearls that tell the character of Jesus. I've just given you the biography of Jesus right here. Fill your heart with Jesus. Every morning load up on the Lord Jesus; bathe yourselves in the presence of Jesus; practice this positive thinking.

VII. Get Busy and Stay Busy

The last thing, and I'll be finished—look in verse 9: Get busy, and stay busy. Notice in verse 9: "*Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.*" (Philippians 4:9) Now the last step is just to practice all of the rest. You see, James chapter 1, verse 22, says, "*Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves*" (James 1:22) Now busyness is not an end in itself. Many people, when they're not right with God, get busy to try to make up for it. A lot of church work is done out of the guilt motivation: people trying to make themselves feel better.

If you think about something, if you keep your concentration on something long enough, it is going to go from your head down into your heart. What the mind attends to continually, it believes; and then, what the mind believes, it eventually does. Have you got that? What the mind attends to, it considers. What the mind does not attend to, it dismisses. What the mind attends to continually, it believes. And what the mind believes, it ultimately does, because the thought is the father of the deed. And that's the reason the Apostle Paul said, "*Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things*"—because attitudes determine actions, and creeds determine deeds. (Philippians 4:8)

And I've told you before that God has so engineered you that you cannot be thinking two thoughts at one time; and if you're thinking what is right, you cannot be thinking what is wrong. I was reading something interesting about marine biology, and I read that there is a parasite that attacks these mussels, these clam-like creatures that live in shells, you know. Have you ever tried to get a clam open without a sharp knife—or an oyster? But you know what this parasite does? It feeds on those marine animals. But what it first does, it attacks the muscle that holds the clam together, that holds the little animal together. And when that muscle is paralyzed, then the shell opens. And then the parasite feeds on the animal itself.

Now what the devil wants to do, by the wrong thinking, is to open your life; he paralyzes your thought life, and then he destroys you. You see, the Bible says, "*Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.*" (Proverbs 22:23) And don't you let the devil pry your mind open with things that are not true, things that are not honest, things are not just, things that are not pure, things that are not lovely, things that are not of good report, where there's no virtue, where there's no praise; refuse to listen to these things.

I talked about that the other night when we were talking about Ephesians, understanding who you are in Christ. You do not work to make yourself acceptable to Him. Remember that? You can't work your way into acceptance. You are accepted in Jesus, in the beloved. (Ephesians 1:6) And a lot of busyness is nothing but guilt on display. But once you get right; once, dear friend, you rejoice in the Lord; once you practice the presence of the Lord; once you learn how to pray about everything, once you become grateful and give God thanks for all that God has done; once you develop this positive mental attitude and refuse to worry, then you need to get busy. You see, listen. Busyness and activity is no substitute for being right with God; but the Bible teaches that, "*Faith without works is dead.*" (James 2:26)

One of the finest psychological truths that I've ever learned in my life is this—are you

ready for it? *Impression without expression leads to depression.* Now, what does that mean? If you come and listen to me preach, and you get these things in your notebook, you get these things in your head but you do not practice them in your life, it's not going to make you a better person; it's going to make you a worse person. You're going to have more and more guilt and more and more despair, because you're hearing these things and you're not doing them. Jesus in the Bible says, *"If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."* (John 13:17) Now Paul said, *"Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you."* (Philippians 4:9) And verse 7: *"And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."* (Philippians 4:7)

Conclusion

Those, ladies and gentlemen, are seven steps to mental health. And if you don't think I'm right, why don't you just try practicing them? And you're going to say, "Pastor, you were right." And you're going to say, beyond that, "You weren't right, preacher; Paul was right." You're going to say, beyond that, "Paul wasn't right; God was right," because it was God who told Paul to put it right here in the Word of God. I just believe with all of my heart that a lot of people could save a lot of money on psychiatrists and psychologists, and even on medical doctors, if they just took these seven principles and put them into practice, don't you?

Five Steps to Mental Health

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: August 2, 1995

Main Scripture Text: Philippians 4:4–9, 11

“I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.”

PHILIPPIANS 4:11

Outline

Introduction

- I. Rejoice in the Presence of the Lord
 - II. Rely on the Power of God
 - III. Reflect on the Provision of the Lord
 - IV. Rest in the Peace of the Lord
 - V. Reflect on the Purpose of God
- Conclusion

Introduction

Take your Bibles and turn, please, to Philippians chapter 4, and tonight I want to give you some verses that will literally transform your thought life if you will allow them to do so. As a matter of fact, this is God’s psychology, and I want to give you from the Word of God five steps to mental health. And, indeed, you may need it. We are going to have a check-up from the neck up tonight, and find out how to get our thinking right—to get our minds right. So many of us need a spiritual formula to deal with depression; to deal with anger; to deal with resentment; to deal with self-pity and worry and fear.

Now the scripture that I’m going to read to you tonight is not the scripture some theoretician, some professor from behind a desk who has read things and is telling them to someone else, has come up with, but these are the words of the Apostle Paul. And they are written from prison—from a slimy prison—but as you read it, you think he sounds like he’s writing from a luxurious hotel. You almost expect him to say at the end, “I wish you were here.” He’s in the Mamertine Prison and he is writing.

Now you say, “What does that have to do with me?” Well, there’s more than one kind of a prison. Iron bars make a prison; but there are other things that make a prison, too. And some of you are living in a dungeon of despair. Some are behind walls of resistance. Some are shackled with the chains of poor health. Some know the iron bars

of disappointment, the shackles of circumstances, the fetters of fear. There's more than one kind of prison, and what Paul has to say here is so incredibly relevant.

Now he's in prison and he can't get out; so he just decides, "Well, if I'm here, I might as well remodel the place." And he does it; but he does it on the inside, not on the outside. And so he says in verse 11 of this same chapter, "*I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.*" (Philippians 4:11)

All right, what are these five principles? Well, let's begin to read, and then we're going to come back and look at them one by one, beginning in verse 4: "*Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep*"—that literally means "guard"—"*your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.*" (Philippians 4:4–9)

I. Rejoice in the Presence of the Lord

Step number one: Learn to rejoice in the presence of the Lord. Verses 4 and 5—look at them again: "*Rejoice...*"—now, notice, not just rejoice, but—"*Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.*" (Philippians 4:4–5)

Now Paul was not in that prison by himself; he was in there with the Lord. So here's the thing: Rejoice in the presence of the Lord. Now that's an incredible thought. "*The Lord is at hand.*" Paul didn't mean, "His Second Coming is near"; he meant, "The Lord is here. The Lord is at hand. I am in this prison. But I'm here with Jesus. And I rejoice in the Lord." What an incredible thing for us to learn: that no matter where we are, how lonely the night, how dark the road, how dismal the prison, how big the problem, Jesus Christ is always there! And He has said, "*I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*" (Hebrews 13:5)

That's the only way that you can make this make sense when he says, "*Rejoice in the Lord always.*" I mean, you don't rejoice in your circumstances; you don't rejoice that you've been put in a prison with vermin and deprivation and suffering and cold. No, it's the fact that nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Now this joy is to be continual, not sometimes. Look at it very clearly, very plainly:

“Rejoice in the Lord always.” (Philippians 4:4) That literally means “all of the time.” The joy of the Lord is to be continuous.

