

ADRIAN ROGERS

# LEGACY

C O L L E C T I O N



## J E R E M I A H

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

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



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

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

# Jeremiah

1. **Pro-Choice Is No Choice** | *Jeremiah 1:5*
2. **The Balm of Gilead** | *Jeremiah 8:22*
3. **A New Day in God's Way** | *Jeremiah 10:23*
4. **God's Guidance** | *Jeremiah 10:23*
5. **A New Start** | *Jeremiah 18:1–8*
6. **Hope for Broken Vessels** | *Jeremiah 18:1–10, 19*
7. **A Life Made Over** | *Jeremiah 18:3–6*
8. **Israel, God's Miracle Nation** | *Jeremiah 31:35–37*
9. **There Is Nothing Too Hard for God** | *Jeremiah 32:17*
10. **Mighty Prayer** | *Jeremiah 33:3*
11. **Mighty Prayer** | *Jeremiah 33:3*

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

# Pro Choice Is No Choice

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: May 13, 1990**

**Main Scripture Text: Jeremiah 1:5**

*“Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.”*

JEREMIAH 1:5

## Outline

Introduction

- I. It Is the Taking of Innocent Life
- II. It Transgresses the Golden Rule
- III. It Is Contrary to Human Nature

Conclusion

- A. Be Informed
- B. Work and Pray for a Constitutional Amendment to Overturn Roe v Wade
- C. Begin to Teach Sexual Morality in the Church and at Home
- D. Have More Compassion for the Unwed Mother
- E. We Need to Speak Out Clearly
- F. Pray That God Will Have Mercy on America

## Introduction

I want you to take God's Word and open tonight to the book of Jeremiah chapter 1. I want you to note this verse: Jeremiah 1 and verse 5: “Before I formed thee in the womb I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.” I want to speak to you tonight on this subject: “Pro-Choice Is No Choice.”

We hear a lot of people today talking about freedom of choice—freedom of choice—freedom of choice. And I say, “Finish the sentence. What is the choice that you are so free to make?” Freedom of choice is freedom to kill as they interpret. May I tell you that my heart is heavy? May I tell you, incredibly, more babies have been killed by abortion since 1973 than the combined populations of New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Dallas, Chicago, Philadelphia, Detroit, Saint Louis, and Atlanta, put together. My desire and my prayer is tonight—that God would enable me, with my stammering tongue and inadequate abilities, to say something that will at least save some.

*I heard of a man one day who was walking down the beach at low tide. And somehow, there had been a storm, an upheaval, and the beach was literally covered*

with starfish. They were all over: little starfish, small starfish; they were up there on the beach. And a man in front of the other man was reaching down, picking up those starfish, and just sailing them back into the water. But there were millions of them. And of course, he was only putting back hundreds. The man, who saw the man throwing the starfish back, stopped him; he said, "What are you doing?" He said, "I'm—I'm trying to save these starfish." "Hey," he said, "there are so many of them. That won't make any difference." He said, "It'll make a difference to this one." Amen? It'll make a difference to this one.

Oh, if God, tonight, could save one baby, this sermon would be worth it. Just to save one baby! Oh, how my heart goes out tonight to these precious little babies! Tomorrow, in so-called "God-blessed" America, more than four thousand little preborn lives will be snuffed out. These are real people. They will suffer capital punishment, but they'll have no trial. They will be afforded no counsel before they are executed. And when they are executed, these babies will be executed in a cruel and an inhumane way.

Now, who are the conspirators in this atrocity? Well, in the first place, the Supreme Court justices who voted for Roe v. Wade; secondly, governmental social planners; thirdly, doctors and physicians who will do for money what they should never do; next, the owners of abortion clinics, abortifactoriums, chambers of death; next, willing fathers and willing mothers. I say about one and a half million will be put to death in America. Pharaoh who murdered the little babies, and Hitler who slaughtered the thousands and the millions in his gas chambers, and others are going to have to take a back seat; they've fallen back into the shadows.

On January 22, 1973, nine men robed in black issued a decree that today is America's national shame. It is now legal in America to kill a baby. It is legal to kill a baby. The only requirement is that the baby still lives inside the mother, that the mother wants the baby killed, and that there's a doctor willing to do the killing. That's it! It's legal to kill a baby if you can just get those things together: the baby still lives inside the mother, the mother wants the baby killed, and there's a doctor willing to do the killing. Well, you say, "That sounds gruesome." It is gruesome. Did you know that in the United States of America, it is legal to kill a baby even in the ninth month, and the mother could be in labor, and that baby could be put to death?

Not so long ago, a baby was born in the maternity suite, there in the hospital, in the room where babies are born, not the maternity suite, but the hospital room, the labor room. And the father was there. And the father took that newborn babe as it was just delivered, took the babe in his own hands, threw that baby against the wall, and killed that child. Do you know what they did? They arrested that father for murder. And they should have. But only a few hours before that, a doctor could have been paid for doing the same thing. Now, I ask you, does that make sense? Of course it doesn't make

sense.

My dear friend, few would argue the matter that an abortion may be admissible to save the life of a mother. But let me tell you what *Roe v. Wade* ruled. January 22, 1973—here it is: A state, Tennessee or any other state, is forbidden to proscribe—that means “to forbid”—abortion anytime prior to birth—anytime prior to birth, if in the opinion of—quote: “one licensed physician, an abortion is necessary to preserve the life or health of the mother.” Now I say, few would argue about preserving the life of the mother, and I’ll talk about that in a moment. But what about the health of the mother? What do they mean by the health of the mother? The court’s own definition of the health of the mother—here’s the way they describe that: “that the medical judgment may be exercised”—now, they are having judgment as to the health of the mother—“the medical judgment may be exercised in the light of all factors: physical, emotional, psychological, familial,”—that is, family factors—“and the woman’s age, relevant to the well-being of the patient.” All of these would be factors that would relate to health.

Now, let me just spell that out even more. A woman who is pregnant and carrying a baby could have an abortion, according to the Supreme Court, if it would force upon her “a distressful life in the future,” or if it would produce in their minds “psychological harm,” or if it would “tax the mental and physical health of the mother by child care,” or if it would bring “the distress associated with an unwanted child”—just, I don’t want this child; that distresses me.

I’ve told you before when I was in Washington, DC, testifying before Senate Committee as president of the Southern Baptist Convention, about abortion; I told Senator Orrin Hatch what the Bible had to say, in my estimation, about abortion. And I went out into the hallway there of that senate chamber. And a woman came out there to speak to me. She was a deaconess in a church up there and also a lawyer. She came up to me, and she put her hands on her hips. She said, “I don’t understand you.” I said, “What do you mean?” She said, “I just don’t see how you—you’re a man, you have no understanding.” She said, “You do not understand what it would mean for a woman to have an unwanted pregnancy; what a trauma it would be; what a distress it would be!” I said, “Now, wait a minute. Let me get this thing straight. Are you saying if people traumatize you or distress you that we ought to snuff them out? Is that what you’re saying? Because,” I said, “Lady, you are traumatizing me.” And I said, “You are distressing me no little bit.” Now, I said, “Suppose I take my thumbs and put them in your vocal cord right now and strangle you!” Well, she started backing up. I said, “At least you could run. At least you could scream and cry out for help. Who is going to stand up for these little babies?” I’m sure that gal went back and said, “That man threatened to strangle me.” Well, I didn’t.

But you see, *Roe v. Wade* says, “If there is even distress associated with an

unwanted child, then that baby can be put to death.” Next, if it will bring “a child into a family already unable, psychologically or otherwise, to care for it,” or if it will bring “the continuing difficulties and stigma of unwed motherhood.”—so I don’t want the stigma that I had a baby out of wedlock, so I will put my baby to death.

Well you say, “Brother Rogers, are you talking about babies that are babies—I mean that have hands and feet and eyes and hair and fingernails?” Yes. Last year, my friend, in New York State alone, more babies in the third trimester—more than four thousand babies in New York State alone in the third trimester—these are babies that could easily live outside the womb—were put to death by abortion. And there is story after story of little babies that are born live, where the doctors just simply muffed the abortion.

A little baby that appeared on Jerry Falwell’s program—his name was John DeHaas; he was a little Korean baby. And over in Korea, they had tried to perform an abortion on this baby, and they muffed it. And the little baby came out; his head was all twisted; his body was injured. I thought about your little baby that you gave a testimony about. This little baby’s head—because they had scraped it and twisted it and torn it and his body was just all disjointed—but he was breathing. And somebody had compassion on that little baby, this so-called aborted fetus, and he was saved; little John was saved. And by a miraculous sequence of events, Reverend and Mrs. John DeHaas found that little Korean boy, adopted him, and raised him, and now he’s perfectly healthy. He was on Jerry’s program and he quoted Scripture verses and sang songs, and he loves the Lord Jesus Christ.

Are you trying to tell me that wasn’t a little baby? That was a baby! What about these little babies that are born prematurely and they live? And they are calling that a fetus and it was a baby after all. Of course it was. Let me tell you something, friend. An unborn baby is human life! When the ovum and the sperm are united, it becomes human life. Now, it’s only a small little human life, and it will continue to grow and change, and grow and change, but it is the same life that grows and changes. Nothing is added except nutrition and water. That’s all; nothing is added. It is the same life in progression; it is growing. “Oh,” they say, “that’s not human life.” Well, if it’s not human life, what kind of life is it? Is it animal life? Is it vegetable life? You say, “Well, we’re not sure.”

All right, suppose I have a machine gun, and I know that somebody is standing behind a door, and I fire that machine gun. That’s murder, right? Yes. All right, suppose I have a machine gun, and I know that nobody is standing behind that door, and I fire that machine gun. That’s not murder, right? But suppose I’m just not sure whether somebody is standing behind that door or not, I’m thinking there may be or there may not be, and I fire that machine gun. Am I then guilty if somebody dies? Yes. You see, what I need to do is to be sure, not whether or not that it is life or not, but before I can

take that life, I have to be sure that it is not human life. When anybody says, “We can’t be sure,” then I say, “My dear friend, if you’re going to err, err on the side of life.” This is life and it is life from God.

Jeremiah 1, verse 5, God said to Jeremiah, “Before I formed thee in the womb I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb”—thou, a man—“I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.” When John the Baptist was in his mother’s womb, carried about by Elisabeth; Mary, the mother of the Lord Jesus, came and met with Elisabeth. Mary is pregnant, and Jesus is in her womb. John the Baptist is in Elisabeth’s womb. And the Bible says in Luke chapter 1 and verse 41, listen to this: “And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary,”—that is, when Mary said, “Hello, Elisabeth”—“the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost.” The little baby, John the Baptist, supernaturally recognized the presence of Jesus in Mary’s womb. And the word that is used for babe is *brephos*. And Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon says of *brephos*, the word that is used here for babe in Mary’s womb: “an unborn child, an embryo, a fetus, a newborn child, an infant, a babe.” The word is used for a baby. Whether it is born or unborn, it is simply called a baby.

Now, *brephos*: Is the life human life? Turn with me to Psalm 139. Listen to the words of God. I’m going to begin reading this wonderful psalm in verse 13. I suggest you read the whole psalm. “For thou hast possessed my inward parts: thou hast covered me”—not it, but me—“in my mother’s womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hidden from thee, when I was made in secret, and intricately wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unformed; and in thy book all my members were written”—that is, the genetic code, the DNA—“were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.” Do you get the idea of continuation? When those chromosomes come together, male and female, when they come, my dear friend, again I say, “That is when there is a human life.” The Bible does not distinguish between prenatal and postnatal life. And this psalm says that preborn babies are the subject of God’s love and God’s concern. And the Bible says that what is happening in the womb is the work of God—that it is wonderful and that it is fearful—for God is forming a child within that mother.

Now, I want to give you some reasons why pro-choice is no choice.

## **I. It Is the Taking of Innocent Life**

First of all, it is the taking of innocent life. The Bible says in Proverbs chapter 6 and verse 16, that God hates him that sheds innocent blood. Now, you can use all kinds of convoluted, high-sounding arguments; but after a while, human instincts, even if you did not have the Word of God, would teach you there is something intrinsically and

fundamentally wrong. Dr. Bernard N. Nathanson, who was an obstetrician and a gynecologist, once an assistant professor at Cornell University Medical School—my dear friend, when you teach at Cornell, you're high up—a leader of the National Association for the Repeal of Abortion Laws, he said, "We've got to get all of these abortion laws off the books. We've got to have freedom of choice." He was the director of the first and largest abortion clinic in the Western world. Now, this man had performed, had superintended—are you listening?—sixty thousand abortions in eighteen months. And then suddenly, he resigned. He quit! And this is what he said after sixty thousand abortions: "I am deeply troubled by my own increasing certainty that I had in fact presided over sixty thousand deaths"—my certainty that I had done it—Now, friend, this is not a backwoods Baptist preacher talking; this is a medical doctor who'd taught at Cornell. He said, "God forbid," and now he's working hard to stop what is happening in America today.