The joy of the Lord is a thermostat, not a thermometer. A thermometer registers conditions. A thermostat controls them. Happiness is related to the thermometer. If your hap is good, you're happy. If your hap is bad, you're unhappy. And your condition of happiness goes up and down with your circumstances. But joy remains constant, because Jesus is constant. You know what most of us need to learn to do? Practice the presence of God—I mean, to understand that He is always there, and in no matter what circumstance we find ourselves, not to become a thermometer, but to set the thermostat.

Now, listen to these verses. I'm going to give you some verses from the Old Testament and I want you to listen to them. Don't turn to them, because you'll be looking for it until I'm finished—Habakkuk. But Habakkuk chapter 3, verses 17 and 18—listen to what Habakkuk said. Now he's a man of God. He says, *“Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls:”—*that is, it's a time of economic depression and deprivation—*“yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”* (Habakkuk 3:17–18) And, friend, if you don't have any joy, it's because Jesus is not real to you. I don't care how sick you may be; I don't care what agony there may be: there is Jesus, and He is always there. You can set the thermostat.

Jesus Christ, when He was facing the cross, spoke of His joy. Luke chapter 10, verse 21: *“In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.”* (Luke 10:21) And just before He was crucified, He said to His disciples in John 15, verse 11, *“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.”* (John 15:11) Listen to Psalm 16, verse 11: *“Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy.”* (Psalm 16:11)

Now that's what the Apostle Paul said: *“They have locked me in, but they can't lock Jesus out”—“Rejoice in the Lord always...The Lord is at hand.”* (Philippians 4:4–5) Now that's number one. If you want to have a good mental attitude, find joy in Jesus, not in circumstances. Circumstances change; He never changes. You can never be shut away from Him. Rejoice in the Lord always, because He's always with you. He will never leave you nor forsake you. Set the Lord before your face. Consider Him. Contemplate Him. Praise Him. Love Him. Enjoy Him. Don't rejoice in circumstances; rejoice in the Lord. Have you got that one?

II. Rely on the Power of God

All right, number two: Not only rejoice in the presence of the Lord—the Lord is at hand; but rely on the power of the Lord. Now, look, if you will, at the next verse. He says, “*Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.*” (Philippians 4:6) Now, what does that mean? It means, if you’ve got a problem, tell God about it. “*In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving...*” Don’t worry about anything. Don’t be full of care about anything.

Do you know one of the most damaging emotions that can come to you is worry? I’ve often told you from this pulpit that worry will do the same thing to you mentally that sand will do to machinery. There are few forms of dissipation that hurt your body more than worry. And don’t look down your long nose at the man who overeats, or the man who smokes cigarettes, or the man who drinks alcohol or takes drugs, if you’re given over to worry, because worry is a form of dissipation. The word—the very word *worry*—means—it has the idea of—division; it has the idea of being pulled apart. Over here on the one hand is hope; and over here on the other hand is fear. And you’re just pulled between hope and fear.

And Jesus in Matthew chapter 6 emphatically warned us against worry. He said that worry is absolutely useless. He said, “*Which of you by taking [anxious] thought can add one cubit unto his stature?*” (Matthew 6:27) I mean, the very best thing you could say about worry is that it doesn’t do any good. Four times in that passage He says, “Take no thought.” And the word literally means “no anxious thought.” It’s not foresight, but foreboding—worrying about things that are out there in the future—that you don’t know what’s going to transpire. He says it does no good. It’s like a rocking chair: it gives you something to do, but it doesn’t get you anywhere. That’s what worry is like.

Behavioral psychologists have told us this about worry. Forty percent of what we worry about never happens; thirty percent has already gone past, and worry can’t change it; twelve percent is needless worry about health; ten percent of the things we worry about are miscellaneous matters that don’t deserve worry; only about eight percent of the things that remain could be counted worthy of worry if you were a worrier; but of those they could be divided into two categories: those you can do something about, and those you can’t do anything about. Now if you can do something about it, do it and quit worrying. If you can’t do anything about it, worry is not going to change it.

*For every evil under the sun
Either there’s a cure, or there is none.
If there be none, never mind it;
If there be one, seek till you find it.*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Now, what does all this mean? It means Jesus said you can't make yourself taller by worry: "Which of you can add one cubit to his stature by worry?" (Matthew 6:27) Mark Twain said, "I'm an old man, and I've known many troubles, most of which never happened." Worry is useless; it's wasteful. Jesus said, "*Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.*" (Matthew 6:34) Worry doesn't take the sorrow out of tomorrow; it takes the joy out of today. Worry pulls tomorrow's clouds over today's sunshine. Worry doesn't help you to get ready for tomorrow, because God doesn't give you strength for tomorrow. "As your days are, so shall your strength be." (Deuteronomy 33:25)

So when you bring tomorrow's troubles into today, you overload today. And worry is the interest you pay on borrowed trouble. And when you get to tomorrow, you're not more ready when you get to tomorrow; you're less ready, because you get to tomorrow out of breath, because you're trying to live today's strength with tomorrow's troubles; and you're overloaded today, and you're worn out before you get to tomorrow. Worry is useless. Worry is wasteful. Worry is wicked. Jesus said this is the way the Gentiles act: "*After all these things do the Gentiles seek.*" (Matthew 6:32) You're acting like a pagan.

Now you say, "Fine, pastor, fine. You make me feel worse now. Tell me not to worry? Now I'm going to worry about that." But now, listen. He doesn't just say in a cavalier way, "Don't worry." He tells you exactly what to do. Look at it in verse 6: "*Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.*" (Philippians 4:6) Worry about nothing; pray about everything. You say, "Well, what do you know about it? You've never known any troubles." But, number two: I didn't write this; the Apostle Paul wrote it. It's written by divine inspiration.