## **II. It Transgresses the Golden Rule**

Why is pro-choice no choice? Because it is pro-choice to take innocent life! Second reason: pro-choice is no choice because it transgresses the Golden Rule. What is the golden rule? The golden rule is Matthew chapter 7 and verse 12: "You do unto others as you would have others do unto you." Is there any mother here who would want to be killed by being dismembered? Then don't do it! Is there any doctor here who would like to be trapped in some sort of a cell or chamber, and have someone pour a corrosive fluid over your body, and have that fluid be forced into your lungs and stomach, and so you, Mr. Doctor, would be left to convulse until you were dead? Would you want that to happen to you? Then don't do it! Is there a judge here who would like to be torn out of his home and ripped apart by a powerful machine? If you don't want that to happen to you, or wouldn't want that to happen to you, then you ought not to do it to someone about that little, who can't take care of himself or herself.

## **III. It Is Contrary to Human Nature**

Pro-choice is no choice. Third reason that pro-choice is no choice: It is absolutely and fundamentally contrary to human nature, human instinct. Even if you don't know God, it's contrary to the way that human beings are formed and built. The Bible speaks of the ultimate in sin in Romans chapter 1, verse 31, and it speaks of a generation "without understanding, covenant breakers," and then it uses a strange word: "without natural affection." The word is *astorgos*, and it really means "a lack of love and natural affection toward one's own children." The mothering instinct is supposed to be so strong that the mother would die for her babies, not put her babies to death.

Pro-choice is no choice: it is contrary to natural instinct. Pro-choice is no choice



because it is rooted primarily in selfishness. Now, the pro-choice people want you to believe that the abortion is for the overburdened and the poor. But may I tell you, dear friend, that ninety-seven percent of the abortions performed in America are convenience abortions. Ninety-seven percent of the abortions performed in America are convenience abortions. Seventy percent of women aborting are unmarried; fifty-three percent have no other children; most are over twenty; most are white; most are middle- and upper-class; and over one-third of the women who have had abortions are going back for the second, third, and fourth abortions. In many instances these are people who have participated in illicit sex, or they are professional women who do not want their profession interrupted, or people who don't want to be bothered with a child. It's rooted in selfishness.

A doctor will get from three to five hundred dollars for an abortion, I'm told. Well, 1.5 million times 350 dollars: that's big business. The abortion business in America is big business. And there are those whose mansions are built—those mansions have children's blood for mortar and children's bones for bricks—and the doctor lives in them. And, my dear friend, this whole thing is built on selfishness.

Pro-choice is no choice. You say, "But wait a minute. You're so one-sided. You don't give the other side. What about all of the arguments? Life doesn't begin at conception; life begins at breathing." That's what they say; after all, when Adam breathed, God breathed into Adam's nostrils the breath of life, and then Adam became a living soul. And so they say Adam had no life until he had breath. But may I tell you that the baby is already alive. And the baby in its mother's womb is already breathing. It is breathing through the umbilical tube. Well, somebody says, "But it might be necessary to save the mother's life. As I've said before, almost all would agree that an abortion is allowable to save the mother's life because, though unwittingly, we could say that the babe is the aggressor, and in self-defense the mother's life may be saved. But I like what Dr. Jérôme Lejeune had to say about this, and it makes more sense than almost anything I've heard. He said, "I would never attack and kill the unborn child." Now, what he meant by that was this: that his purpose would be not to kill the child, but to save the life of the mother. And if the child died in the process, that would be sad indeed. But he said, "I would never attack and kill the baby. I would attempt to save the mother."

Somebody says, "Well, but what about incest? What about rape?" My dear friend, one of the most gracious and great ladies that this world has known was a great gospel singer named Ethel Waters. How many of you ever heard Ethel Waters sing? Ethel Waters was born out of a pregnancy due to rape. How many of you have read the story of Ruth in the Bible? What a wonderful story that is! But Ruth, who is in the ancestry of the Lord Jesus, was descended from Moab, who was born of an incestuous relationship. You can't play God in these kind of cases. And it's extremely rare that rape

brings conception. The Minneapolis-Saint Paul hospitals did a ten-year study, and out of 3,500 cases of rape, not one pregnancy occurred. And I'm told that if treated with spermicide in the emergency room, pregnancy will not occur. It takes several hours for the sperm to unite with the ovum. But if it did—tragic, oh, tragic indeed—but still, dear friend, there is human life.

You say, “Well, what about the danger of deformity? What about if we’ve taken a test, and we know that our little baby is going to be deformed? Wouldn’t it be all right, then, to kill that little baby rather than have that baby come into this world deformed?” Well, I want to ask you a question. Are we, as a society, about to eliminate those that we feel are defective? If that is true, what about people who are defective after they’re born? I mean, just how perfect does one need to be in order to be allowed to live?

Let me just read something there: “Dear Mom, can you believe it’s the year 2023 already? I’m still writing ’22 on everything! It seems like just yesterday I was sitting in first grade and celebrating the change of a new century.”—So here’s somebody in someone’s imagination writing a letter in the year 2023—“I know we really haven’t chatted since Christmas, Mom. Sorry. Anyway, I have some very difficult news, and I really didn’t want to call and talk face-to-face.”

“Ted’s had a promotion, and I should be up for a hefty raise this year if I keep putting in those crazy hours. You know how I work at it. Yes, we’re still struggling with the bills.”

“Timmy’s been okay at kindergarten although he complains about going. But then, he wasn’t happy about the day care either! So what can I do? He’s been a real problem, Mom. He’s a good kid, but quite honestly, he’s an unfair burden on us at this time in our lives. Ted and I have talked this through and through, and we have finally made a choice.”—there’s our word again, a choice—“Plenty of other families have made the same choice and are really better off today.

“Our pastor is supportive of our decision. The family is a system, and the demands of one member should not be allowed to ruin the whole. The pastor told us to be prayerful; consider all the factors and what is right to make our family work. He says that even though he probably wouldn’t do it himself, the decision really is ours. He was kind enough to refer us to a children’s clinic near here, so at least that part is easy.”

“I’m not an uncaring mother. I do feel sorry for the little guy. I think he heard Ted and I talking about it the other night. I turned and saw him standing at the bottom of the step in his pj’s, with the little bear that you gave him under his arm, and his eyes sort of welled up with tears. Mom, the way he looked at me just about broke my heart. But I honestly believe this is better for Timmy too. It’s not fair to force him to live in a family that can’t give him the time and attention he deserves.”

“And please don’t give me that kind of grief that Grandma gave you over your abortions. It’s the same thing, you know. There’s no difference. We’ve told Timmy he’s

just going in for a vaccination. Anyway, they say the termination procedure is painless. I guess it's just as well that you haven't seen that much of him. Give my love to Dad."