Now the cure for worry, very simply, is prayer to that God who is right there with you, who will never leave you. It is prayer that is a place of power, provision, and peace. And I love these lines:

*I met God in the morning
When my day was at its best,
And His Presence came like sunrise
Like a glory in my breast.*

*All day long the Presence lingered,
All day long He stayed with me,
And we sailed in perfect calmness
O'er a very troubled sea.*

*Other ships were blown and battered,
Other ships were sore distressed,*

*But the winds that seemed to drive them
Brought to us a peace and rest.*

*Then I thought of other mornings
With a keen remorse of mind,
When I, too, had loosed the moorings
With the Presence left behind.*

*So I think I know the secret,
Learned from many a troubled way:
You must seek Him in the morning
If you want Him through the day.*

—RALPH CUSHMAN

Pray about everything; but unlock the morning with prayer. Refuse to worry. *“In every thing by prayer and supplication...”* (Philippians 4:6) If it’s big enough to concern you, it’s big enough to concern God. Don’t get the idea that there are some things that are too small to tell God about. Pray about it.

We have these missionaries here tonight. And my favorite story is of a missionary who met a voracious lion, and he prayed and asked God for deliverance. And God delivered him from the mouth and paw of that lion, and he gave God great praise. And that night when he tried to sleep, there was a mosquito in the room. It kept him awake all night long. And when he woke up with dark circles under his eyes, the Holy Spirit said to him, “You asked the Father to deliver you from that lion; but you thought you could handle that mosquito by yourself, didn’t you?”

Now, think about it. I mean, we think, “Well, you know, I need God for the big things.” You need God for everything—for everything! *“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving...”* (Philippians 4:6) You say, “Well, I don’t want to bother Him about the little stuff.” Can you think of anything that’s big to God? It’s all little stuff to Him, and He’s concerned about that.

III. Reflect on the Provision of the Lord

Now, listen. How can you have a positive mental attitude? Rejoice in the presence of the Lord. Rely upon the protection of the Lord. Don’t worry. Bring God into it. Number three: Reflect on the provision of the Lord. Now he says when you’re asking God to help you to do it with thanksgiving. Look again, if you will, in verse 6: *“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication”*—and here’s the little dynamite parenthetical phrase—*“with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.”* (Philippians 4:6)

Now if you ask God for more, and don't thank Him for what He's already done, I doubt you're going to get your prayers answered like you ought. Did you know that there's no higher expression of faith than thanksgiving, and worry is the highest expression of unbelief? Now, you think about it: thanksgiving is the highest expression of faith; worry is perhaps the greatest expression of unbelief. Refuse to worry. Tell God about it, and thank God for what He has done and for what He's already going to do. Now Paul is encouraging a spirit of thanksgiving when he's in a slimy dungeon. Why? Because of the blessing that he had. Sometimes we just have to get things in focus. We get to feeling sorry for ourselves and we fail to understand the blessings of God.

The word *think* and the word *thank* are related. Don't take things for granted; take them with gratitude. Psalm 68, verse 19—it ought to be on the dashboard of your car: *“Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation. Selah.”* (Psalm 68:19) *Selah* means, “There: think about that.” Lamentations 3, verses 22 and 23: *“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)

Thank Him. If you are in a dungeon, thank Him for your spiritual blessings. If you are in a dungeon, thank Him for the simple blessings. I've learned this as I've gone through life: Unthankful people are always unhappy people. Some people, rather than being humbly grateful, are grumbly hateful. I think we've all met them. They are filled with bitterness and fear and negativism and selfishness and self-pity.

IV. Rest in the Peace of the Lord

Rejoice in the presence of the Lord. Rely on the power of the Lord. Reflect on the provision of the Lord. Number four: Rest in the peace of the Lord. Look, if you will, in verse 7: *“And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”* (Philippians 4:7) The peace of God is there to guard you and to protect you.

When Paul was in prison, he most likely was guarded by those Roman guards—day and night by soldiers. He was a very important prisoner. Paul looked around and he saw those soldiers guarding him. He said, “I've got something better than that guarding me: I've got the peace of God that is guarding me.” It literally says here, *“And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep...”* Look at the word *keep*. It literally means “to garrison, to guard.” He had the joy of the Lord to gladden him and the peace of God to guard him *“through Christ Jesus.”* Again, “It's Christ who's here in this prison with me.” What is the peace that he had? It's the peace of God, not the peace of circumstances.

Bible peace is not the subtraction of problems from life; it's the addition of power to

meet those problems. You don't keep this peace; this peace keeps you. It's peace that passes understanding. You can't get it from a bottle; you can't get it from a syringe; you can't get it from a psychiatrist, a psychologist, a well-meaning friend or a book; you can't even get it from a principle; you get it from God. Jesus said, "My peace I leave with you." (John 14:27) That's your legacy. It's peace that the world cannot give, and it's peace the world cannot take away. Find your peace in Him. *"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee."* (Isaiah 26:3)

V. Reflect on the Purpose of God

Now, here's the fifth and final step of these five things that if you'll do them—not just hear them from the pulpit on Wednesday night, but if you'll do them—according to the Word of God, you will have that kind of healthy mental attitude that a Christian ought to have. Number five: Reflect on the purpose of God.

Now, what is the purpose of God? Well, look, if you will, in verse 8: *"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."* (Philippians 4:8) *You can choose your thoughts like you can choose your friends.*

Now we need to understand that we can be selective in what gets into our mind, what we allow into our mind. And you can allow filth and debauchery and negativism to come into your mind if you want to; but you can just say, "There's no room in my mind for you right now."

How are you going to think the right things? Well, let me put it another way. How are you not going to think the wrong things? By thinking the right things. I've told you many times that God has wonderfully made you where you can't think two thoughts at one time. So if you're thinking what you ought to be thinking, you won't be thinking what you ought not to be thinking. And this is the cure for "stinking thinking": if you will think on the right things. "Things that are true": he's not talking about facts, but truth. "Things that are honest": it literally means "honorable, venerable"; things that are just not crooked. "Things that are pure": don't be looking at pornography and all kinds of ungodly lascivious things. "Things that are lovely": God is a God who created so much beauty. It's amazing how people can be around great beauty and miss it.

I heard of a little boy who went out to see the Grand Canyon and an old preacher went out to see the Grand Canyon. The old preacher wrote back to his wife and said, "Today I've seen the handiwork of God; I've seen God as He put colors on His palette, and God as He took His fingers and sculptured a masterpiece," and he went on in grandiose words to describe the Grand Canyon. The little boy wrote back to his mother

and he said, “Guess what, Ma? Today I spit a mile.” You can be surrounded by beauty, and not see it. “Whatsoever things are lovely.”