Pure fiction—but, my dear friend, I wonder if the time is not coming when the unwanted, whether they be little children or older people who are a burden to society, are not taken to clinics and painlessly gotten out of the way! I mean, if we are to eliminate the unwanted, then what follows next: infanticide, euthanasia, genocide? I'm telling you, friend, pro-choice is no choice.

Somebody says, "Well, now wait a minute. A woman's body is her own body. She has a right to do what she wants to do with her own body. She may have and that's dubious; but my dear friend, we're not talking about her body, we're talking about the body of a little baby. That's what we're talking about. Freedom of choice is not the freedom of choice to kill someone else. Well, you say, "But the baby lives inside the mother." Suppose I have an unwanted guest in my home; do I have the right to kill an unwanted guest in my home? Put it down big, put it down plain, put it down straight: no mother has the right to kill her children, no matter what kind of choice she spouts off about having. I mean, when they're speaking about freedom of choice, they're talking about freedom of choice to kill. "Well," you say, "it's my own body." But you really don't even have that much right over your own body. For example, do you have right to put heroin in your body? Of course not, we have laws that'll stop it. Isn't that your body? Could you say, "It's my own body; I have a choice to use dope"? Or do you have a right to practice prostitution because it's your own body? You say, "It's my own body; if I want to sell it, I can." You don't have that right.

Suppose I were to lay my hand out here and take a hatchet from underneath this pulpit, put my finger up there, and chop off one of my fingers, and it falls down there. And then I put the other finger up and chop off that one. Before I've gotten to the third finger, I hope you fellows would have stopped me. Right? I say, "Leave me alone! It's my own body!" You'd say, "You can't do that! We're a civilized society." My dear friend, it may be her body; she doesn't have complete control over her body in a civilized society, much less, control over the body of that baby that lives within her. Pro-choice is no choice.

Somebody says, "But, what about child abuse? It would be better to have that baby taken out, than to be born in a family where that child is not wanted and will be battered." Statisticians tell us that ninety percent of the battered children were the result of a planned pregnancy—ninety percent. Unwanted children are those that are not the most abused.

Well, here's the big one. They say, "Listen, Mr. Rogers. We believe in pro-choice because abortion laws are unfair to the poor. You see, the wealthy people can have abortions. Even illegally, they can get abortions, but the poor people can't." Well, is that

a good argument? Did you know that it is probably safer for a rich person to break any kind of a law? Probably safer. He has more ways of hiding it; he can get better counsel and better legal defense, if he breaks that law. Because it is easier for a rich person to break a law, does that mean that we should have no laws? You say, “Well, the rich have more of an access to abortion.” The rich have more access to heroin. So, are you saying that since the rich have more access to heroin, that we should make laws where the government supplies heroin to the poor? No. My dear friend, it is grievous that the poor may need medical help. We ought to do all that we can do to see that they get medical help, but not to kill the unborn. I’m telling you, with all of the unction, function, and emotion of my soul, that pro-choice is no choice.

## **Conclusion**

Now, what should we do? May I just tell you six things very quickly, and I’ll be finished.

### **A. Be Informed**

Number one: be informed—be informed. Know what the facts are. It’s easier just to let this thing just slide over our heads.

### **B. Work and Pray for a Constitutional Amendment to Overturn Roe v Wade**

Number two: work for and pray for a constitutional amendment that will reverse Roe v. Wade. Somebody says, “Are you getting political from the pulpit?” You know, this thing gives me a pain I can’t locate. You ask a politician: “What do you believe about abortion?” “Oh, I’m personally against it, but that’s a religious matter.” You let a preacher stand up in the pulpit and preach against it, and they’ll say, “Why doesn’t he stay out of politics?” Boy, they get you going and coming. “Oh,” he says, “I’m against an abortion; I’m against that, but what a woman does with her own body is her own business. I, personally, am against it.” I can hear somebody saying in Hitler’s time: “Now, I’m against the Holocaust, but whatever Hitler does in his own private gas chambers is his business, you know.”

### **C. Begin to Teach Sexual Morality in the Church and at Home**

Listen. My dear friend, work for a constitutional amendment. And then, I’ll tell what the third thing we need to do: we need to begin to teach sexual morality in the church and at home, and not in some school-based sex clinic that teaches plumbing and so-called safe sex.

### **D. Have More Compassion for the Unwed Mother**

Fourthly, we need to have more compassion for the unwed mother. The reason that so many little teenage girls, who’ve been caught up in the sexual revolution spawned by Hugh Hefner and the others—they have no standards; they come up pregnant. Then they’re afraid to tell their daddy, afraid to tell their mama, afraid to tell their pastor. We

need to say, “There’s hope and there’s help and there is forgiveness.” And we need to show them an alternative. This church supports an organization called Life Choices and what we do is when some girl comes up and says, “I am pregnant out of wedlock. And I have a little baby; I don’t want to put my baby to death.”—we say, “We’ll help you, we’ll give you counseling, we will get you medical treatment, we will encourage and pray for you, and we’ll place that little baby in a home.” Oh, my dear friends, there are thousands of people who want a baby—who want a baby! That baby doesn’t need to be killed.

#### **E. We Need to Speak Out Clearly**

We need to show compassion. But I’ll tell you what else we need to do: we need to speak out clearly, with no stutter, no stammer, no apology. Isaiah 58, verse 1 says, “Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.” We need to cry out against this holocaust and the murder of innocents. And I’ll tell you what else we need to do: we need to refuse to be swayed by the high-sounding arguments of the liberals, the humanists, the social planners, and the so-called experts. They don’t know; they don’t even have a base of morality to come from. Isaiah chapter 5 and verse 20 says, “Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!” Don’t let these kind of people with their convoluted, double-jointed arguments sway you. Think straight!

#### **F. Pray That God Will Have Mercy on America**

Last of all, we need to pray that God Almighty will have mercy on America and give us space to repent. We need a national revival. What is happening in America is happening today because so many of us have failed to be the salt and light that we ought to be. I’m not naïve enough to believe that there are no people here whose family has not been touched by abortion. And if you think that what I’ve said tonight is here, I’ve said it to put you under a guilt trip; you’re so wrong. Many have unwittingly, unknowing allowed an abortion—been told by some doctor it’s no different than a tonsillectomy: “We’re just removing some unwanted tissue from your body.” And you can’t go back now, and you can’t reverse that. But I’ll tell you one thing, dear friend. God loves you and God forgives that. And just put that under God’s mercy and God’s grace. Ask God to heal that memory. And if you want to do something in honor of that little baby that you could’ve had, may I suggest that you just work to help other mothers, not to make the same mistake.

Let’s bow in prayer: Father God, help us to understand tonight your love for babies, for little children. And give us, Lord, the same kind of love. In Jesus’ holy name, amen.