And then he says, “Whatsoever things are of good report.” You can get a bad report and dwell on it; you can get a good report. You want good news? Pick it up and read it. I’ll tell you, you open the book of Philippians, you don’t smell the dungeon; you smell heaven—you smell heaven! This is written from a prison—from a prison! You almost wish you could be there with him. He’s in prison. He says in verse 11, “Hey, don’t feel sorry for me”—“*I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content,*” (Philippians 4:11) and he says, “If you will do this, you will have the peace of God in your heart.” Verse 9: “*Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do:*”—now here’s the promise—“*and the God of peace will be with you.*” (Philippians 4:9) You almost hear him saying, “And you, too,” amen?

Conclusion

All right, let’s pray. Father God, help us to learn that you are at hand; Lord, to rejoice in you, not in circumstances; Lord, to tell you about our problems and let you protect us. Heavenly Father, I just pray that you’ll help us to control our thought life, and, Lord, to choose those right thoughts to come into our heart and into our minds, and, Lord, that your peace will guard us, your joy will gladden us, and your Spirit will guide us.

Prayer

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: July 20, 2003

Main Scripture Text: Philippians 4:6–7

“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.”

PHILIPPIANS 4:6

Outline

Introduction

- I. Why Should We Pray When God Already Knows Our Needs?
 - A. The Fellowship Factor
 - B. The Development Factor
 - C. The Dependency Factor
- II. For What Is It Proper to Pray?
- III. Does God Hear the Prayers of the Unsaved?
- IV. Why Should We Pray in the Name of Jesus?
 - A. The Name of Jesus Stands for Approval
 - B. The Name of Jesus Stands for Authority
 - C. The Name of Jesus Stands for a Claim to His Glory
- V. Does God Always Give Us What We Ask?
 - A. Sometimes We Ask for the Wrong Things
 - B. Sometimes We Ask, and There is Sin in Our Lives
 - C. The Relationship Between Husband and Wife May Be a Hindrance
 - D. You May Have a Grudge That Is a Hindrance
- VI. Does Prayer Change the Mind of God?
- VII. What Do We Do If Our Prayers Are Not Answered?
 - A. There Is a Time to Persist in Prayer
 - B. There Is a Time to Desist in Prayer
- VIII. Shall We Expect Miracles When We Pray?
- IX. Can Our Prayers Override the Will of Another Person?
- X. Does God Have Favorites Whose Prayer He Hears?
- XI. How Can I Know the Will of God in Prayer?

Conclusion

Introduction

Philippians chapter 4 and verse 6—would you find it, please; and when you’ve found it, look up here. And let me say that prayer is our greatest Christian privilege and—we might as well admit it—our greatest Christian failure. We need—all of us, including the

pastor—to learn to pray more and to learn to pray better.

Now one of the reasons that we do not pray any better or any more than we do pray is that we have questions about prayer, and these questions cause uncertainty. And this uncertainty sometimes neutralizes us and causes some dalliance about prayer. Now, see what God's Word says, however, in Philippians chapter 4, verse 6: "*Be careful for nothing;*"—that is, don't worry about anything—"but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep"—literally "guard"—"your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:6–7) Magnificent promise: "*in every thing by prayer...*"

Now you don't have to understand prayer, thank God, in order to pray. Albert Einstein before he died said he hoped to understand what light and electricity are. Now you can see how it works and not necessarily understand it. Albert Einstein, for example, would not understand totally the light that shines on us in this auditorium tonight. And if you think that you understand it, it's because you have a simplistic view. You don't understand light in its essence—what it is, and how it truly operates; but you don't have to sit around in the dark just because you don't understand the light, right? You can enjoy the light, and you can see how electricity works.

Now there are some valid questions concerning prayer. In my study I've tried to think through some of these. And these are not in any particular order; not one is more important than the other. They are certainly not all of the questions, and certainly not all of the answers to any of these questions; but I want us to think and answer some questions tonight. So the message tonight is not going to be an oratorical masterpiece, but it's going to be very practical and, I hope, helpful to you.

I. Why Should We Pray When God Already Knows Our Needs?

Question number one: Why should we pray when God already knows our needs? Why should we tell God what He already knows? Why should we ask God to do what He already wants to do? In Matthew chapter 6, verses 7 and 8, Jesus said, "*But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them:*"—now here's the key that I want to use right now—"for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him." (Matthew 6:7–8)

Now God already knows, so why should we ask God to do something that He already knows? Now, listen. We do not pray to impress God. You're not heard for your "*much speaking.*" You don't have to use poetic language. The Bible teaches that you don't have to be an amateur Shakespeare in order to pray; you don't have to use flowery language. If an earthly child can speak to an earthly father, you can speak to

your heavenly Father. You don't pray to impress God. You cannot impress God. Number two: You don't pray to inform God. You can't tell God anything He doesn't know. So if you don't pray to impress God, and don't pray to inform God, what do you pray for? You pray to invite God.

Now it's very important you understand this. Why do we tell God what He already knows? We are inviting God into our lives when we pray. Now, why do we do that?

A. **The Fellowship Factor**

Well, first of all, there's a fellowship of prayer. There's a fellowship factor. Second Corinthians chapter 6, verse 1: *"We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain."* (2 Corinthians 6:1) Now the part I'm going to choose out of that verse is that we're workers together with God. God gives us the joy, God gives us the privilege, when we pray of administrating His kingdom, His affairs—working together with Him. He could do it without us; we could not do it without Him; but what a glory that God allows us the privilege of doing it with Him!

About four or five months ago I told you a story; but I want to share it with you again tonight because it fits so perfectly. I was invited to go speak at a college somewhere near here and I said, "I can't go." They said, "Well, we'll send a plane to pick you up and bring you back the same afternoon if you'll possibly come and speak." I said, "Well, all right." So I went out to the airport, and they had a small plane out there, and I sat side by side with that pilot—one pilot and two sets of controls. He said, "Do you want to fly this thing?" I said, "I don't know how." He said, "That's okay: I'm over here. Take over." Well, I had a great time. I flew that airplane—I didn't land it, but I flew it. You know, takeoff is optional; landing is mandatory. And, anyhow, I didn't land it, but I flew it; and it was an unusual thing. As we were flying along there, it dawned on me we were having great fellowship. I was having great delight. Now again, he could fly it without me; I couldn't fly it without him; but he gave me the privilege of doing that together with him.

B. **The Development Factor**

We are workers together with God. There is the fellowship factor. There's another factor—and it is the development factor. When we pray, God is growing us. Have you ever prayed and didn't receive immediately what you asked for? What did you do? You kept on praying. But not only did you keep on praying; you began to search your life and see, "Is there something in my heart, in my life, that is hindering God from answering my prayers?" And many times, there is. And you grow through prayer.

C. **The Dependency Factor**

The fellowship factor. The development factor. And there is the dependency factor. God never wants us to live lives that are independent of Him. Now if God just did everything for us and we never had to ask, we never had to pray, soon we would begin to take

things for granted, and we would cease to depend upon God. Prayer binds us to God.