# The Balm of Gilead

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: December 17, 1980**

**Main Scripture Text: Jeremiah 8:22**

*“Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then  
is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?”*

JEREMIAH 8:22

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Balm Was Provided
  - II. The Balm Was Precious
  - III. The Balm Was Powerful
  - IV. The Balm Was Personal
- Conclusion

## Introduction

Now take your Bibles tonight and turn to Jeremiah chapter 8, Jeremiah chapter 8. I just want to continue the theme that I've been talking to the children about as we've been thinking about trees. This tree and this tree, but above all, that tree, the tree upon which the Lord Jesus died in agony and blood. I believe that Jeremiah chapter 8 and verse 22 speaks of this tree in a way. Look at it. Jeremiah chapter 8 and verse 22. Jeremiah was called the weeping prophet. And Jeremiah asked a question. “Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? Why then is the health of the daughter of my people, ah, recovered? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?”

Let's pray one more time. Heavenly Father, as we study Thy Word together in this devotional thought, we pray, dear God, for the strength and the unction and the power of the Holy Spirit to be upon this message. Help me as I preach. Give me, dear Lord, the words to say, and anoint the eyes of those that listen. In Jesus' dear name, amen.

I want to talk to you about the balm of Gilead. Now we sing a song around here, and to me it's one of the most beautiful songs in all of the hymnal. “There is a balm in Gilead to heal the sin-sick soul.” Now often we talk about sickness, but it's generally physical sickness. As a matter of fact, tonight, as you look at the hospital list, all of the people that we were praying for in that hospital list were those who were physically ill. And, you know, I think we ought to pray for the sick of our church. But, you know, I've been

impressed, as I've been going to Baptist prayer meetings on Wednesday nights for many, many years now, that most of the time when someone asks a prayer request, it is for someone who is sick physically who needs to be healed. And very seldom do we hear people saying, "I have a neighbor that's lost. Pray for that neighbor. I have a daughter that's lost. Pray for my daughter. I have a son that's lost. Pray for my son. I have a mother or father that's lost. Pray for them." It seems to me that we are all the more interested in getting people healed physically than we are getting them healed spiritually. I believe sometimes that we're more interested in keeping God's people out of heaven than we are in keeping some people out of hell. We're praying for people that they'll not go to heaven, rather than praying for people that they will not go to hell. We need to be concerned for spiritual illness. And God here is speaking of, of, of a spiritual illness here in Jeremiah chapter 8 and verse 22.

Now you may not understand what spiritual illness is. And I, ah, this afternoon at my desk, sat down and listed what the Great Physician would have to say about the human race if He were to diagnose the human race. He would look at our head, and He would say, "The whole head is sick," in Isaiah 1, verse 5. He'd look at our eyes, and He would say that our eyes are full of adultery and cannot cease from sin in II Peter chapter 2 and verse 14. He would look at our ears, and He would say that our ears are dull of hearing in Matthew chapter 23, verse 17. He would look at our lips, and He would say the poison of asps is under our lips in Romans chapter 3 and verse 13. He would look at our tongues, and He would say that our tongues are, are an unruly evil full of deadly poison in James chapter 3 and verse 8. He would look at our throat, and He would say that our throat is an open sepulcher; that is, with all of the stench of the grave coming out of it in Romans chapter 3, verse 13. He would look at our neck, and He would say in Deuteronomy chapter 31 and verse 27 that our neck is stiff and rebellious. He would look at our hands, and He would say that our hands are full of mischief and bribes in Psalm 26, verse 10. He would look at our feet, and He'd say that our feet are swift to running to mischief in Romans chapter 3, excuse me, Proverbs chapter 6 and verse 18. He would take His x-ray vision and look at our bones, and He would say in Job chapter 20 and verse 11 that our bones are full of the sins of our youth. But above all, He would look into our heart, and He would say in Jeremiah chapter 17, verse 9 that the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. He would say in Isaiah that from the crown of our head to the sole of our feet, that we're full of spiritual sickness. And so, dear friends, I want to talk to you about how to be healed, for the Bible says there is a healing, there is a remedy. Listen again to Jeremiah chapter 8 and verse 22: "Is there no balm in Gilead...." The word balm means healing ointment. "Is there no healing ointment in Gilead; is there no physician there?" Notice with me several things about this healing ointment. Notice several things about the balm of Gilead.



## **I. The Balm Was Provided**

First of all, this healing balm was provided. And how was it provided? It came from a tree. In Gilead, there was a very special tree, and the resin of that tree exuded a very fragrant and a very precious and a very powerful ointment. And this ointment was used to, ah, effect miraculous or seeming miraculous cures. But the thing that I want you to understand is that the provision was from a tree. There was the balm tree there in Gilead that made this provision.

Then I want to remind you again what I told the children tonight, where the Bible says in I Peter chapter 2 and verse 24, that “Jesus bare our sins in His own body on the tree.” And I want you to see that, as in Jeremiah’s day, the balm was provided. The healing ointment, the healing agent was provided. In our day, in this day, it’s also provided, for the Bible says again in I Peter chapter 1 and verse 24, that, ah, chapter 2 and verse 24, that “...it is by His stripes that we’re healed.” Yes, dear friend, there is a balm in Gilead.

*Oh, can it be upon the tree the Savior died for me. My heart is filled, my soul is thrilled to think He died for me.*

## **II. The Balm Was Precious**

But not only was this balm provided, but I want you to see that this balm was precious. Now back in Jeremiah’s day, when the people of Gilead would gather this healing ointment, it would take them all day long to gather forty drops, fifty drops, at the most, sixty drops. It was exceedingly precious. And I believe here by type and picture and prophecy again it’s speaking of what the Lord Jesus Christ did upon that tree. For not only does Peter tell us that we were healed by that tree, but Peter also tells us in I Peter chapter 1 and verses 18 and 19 that we were “...healed with the precious blood of the Lord Jesus, as a Lamb without spot and without blemish.” The balm was provided. The balm was precious.

And let me say this to you: You know, we talk so much about being saved by grace through faith. And we say, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.” And that’s so true. But so many times when we talk about the freeness of salvation, some people interpret that to, to mean the cheapness of salvation. Salvation is free, but it is not cheap. Peter tells us that it’s precious.

## **III. The Balm Was Powerful**

But not only was the healing agent provided, and not only was it precious, but it was oh, so powerful. Look again here, if you will, in Jeremiah chapter 8 and look at verse 17 and you’ll see the sickness of which Jeremiah is speaking. He says in Jeremiah 8, verse 17: “For, behold, I will send serpents, cockatrices, among you, which shall not be charmed,



and they shall bite you, saith the LORD.”

Now he’s not talking here about literal serpents, but what he’s talking about is this: that the wages of sin is death. The soul that sinneth, it shall surely die. And even in the word sin you can hear the hiss of the serpent. And what Jeremiah is saying, and what God’s Word teaches all the way through, is that sin is not some outward act. Sin is a disease, a venom in the bloodstream of mankind, just like the deadly venom that has been injected by a serpent. And it takes a very powerful healing agent to cleanse not some surface wound, but to cleanse an inner malady. You see, the problem with you and with me is not what we do. The problem is in what we are. And so, the agent had to be very, very powerful. And as this balm was applied, it did three things to the wound. The first thing it did was to cleanse. And the Bible says, “The blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanses us from all sin.” The second thing it did was to sooth, and it eased the pain. And I’m so grateful that the healing balm of that tree, when the Lord Jesus Christ died for me, gives me peace and soothing. Jesus speaks to my heart and quietens my, ah, sin-troubled soul and soothes, ah, my heart. But then, the third thing that the balm did – not only did it cleanse, and not only did it sooth; it healed, it healed. And I want to tell you, dear friend, that, that Jesus, and Jesus alone, and the balm of Gilead and the Great Physician is the only answer for your sin. It was provided. It was precious. It was powerful.

But here is what, here’s the burden of Jeremiah: The people seemed not to realize that the remedy was there. So I want you to notice the fourth thing about this balm of Gilead. It was present. It was right there. He says, “Is there no balm in Gilead? Why, why do you remain in this condition?” It’s not that there’s not a remedy. You see, Gilead was right next to where Jeremiah was prophesying. It was right there. It was so near. It wasn’t as though they had to go to Hong Kong for it or London or Tokyo. He saying, “Right here at your hand. Is there no balm in Gilead? Why then, are you not healed?”

Turn to Romans chapter 10 for just a moment. And keep one hand there in Jeremiah. And I was, ah, this afternoon going over this verse as I was meditating on, ah, what we’re talking about. And this verse the Lord seemed to lay on my heart. And in Romans chapter 10, beginning in verse 6: “But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into haven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above) Or, who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead). But what saith it? The word is nigh thee (that is, it’s near thee. How near is it to you?), even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach. That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

Now what does that verse mean? It means, dear friend, if you want to be saved, you don't have to go off looking for the Lord Jesus. Ah, you see, He's very present. You don't have to somehow go up into the heavens, which thing would be impossible, and say, "Oh Jesus, please come down and save us." Nor do you have to descend into the pit. Nor do you have to walk through the corridors of the doomed and the damned and go through the charnel house of the dead, and say, "Jesus, be raised from the dead and come and save us." You don't have to do that. You don't have to ascend into heaven to bring Him down. You don't have to descend into the grave to bring Him up. Listen to what Paul is saying. "...the word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth..." You say, "How did it get in my mouth?" I just preached it in there. "...and in thy heart..." How did it get in your heart? I just preached it in there. "...even the word of faith, which we preach." I am just telling you right now that Jesus will save you. Now it's in your mouth. All you have to do is say, "Jesus will save me." See. It's in your heart. All you have to do is believe it. That's how close Jesus is. Jesus is closer to you than the person sitting next to you. Jesus is in your mouth. Now I don't, I don't want to be irreverent, but, dear friend, that's just how close He is to you tonight. Ah, Jesus is in your heart. The word of faith is there if you'll only claim it, if you'll only believe it. That's how near He is. This is what Jeremiah is saying. Oh, he's saying, "Is there no balm in Gilead?" I mean, you're right here. Why should you die? You see, it was provided. It came from a tree. It was precious, and the blood of Jesus is precious. It was powerful, and, and the blood of Christ is powerful. It was present. There was no need for them to do without it.

#### **IV. The Balm Was Personal**

But I want to say one last thing, and it's going to be very brief tonight. It was personal. You see, none of them could be healed by proxy. No one, when they get sick, ah, can send someone else to the doctor for them. Ah, ah, no one can be healed on behalf of another. The healing agent was personal. And so, this is what he says again in verse 22: "Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?"

You see, it had to be applied by a person ("...is there no physician there?") to a person. Why then are you not healed? You see, God, God doesn't heal anybody by proxy. He doesn't save anybody by proxy. You must, one at a time, come to the Lord Jesus Christ and trust Him to save you. This healing balm had to be personally applied.

I was thinking, as I was meditating on this, about that lady who had an issue of blood, that woman in Mark, the fifth chapter. And Jesus was just thronged about by people. There were just, perhaps literally thousands of people who were following Him. And the Bible tells us that, that He was just so squeezed in by the people that He was just being jostled by the crowd. But this little woman had it in her heart that if she could

just get near to the Great Physician, as she said, “If I can but touch the hem of His garment, I’ll be healed.” And I see her emaciated little body as it works its way through the crowd there, and people shoving and elbowing her away, but she’ll not be denied. And, finally, she gets close enough. And she stretches out that little thin, transparent hand, and she touches just the hem of His garment. And immediately Jesus says, “Who touched me?” And someone says, “What do You mean, who touched you? You’ve been rubbing shoulders with people all day long. People have been jostling you and shoving you back and forth. And you say, ‘Who touched me?’” No, He said, “Virtue went out of Me. Somebody touched me.”

Did you know that you can be in a congregation like this and rub shoulders with Jesus? But someone in this congregation tonight will reach out and touch Jesus, just touch Him. You see, it’s personal. It’s personal. It has to be applied personally. Jesus healed this woman. And, incidentally, He said, “Woman, go thy way. Thy faith has made thee whole.” And He, He wanted her to understand, you know. He didn’t want her to be a superstitious believer. It wasn’t the finger. It wasn’t the fringe. It was the faith. “Thy faith hath made thee whole. And go thy way.” And she was healed instantaneously. Why? Because He is the Great Physician. The Great Physician now is near, the sympathizing Jesus, but you must touch Him with the finger of faith and be instantaneously healed. I’m not talking here about the healing of the body.