And so therefore, that's why we tell God what He already knows. He knows what we have need of before we ask; but we're definitely, specifically, unqualifiedly told to pray and to ask, not to impress God, not to inform God, but to invite God, so that we might have that fellowship with God; so that we might learn to depend upon Him; so that we might grow.

II. For What Is It Proper to Pray?

Now, second question: For what is it proper to pray? Well, our text has already told us—Philippians 4, verse 6: *“In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving...”* (Philippians 4:6) Now, according to that, we should pray about everything. Now that doesn't mean we should pray about whether we should use the knife first or the spoon first. But it means that there's nothing in life that is outside the reach of prayer. If it concerns you, it concerns God.

Now, listen to me, folks. Many of us are wondering whether or not we ought to do certain things. A good test as to whether or not you ought to do something is: “Can you pray about it?”

For example, I don't know why I'm on cigarettes today, but maybe some of you need this. And I'm so grateful that people don't smoke around the doors of this church. Aren't you grateful for that? I really am. Some churches, you know, you have to get through people out front who are barbecuing their testimony. One man was out in front of a church smoking, and somebody said, “You're a teacher in this church, aren't you?” He said, “No.” “Well,” he said, “you certainly are. You're teaching our boys and girls something—teaching the wrong thing.” But, you see, if you go out and light up, can you say, “Now, Lord, help me to smoke this cigarette for your glory; thank you for this”? No.

You see, if you can't pray about it, you ought not to do it. What we do sometimes is try to divide life into secular and sacred. We say, “This is the sacred part of life: we'll pray about this. This is the secular part of life: I'll handle this myself.”

True story: Charles Stanley was the new pastor of the First Baptist Church of Atlanta, Georgia, many years ago. The church had been through some turmoil. They were having a meeting of the deacons and the finance committee and some of the others, and they were snub up against a financial problem. And Charles said to those men around that table—they were not very deep spiritually at that time—“Men, let's pray.” One of those men said, “Preacher, this is business. We don't need to pray about this.”

Now that's the mind that a lot of people have. You kind of divide life into the sacred and into the secular. Can you imagine Jesus Christ dividing His life into the sacred and the secular? No, of course not! Our life is seamless. In all natural things, we're spiritual;

in all spiritual things, we're natural. We're naturally supernatural and supernaturally natural. We don't divide our lives into the secular and the sacred; we divide our lives into the spiritual and the profane. And if it's profane, it's out of bounds. If it is spiritual, we pray about it, whether it's in the natural or the supernatural realm.

So, what do we pray about? We pray about everything. You say, "Can I pray about small things? Can you pray about a parking space?" How many of you have ever prayed for a parking place? Sure. You pray about a lot of things. You say, "Well, that's silly; that's too small." Can you think of anything that's big to God? There's nothing big to God. You see, don't think that things are big or small according to God. The biggest thing you can think about is small to God, and the smallest thing you can think about is important to God, if it's important to you.

"Well," you say, "pastor, you say pray about everything. Suppose there's something I want, and I know it's not God's will, should I pray about that?" Absolutely! Tell God, "Lord, there's something wrong with me. I want something you don't want. Fix my *wanter*." Pray about it. I mean, if there's something that you want that you know is out of the will of God, pray about it, and tell God about it. He already knows what you're thinking, anyway. *"In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."* (Philippians 4:6)

III. Does God Hear the Prayers of the Unsaved?

Third question: Does God hear the prayers of the unsaved? Well, there was a man in the Bible who was unsaved, and it certainly seems that God heard his prayer. Read in Acts chapter 10, verses 1 through 4: *"There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band,"*—that is, here was a Gentile, a pagan, an army officer; but now, notice how he's described—*"a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway. He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius. And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God."* (Acts 10:1–4) Now here was an unsaved man, and God is aware of his prayer.

What, then, is the difference in a child of God who can pray in the name of Jesus and an unsaved man that God may have mercy upon? Now, listen. God has given promises to the child of God in prayer that He's not given to the unsaved.

Let me see if I can get an example of this. A banker—a bank president—may give money to charity. He doesn't have to; there's no law that says he must. But he may decide that's what he wants to do. He may give money to charity. But if I have money on deposit in that bank, I can go in and write a check and expect it to come to me. Do

you see the difference? You see, God is sovereign: God can hear the prayer of an unsaved person; but we who are Christians have the great prayer promises, and we can write checks on heaven's bank and sign the name of Jesus to those checks if we're asking in the will of God.

IV. Why Should We Pray in the Name of Jesus?

Next question: Why should we pray in the name of Jesus? Now Jesus taught us to pray in His name. In John chapter 14, verses 13 and 14, Jesus said, *“And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.”* (John 14:13–14) That seems like an awful big promise. Does that mean that we can sign the name of Jesus to any prayer we ask and have whatever we want—a gold Cadillac in the name of the Jesus, a ranch in Palm Springs in the name of Jesus? No.

What does it mean to pray in the name of Jesus? The name stands for three things.

A. The Name of Jesus Stands for Approval

First of all, it stands for approval. That is, Jesus approves this thing.

When I was a kid, I used to have a baseball bat signed by a major league baseball player. Well, he didn't really sign it; but, you know, that logo was stamped on it. I think—I can't even remember which one it was now—but let's say it was Ted Williams, and his name was on that bat. Well, that means he says—all this is theoretical, because I don't believe this—but theoretically, he says, “I approve this bat.” Now he probably never saw that bat; but his name is on it. Name means, “I approve it.”

Now you can't ask anything in the name of Jesus without His approval.

B. The Name of Jesus Stands for Authority

The second thing that name means is “with His authority.”

Now we have people who purchase things for the church here. They have a purchase order, and that purchase order has to be signed if it reaches a certain amount, in order to have control. People just can't go out and say, “I want something in the name of Bellevue Baptist Church.” There has to be an authority behind it. To pray in the name of Jesus means, “This is a purchase order that Jesus has signed off on, that He has approved.”

Did you know, Brother David, that here about twenty years ago or more we had a man and a wife and their son who were members of our church—somehow their name was on the roll, at least—and they were going from door to door in the neighborhood, collecting money for Bellevue Baptist Church: “Hello. We're from Bellevue Baptist Church. Would you like to make a donation to our church?” Now, friend, I want to tell you something. If I had seen them do that personally—to the moon! That's not the way

we raise money, anyway. Number two: They were crooks. They were putting the money in their own pocket. But they were asking in the name of Bellevue Baptist Church. It was a forgery; it was a lie.

You'd be surprised how many people try to sign Jesus' name to certain requests: "I want this; I want that—in the name of Jesus."

C. The Name of Jesus Stands for a Claim to His Glory

To pray in the name of Jesus means it is something He approves. Number two: It means something He authorizes. And, number three: Not only does it mean approval and authorization, but it means a claim: It is for His glory—for His glory.

I have a grove of trees planted over in Israel. Some friends—they are Jews, who love me—said, "Dr. Rogers, we have planted a grove a trees in your name. It is the Adrian Rogers grove of trees." I hope they're still living. I've never seen them; but they're planted there in my name. What were they saying? "We want to honor you; so it's in your name."

Now when you come to the place where you can pray for something Jesus approves, Jesus authorizes, and Jesus gets the acclaim and the glory for, then you're praying in Jesus' name, okay? So that's what it means to pray in the name of Jesus.

Not every prayer that's prayed with the words "in the name of Jesus" is in the name of Jesus. For example, Acts 19, verses 13 through 17: "*Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists,*"—that means "people who cast demons out"—"*took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the LORD Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so. And the evil spirit answered...*"—this is really kind of funny, guys—"and the evil spirit answered..."—I mean, it's pathetic; it's really—forgive me for laughing, but I can't help it—"the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded." (Acts 19:13–16)

Now these people are saying to the demons, "In the name of Jesus, come out of him"—seven on one. One man whipped them and ran them out of town, stripped all the clothes off of them. What was wrong with that whole thing? "In the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches," not "the name of Jesus that I know." Don't you dare come and ask something in the name of Jesus that Adrian preaches. You'd better say, "In the name of Jesus that I know, the Jesus who is the Lord of my life." You have no right to forge His name to any check and pray anything in the name of Jesus that is outside of His will, the leadership of His Holy Spirit. Now we pray in the name of Jesus.

V. Does God Always Give Us What We Ask?

Number five: Does God always give us what we ask? No. And thank God. Have you ever thanked God for unanswered prayer? You ought to.

A. Sometimes We Ask for the Wrong Things

Let me tell you about a prayer that Moses prayed—Numbers 11, verses 11 to 15: *“And Moses said unto the LORD, Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant?”*—now he’s fussing at God—*“and wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me...”*—he had pastored the First Baptist Church in the Wilderness: about two thousand people. He was like the man who said, “I don’t mind being swallowed by a whale; I hate to be nibbled to death by minnows”—*“have I not found favour in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me? Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swarest to give unto their fathers? Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? for they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh, that we may eat. I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me. And if thou deal thus with me,”*—now here’s his prayer—*“kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness.”* (Numbers 11:11–15)

“God, if you really love me, whack me. If you really love me, take me out. If I’ve found favor in your sight, do me a favor, O God, and kill me.” That was a prayer. Did God answer it? Nope—I think not. If you’ll read this prayer, there are thirteen personal pronouns in it: *I, me, my*. He’s all wrapped up in himself; feeling sorry for himself. You see, sometimes we ask God for the wrong things, and that’s why God doesn’t answer our prayers. And we ought to thank Him that He doesn’t.

Let me give you another example—Matthew 20, verses 20 through 22: *“Then came to him the mother of Zebedees children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him. And he said unto her, What wilt thou?”* “Mrs. Zebedee, what do you want of me?” In other words, she’s praying, and He said unto her, *“What wilt thou?”*—“What do you want?” *“She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left, in thy kingdom. But Jesus answered and said,”*—now, underscore this if you don’t mind underscoring in your Bible—*“Ye know not what ye ask...”*—how many times have you prayed, and the Lord said, “Poor thing, he doesn’t know what he’s asking”—“she doesn’t know what she’s asking”?—*“Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They”*—that is, James and John—*“say”*—“Yep”—*“...We are able.”* (Matthew 20:20–22) But they weren’t. They did not know.

Many times, we pray; we ask God to do things we think would be good and right—

but we just don't know. That's the reason the Holy Spirit has to make intercession with groanings that cannot be uttered. (Romans 8:26)

It is reported—I don't know whether this is true or not—but Mrs. Billy Graham, Ruth Graham, said, "I'm grateful God didn't give me everything I asked for. If He had, I would have married the wrong man on four different occasions." She said, "Lord, let me marry John, Joe, Jim, Bill"—whomever. Well, no. She married Bill. But God was saving Billy for Ruth.

B. Sometimes We Ask, and There is Sin in Our Lives

Now sometimes we ask for the wrong things. Then, sometimes we ask, and our prayer is not answered. Why? The answer is so simple: because there's sin in our lives. Now we talk about great prayer promises. I want to give you some prayer promises. You may not like them; but they're prayer promises.

Isaiah 59, verse 2, says, "*But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.*" (Isaiah 59:2) It's not that He cannot; it means that He will not. Why? Because sin has caused God to turn His face against you.

Or let me give you even a more clear delineation. In Psalm 66 and verse 18, the psalmist said, "*If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.*" (Psalm 66:18) Now it doesn't say, "If I've sinned, the Lord will not hear me"—thank God for that, because we've all sinned—but "if I regard iniquity."

Let my Bible—that represents sin—illustrate what I'm talking about. We say, "Well, the pastor says nobody's perfect. So everybody has a sin. So this will be my sin. Sweet little sin. I love that sin." Where do I have it? Right here in my heart. "Nice guy." "Now, Lord, here's what I would like for you to do for me." "Nice sin." "Lord, I need healing. Lord, I need a job. Lord, I need..." "Nice fellow." Do you think God's going to hear that prayer? "*If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.*"

Do you know what? If God were to answer the prayer of a person like this, do you know what God would be doing? Encouraging us to sin, would He not? Very, very simply, the reason that some of us don't get our prayers answered is not all that complicated. It's not that we're asking for the wrong thing. We may be asking for the right thing, but there's sin in our heart.

C. The Relationship Between Husband and Wife May Be a Hindrance

How about your home? Husband and wives, were you married by the Justice of Peace or the Secretary of War? First Peter 3:7: "*Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.*" (1 Peter 3:7) The relationship that you have with your husband or your wife may be the reason that

your prayer is not answered.

D. You May Have a Grudge That Is a Hindrance

Maybe you have a grudge today. Maybe you're feeding a fever, nursing a grudge, and you're asking God to do something for you. And Jesus clearly said in Matthew chapter 6, verse 14, "*For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.*" (Matthew 6:14) But if you don't forgive, your heavenly Father can't forgive you. Now if you're holding a grudge, there's no deep, dark secret why your prayer may not be answered.