## Conclusion

You know, tonight, if I had the power to heal, which I do not have, but if I had the power to heal, and I could get a, a six or eight or even one person in here in a wheelchair or, or people with twisted limbs or blinded eyes or deaf ears, and I were to walk down here and start laying my hands on them and praying for them to heal them, you talk about crowds. We’d have to give tickets, sure enough. This tree wouldn’t be the appeal. Listen. They’d be all over out here in the parking lots, and it would be put in the newspaper. I mean, if it were an authenticated case, not some charlatan. But, I mean, if eyes, blind eyes were really opened, people we all knew were blind. Deaf ears were really, ah, opened. And, and shriveled limbs were really opened. Boy, it’d, it’d spread like wild fire now, wouldn’t it? It’d excite me. It’d excite you. Boy, we’d be saying, “Did you hear what happened? Did you hear what happened?” But I want to tell you something, friend, and I want you to pay attention to me. Something more wonderful than that happened this past Sunday morning when those people lined up here to receive Jesus. Now I’m not, that’s no copout. That’s no copout. That’s not my explaining away my lack of ability to heal. That’s not my gift. Listen. The greatest miracle is the salvation of a soul. Now you get that and get it straight and get it big. The greatest miracle is the salvation of a soul. No other miracle cost God anything. When God made

this world, He did it just like that. He spoke and it was so. That's it. When God healed a blind man, all He had to do was just say and he's healed. But when God saves a soul, He had to hang His Son on a cross. The only time God went to any difficulty to do anything was Calvary. And let me tell you something, friend, that the miracles of grace are always greater than the miracles of glory. Now I'm not against miracles, and I'm not one to say that the age of miracles is past. But the greatest miracle is the healing of a sin-sick soul. "Is there no balm in Gilead?" Yes, there is. "...is there no physician?" Yes, there is.

Brother Bob Fargarson told me a few days ago, he said, "Pastor, there's someone over here in the hospital I want you to go see. He's concerned about his soul." Brother Bob and I went to see a fine businessman who was there in the hospital bed. He said, "Mr. Rogers," said, "I've been listening to you preach on television. You've been preaching about the new birth." He said, "I have not been born again." He said, "You've been talking about the witness of the Holy Spirit in your heart." He said, "I don't have that witness. Could you tell me about it?" And I took the Word of God and gladly and joyfully explained to this man about the new birth, explained to him about the witness of the Spirit. We went over it once, twice, thrice. And I said, "Would you give me the privilege of praying with you and leading you in a prayer to receive Christ as your personal Savior?" "Oh," he said, "I would." And I kneeled there by that hospital bed and prayed, and he prayed, asked Christ to come into his heart. And then, ah, with tears he looked at me and said, "Oh, I thank you for that. I thank you so much." We went over it again and rejoiced in it, and I gave him some more material. And, and Brother Bob had a beautiful New Testament we left for this fine businessman.

Ah, just yesterday I received a note from his widow that he's gone to be with the Lord Jesus. And she said to me, "Thank you for coming. Thank you for talking with my husband. Thank you for helping him to understand what it means to be born again. He's gone to heaven."

And I want to tell you something, friend. I am not being one bit facetious when I say he has been healed completely. Healed completely. And I had rather have the power and the ability to go into that room and tell that man about the Lord Jesus Christ than I would to lay my hands on him and recover him of his cancer. I mean that with all of my heart and soul.

You know what the Bible says about John, John the Baptist? You read it in John, the tenth chapter. The Bible says about John the Baptist that John did not miracle. But the people said, "All things that John said about Jesus were true, and many believed on Him because of John." I'd rather have that said about me than the fact that I could perform a miracle any day. Rogers did no miracle, but many believed on Jesus because of him. I want it said about you. I want to tell you, friend, our great privilege this

Christmas season is to tell people there is a balm in Gilead. The Great Physician now is near, the sympathizing Jesus.

It has been provided. It is precious. It, my dear friend, is present. It is personal. It must be applied to the human heart.

Let's bow together in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. Father, I pray, I pray tonight for those who may not know the Lord Jesus, that even tonight they might come and say to Him, "Lord Jesus, heal my sin-sick soul. Come into my heart, and with the balm of Gilead cleanse me, soothe me, and heal me, and I shall be whole." And, Father, I just pray that if there's anyone in this building tonight who's not saved that they will tonight receive Christ. And, Father, I pray for those who may be saved who need believer's baptism or who need to transfer their church membership, that they will come tonight and present themselves for church membership or baptism or whatever Your will is for them. In Jesus' dear name I pray, amen.

# A New Day in God's Way

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** December 26, 1982

**Main Scripture Text:** Jeremiah 10:23

*"O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself:  
it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."*

JEREMIAH 10:23

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Make a Full and Complete Surrender to the Lord
- II. Open Up Your Mind to the Word of God
- III. Begin to Pray and Ask God for Guidance
- IV. Do Not Be Afraid to Use Your Mind
- V. Do the Will of God as You Know It Day by Day

Conclusion

## Introduction

Now I'd like for you to find your Bibles now and open them, please, to Jeremiah chapter 10—and those of you who did not bring a Bible with you, there in the pew rack somewhere near you is a Bible; and I'd like for you to get that Bible and use it today: it's for your use—Jeremiah chapter 10 and verse 23. We're facing a brand new year. And I want to use therefore as a New Year's text this text and as a New Year's title, "A New Day in God's Way"—"A New Day in God's Way."

Now I want us to look at our text, Jeremiah chapter 10 and verse 23. Jeremiah said, "O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps"—"it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." (Jeremiah 10:23)

Friend, I want to tell you that prosperity and success in 1983 is knowing and doing the will of God. *Success is nothing more, nothing less, nothing else, nothing but the progressive realization of the will of God for your life.*

Now, success is not being wealthy, nor is it being poor. Success is not being famous, nor is it obscurity. Success is not pleasure, nor is it pain. None of these things are fundamental to success. They're all incidental to it. Success is just simply the progressive realization of the will of God for your life. And the Bible says, "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." Half of the trouble that we have in this life is in wanting our own way. The other half comes when we get it.

Now, friend, I want to tell you that it is not in man to find his way. *“The steps of a good man”*—the Bible says—*“are ordered by the LORD: and he”*—that is, God—*“delighteth in his way.”* (Psalm 37:23) And I want to tell you, again, that God has promised that He will guide us. Some of the sweetest promises in the Bible deal with our being able to know the will of God for our lives.

Now I want you to take a pen and jot down some of these verses that you might study them again when you get home. These are verses that deal with the realization of the will of God for your life. Listen to some of these verses now as I share them. Isaiah chapter 58 and verse 11: *“And the LORD shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought.”* (Isaiah 58:11) Now, let me give you a free translation. God’s going to take care of you through this economic recession. That’s exactly what this means. He’s going to satisfy your soul in drought. That is, in a time of economic hard times, God is going to take care of you. And He will guide thee not off and on, but continually. Every day in 1983, you can know the guidance of our great God.

Let me give you another verse—Psalm 32 and verse 8. God said, *“I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.”* (Psalm 38:8) Oh, what a wonderful guidance that is, by the way, when you guide with your eye! That means that just a look, just a glance, from God is all we need.