VI. Does Prayer Change the Mind of God?

Now, next—six: Does prayer change the mind of God? It's a very important question: Does prayer change the mind of God? May I say clearly, no, it does not. *Prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance; prayer is laying hold of God's will.* First John chapter 5, verse 14: "*And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.*" (1 John 5:14) *The only thing that lies outside the reach of prayer is that which lies outside the will of God.*

You see, God is a changeless God. You can't change Him with your prayers, and I can't change Him with mine. Why? First Samuel 15, verse 29: "*And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man, that he should repent*" (1 Samuel 15:29)—that is, "that God would change." Malachi 3, verse 6: "*For I am the LORD, I change not.*" (Malachi 3:6) James 1, verse 17: "*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.*" (James 1:17) That is, God is not light and dark. Goes does not flicker on and off. He does not change.

So I want to say again *that prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance; it is laying hold of His will.* But God will do things when we pray that He will not do if we don't pray. Prayer does not change God; it does not change God's character. But it does affect what God does. And the Bible says clearly and plainly, "We have not, because we ask not." (James 4:2)

VII. What Do We Do If Our Prayers Are Not Answered?

Now, what do we do if our prayers are not answered? What if your prayer is not answered? That is the next question.

A. There Is a Time to Persist in Prayer

Well, let me say, number one, if you pray, and your prayer is not answered, you keep on praying. There's a time to persist in praying. Daniel chapter 10 and verse 2—Daniel prayed for three solid weeks about a matter—Daniel 10, verse 2: "*In those days I Daniel*

was mourning three full weeks.” (Daniel 10:2) Twenty-one days Daniel prays. Well, was God hearing that prayer? Look in Daniel chapter 10 and verse 12. An angel came to Daniel and said, *“Then he said unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words.”* (Daniel 10:12) An angel came with an answer to Daniel.

Now Daniel had been praying for twenty-one days. It looked like God was not doing anything. But as you study this passage, it’s a very intriguing passage, almost enigmatic; but there’s a cosmic war going on. And the angels of God, and demonic spirits—the prince of Persia—are wrestling in the cosmic arena. And the angel comes and says, “Daniel, your prayer was heard when you began to pray three weeks ago.” Daniel prayed and he kept on praying. And Luke 18:1—Jesus said, *“And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.”* (Luke 18:1) There’s a time to persist in prayer.

B. There Is a Time to Desist in Prayer

There’s a time to desist in prayer; there’s a time when you quit praying. The example of this is the Apostle Paul. Paul prayed three times. It doesn’t mean, “Lord, do this! Lord, do it! Lord, do it!” It means there were three specific periods of prayer. He had a thorn in the flesh. He prayed, “O God, take away this thorn”—and God didn’t do it. He prayed again, “Lord, take away this thorn”—and God didn’t do it. He prayed again, and God did not take away the thorn. But God did answer him in a different way.

Put down 2 Corinthians chapter 12 and verse 9: *“And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.”* And Paul said, *“Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”* (2 Corinthians 12:9) Paul didn’t say, “What can’t be cured must be endured.” He said, “I’ll just glory in it; I’ll thank God in it.” God did not give Paul what he asked, but God gave Paul something better than he asked. And God said *no* to Paul, but God gave Paul something different. So delays are not necessary denials. And if God does deny, it doesn’t mean that He’s withholding His love; it just means that He has given you something better.

I want to share a personal testimony. I had a man who did something very wrong, very egregious, to someone that I love very much. And I prayed about it, and prayed about it, and prayed about it, and prayed about it. I asked God to change that man’s heart. And God did not change that man’s heart, because I was asking God to do something that God was not going to do. God has never ever really forced His will upon anybody. But God said to me, “Adrian, I have heard your prayer. I’m not going to give you what you ask; but I’m going to give you something better than you asked.” And He

did. And for that, I praise Him.

Now if you are praying for something and it doesn't seem that your prayer is being answered, keep on praying until God tells you to quit. I can remember when God spoke to me in my heart. You pray until God says *yes*, or you pray until God says *no*; but you'll have the answer either way. But you keep on praying. If your prayer is not answered, you persist until God says *desist*. But you will have the answer; and the answer will be *yes*, or the answer will be *no*.

VIII. Shall We Expect Miracles When We Pray?

Now, next: Shall we expect miracles when we pray? Well, let me say, friend, never get in the habit of saying what God cannot do. The only thing God cannot do is to sin, or to lie, or to deny Himself. But listen to Jeremiah 32, verse 17: *“Ah Lord GOD! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee.”* (Jeremiah 32:17) There's nothing too hard for God. God is a God of might and miracle.

Now, in a sense, all answered prayer is a miracle, because the supernatural is moving into the natural. So any time there's an answered prayer, in the classic sense, that is supernatural. But there are other kinds of miracles: miracles in nature, where God turns water into wine, and God heals, takes away cancers, and all of those things. Do I believe God does that? Yes, I do. But these are not normative. You're going to find in the Bible that miracles came in clusters in Bible times. They had certain things in common. They gave glory to God. They did not glorify men. They validated the claims or the identity of God. And they advanced God's work significantly. But God is a God of might, and God is a God of miracles. And if God has a miracle for you, He'll give you miracle faith—He'll give you miracle faith. Now I never discount miracles, but miracles are not normative. That does not mean that God does not answer prayer.

IX. Can Our Prayers Override the Will of Another Person?

Next—and we're almost finished: Can our prayers override the will of another person? No. God has given man a free will, and God will never force a man's free will.

Now there's some theology that says God will. I don't believe that at all. Revelation 22, verse 17: *“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”* (Revelation 22:17) God gives you a will, and you can say *yes* or *no* with that will. It's a dubious privilege that you have.

Now people must choose God for themselves. If you have a wayward child, a husband, a friend, a neighbor, you can pray for that person, but you cannot force your will upon him. Now, why then do you pray for the unsaved? Why do we pray for our

friends? Because there's a spiritual warfare, and we can bind the powers of darkness in prayer. We can bring God's influence to people in prayer.

Let me give you an example—Matthew chapter 17, verses 14 through 21: *“And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him,”*—that is, to Jesus—*“and saying, Lord, have mercy upon my son: for he is lunatick,”*—now what that means is he was mentally ill—*“and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water. And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him. Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me. And Jesus rebuked the devil;”*—now every time you read the word *devil* in this sense, it refers to demons. There's one devil and many demons. In one sense, it could have been Satan himself; but most likely it means, “Jesus rebuked the demon”—*“and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour.”* Now, notice the child had Jesus working from the outside sovereignly upon him. *“Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out?”*—that is, the demon out. *“And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit this kind”—*that is, demon possession—*“goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.”* (Matthew 17:14–21)

Now here was a child who was hopeless and helpless apart from the prayer of somebody else. This is not a case of forcing the will of the child, but it is freeing the child from demon obsession and demon possession. Now when we pray, we have a hell-bent world in the grip of Satan. And our prayers do not force people to be saved, but our prayers free people to be saved. We bind away the blinder who blinds their eyes. They must individually receive Christ. If God were to force just one person to be saved, then He'd have to force all six billion people on earth to be saved. God does not force salvation. Forced love is a contradiction in terms. But God frees people to be saved—and through our prayers.

When I was preparing this message, I thought of an episode that happened to me as a young preacher. I was pastoring as a college student a little church, the First Baptist Church of Fellsmere, Florida, a town of about six hundred people. It was the first Baptist, last Baptist, and only Baptist church in that town. There was a boy, a young man, named Johnny Sowell. He was about nineteen years of age. I wanted to win Johnny Sowell to Jesus Christ. Johnny was boarding in a house, and there were all kinds of children in that house. And when I would go to the house to try to witness to Johnny, the little kids in that house were so glad to see me come. I would sit down on the couch. They would just cover me up, and want to talk to me, and so on; and I

couldn't talk to Johnny about Jesus. I was really burdened for him. And I got on my knees—actually, on my face—in a deacon's living room. He let me use his house for prayer. And I was praying. And I prayed for Johnny. And I said, "O God, I want Johnny to be saved. O God, show me what to do."

Now, folks, it was mysterious, and I can't explain this completely how this happened in my heart, but God said, "You go downtown. There on the street corner you'll see Johnny. You ask Johnny if he wants to go to Vero Beach"—that was about fifteen miles away. "He'll get in the car. You go with him. You tell him about me. And he'll get saved." I got in my car and drove downtown. There he was downtown—I mean, man, crossroads! There he was standing on the street corner—Johnny was right there! I said, "Hi, Johnny. I'm going to Vero Beach. You want to go with me?" He said, "Sure thing," and jumped in the car. We drove to Vero Beach, turned around, and came back. I had nothing to do in Vero Beach but talk to him about Jesus. When we got back, I stopped the car, turned off the engine; we bowed our heads; he prayed and asked Jesus Christ to come into his heart and was saved. I wish more things like that happened to me, you know, to that degree. And I still don't understand all of it. But I do believe that that prayer did not force that man's will but it freed him to be saved. It got him in a place where he could say yes to the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so our prayers do not override the will of another person. God has given us all free will. But God enables us to pray and to bring people to a knowledge of Jesus and to bind away the power of Satan. Now we're almost finished.

X. Does God Have Favorites Whose Prayer He Hears?

Next: Does God have favorites whose prayer He hears? You know, I was on an airplane this past week, and somebody said, "Oh, I was so glad when I saw you on this airplane. I knew we were going to be safe." You know, I have people say to me, "Would you pray for me? I know God hears your prayers," like somehow God has favorites. With God, there's no respect of persons. Listen to this verse—Psalm 65, verse 2: "*O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.*" (Psalm 65:2) There's no respect of persons with God. Friend, God will hear your prayer just as quickly as He will hear mine or Billy Graham's or anybody else's. "Unto you, O God that hears prayer, shall all flesh come."

Now there are certain people that if I have a prayer need I'll go to. One of them is sitting right out here looking at me right now. She's a friend of mine. And I turn a prayer request over to Pat. We'll do it tomorrow morning—Pat Caldwell. When I pray, I pray on Monday mornings in a prayer chain from 7:00 to 7:30, then I call Miss Pat—and I'm always just a little late; can't get finished with the Lord—and I call Miss Pat, and she says, "Now, pastor, what can I pray for you about?" I appreciate that, Pat—I really do:

“What can I pray with you about?” And I say, “Well, I’m doing this, or this, or this.”

Now, does that mean that God will hear her prayer more than anybody else? Of course not! But I know this: that she believes in prayer, and therefore I can ask her to pray. But I could ask anybody who believes in prayer and believes in God and has a clear life, a clean life, to pray. Friend, *God has intimates, but He doesn’t have favorites.* And all who know and love the Lord Jesus can pray.

XI. How Can I Know the Will of God in Prayer?

Now, last of all—and I know this has been long, and it may seem rambling to you; but these are questions that have come to me as I’ve thought about prayer—and that is, how can I know the will of God in prayer? Now, remember I’ve told you nothing lies outside the reach of prayer but that which lies outside the will of God. First John chapter 5 and verses 14 and 15: “*And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.*” (1 John 5:14–15) Well, how then are we going to pray in the will of God? For successful praying is prayer for those who are surrendered to God’s will.

One of the greatest lessons I’ve learned about prayer is this—and I’m still learning: *The prayer that gets to heaven is the prayer that starts in heaven.* What we do is just close the circuit. “*For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things.*” (Romans 11:36)

So, how do we know the will of God? And, by the way, don’t be afraid of the will of God. The will of God is what you would want if you knew everything from God’s viewpoint. John 15, verse 7—here’s the key—Jesus said, “*If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.*” (John 15:7) Why? Because at that time, what I will blends with what He wills: “If you abide in me, and my words abide in you...” Friend, if you love the Son of God and love the Word of God, abide in Jesus.

Remember I spoke this morning about “Where on Earth Does God Live.” And we said that He comes to abide in us, to live in us. That’s union. But there’s a difference between union and communion. Communion means “to fellowship with Him, the God who abides in you.” “*What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost...which ye have of God...?*” (1 Corinthians 6:19) Fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Abide in Him. And when you abide in Him—the analogy that Jesus used—it is like a branch abiding in a vine. That branch receives its nourishment, its sustenance, its life, from the vine. That’s what you do with the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is real to you—a bright, living reality. You abide in Him, and His Word abides in you. “*Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*” (Romans 10:17) And you’re going to find out

that God will guide, God will direct, your prayers. And you will find yourself praying in the will of God.

Conclusion

Now I must finish the message. But, friend, don't wait until you have all of the answers before you pray. You don't have to understand electricity to turn on the lights, amen? One of my favorite songs is this:

*What a friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer!*
—JOSEPH M. SCRIVEN

The greatest privilege we have is prayer. Alas, alas, the greatest failure that most of us have is prayer. *“And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.”* (Luke 18:1) Again, the Bible says, *“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication let your requests be made known unto God.”* (Philippians 4:6)

I want to confess to you that my prayer life has never been all that it ought to be. And I don't stand up here as the paragon of excellence, but I stand up here as a fellow believer and pilgrim, praying with you, “Lord, teach me to pray.” I want to be a man of prayer. I want our church to be a church of prayer. “Unto thee that answereth prayer shall all flesh come.” (Psalm 65:2)