You know, when husbands and wives have been living together long enough, they can speak to each other with their eyes, did you know that? I can be at the table and start to say something, and Joyce can look at me, and, I mean, I should change the subject, amen? We just guide with our eyes.

When my children—some of them are here this morning—were growing up, they’d be sitting in church, cutting up, when daddy was up in the pulpit preaching. You wouldn’t know it, but I could look at them and tell them just by a look, “If you don’t straighten up, you’re going to get it when you get home.” And everybody else doesn’t know what’s going on. But somebody who lives together knows what’s going on. That’s that kind of intimate fellowship that God says, *“I will guide thee with mine eye.”*

And then again, in Proverbs chapter 3 and verse 6, here’s a great promise—God says, *“In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths”*—*“he shall direct thy paths.”* (Proverbs 3:6) And, friend, this is just as true for the plumber as it is for the preacher. Now, don’t get the idea that God’s will is just for a certain chosen few who have been called into full-time Christian service. We’re all full-time Christians, and we’re all to be serving our Lord. Now, God may have my full-time service behind this pulpit. He may have your full-time service behind a desk in some office somewhere, or whatever. It makes no difference. God has a plan for your life.

Now, friend, everybody is important to the Lord. Listen. Psalm 37 and verse 23—here’s a great verse: *“The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he”*—that

is, God—“*delighteth in his way*” (Psalm 37:23)—“*the steps of a good man*”—not the steps of good men, but the steps of a good man; not the life of a good man, but the steps of a good man. God, step by step and day by day, wants to lead you and wants to be delighted in the way that you go. I tell you, dear friend, that God has a plan, a specific plan, for your life. God has a will and a way for your life. And the very steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord.

Oh, how God watches over you! The very hairs of your head are numbered. Not a sparrow falls to the ground but what He knows it altogether. And God has a plan for your life. And God’s plan for my life and your life, of course, are different. God has as many different methods as He has men. And God wants to be unique in your own life. And therefore you need to be careful trying to pattern your life after someone else’s or trying to discover the will of God in the incidental way that somebody else discovered the will of God in his or her life. God does not deal with people en masse. He deals with people as individuals.

There are some principles. And I want today, as we talk about finding “God’s Way for a New Day,” to talk to you about five principles. And I want you to get them down: five principles that will help you and me and anybody else to know God’s will—God’s way for this new day as we’re on the threshold of a new year.

A new year, there’s something wonderful about it. I know it’s just like any other day, in one sense of the word, but in the Bible God made a significance of a new year for the children of Israel. He said, “This month shall be the beginning of months to you.” (Ephesians 12:2) And it is good to get a fresh start. And I have to confess, I make resolutions every year. Of course, they go in one year and out the other; but I make them. And I’m helped by them. And this year I’m thinking seriously and prayerfully about what I want the Lord to do through me and what I want to be in the Lord this coming year. And so, as we are thinking together about “God’s Way for a New Day,” let me share with you now these five principles.

## **I. Make a Full and Complete Surrender to the Lord**

Number one—number one: Make a full and complete surrender to the Lord. Now you cannot go around this step and you cannot go beyond it until you take this one: Make a full and complete surrender to the Lord. I know of no better verse to give you here than Romans chapter 12, verse 1. And here’s what the Apostle Paul said: “*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God,*”—that is, on the basis of God’s goodness to you—“*that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service*”—that is, in the light of Calvary, there’s nothing unreasonable about your doing this. “*And be not conformed to this world:*”—that is, don’t let this world squeeze you into its mold—“*but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind,*”—



now, listen to it—*“that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”* (Romans 12:1–2)

Now, God says you must come to Him and you must present yourself. You must give yourself to Him completely, totally. That means that you sign a check and hand it to God and say, “God, you can fill in the amount.” That means that you sign a blank contract at the bottom. You put your name on it, and you give it back to God, and you say, “Now, God, you fill in the contract.” You don’t say to the Lord, “Now, Lord, you show me your will, and I’ll make up my mind whether I’ll do it.” You say to God, “God, my mind is made up: I’ll do it. Whatever it is, wherever it is, whatever it cost. I will do it.”

You say, “But wait a minute. Nobody ever signs anything till he reads all the fine print.” With God, you do, because it’s a matter of trust; it’s a matter of faith. “But,” you say, “preacher, if I did that, why, he might take my children from me. Why, if I did that, I might end up a missionary in some dark corner of the world. Why, if I did that, He might want me to be one of those suffering saints. I just can’t trust the Lord that way.”

Well, that’s what Paul is saying. Paul is saying, “Look. You can trust Him”—*“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God”*—on the basis of Calvary. You see, if God *“spared not his own Son...shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”* (Romans 8:32) he asked in Romans 8. That is, the person who gave you a gift this Christmas, don’t you think he’d be willing to give you what it was wrapped in? I mean, if God gave you Jesus, then He’s going to, with Jesus, give you all things. Do you understand what I’m talking about? You don’t have to be afraid to trust the Lord. The will of God is not something you have to do. The will of God is something you get to do. Don’t be afraid to trust the will of God and to do the will of God.

I told you before that God’s will is what you’d choose for yourself if you had enough sense to choose it and want it. And don’t ever assume that what He wants and what you want have to be different if you’re walking in the Spirit. Friend, what God wants and what you want will be the same when you’re walking in the Spirit. That’s the reason He says, “Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give the desire of your heart.” (Psalm 37:4) Jesus said, *“My meat is to do the will of him that sent me.”* (John 4:34) What does that mean? Jesus says, “I delight in it. It is my sustenance. It is my joy. It is my desire to do the will of Him that sent me.”

And every Christian who’s in the will of God is happier than anybody who’s out of the will of God. And it is a libel on the character of God to think that you have to choose between the will of God and joy. Friend, you will only find joy in the will of God. Don’t be afraid of the will of God. Be afraid that you’ll miss it.

“But,” you say, “what if I end up in Africa?” If you do, you’ll want to go to Africa. You’ll be happier there than you would be anywhere else. The will of God is best for you, dear friend. And on the basis of the mercies of God, you just simply come and say, “Lord, I

give myself to you.”

Now, what I’m about to say now is so important that I’m prefacing it with this remark:

*Doing the will of God is not surrendering to a plan; it is surrendering to a person.*

Now, that’s very important you understand this. I hear people talk about, “Well, I surrendered to the ministry.” It’s a shame they didn’t surrender to Jesus. You surrender to a person, to the Lord. Now He may call you into the ministry, but that’s not the point. You just simply give your life to Him totally, completely. Now, the Bible says, “*sacrifice, holy*,” but that word is linked to our word *wholly*, which means “completely, totally.” You give your body to Him: “Here I am, Lord.” And don’t be afraid to do it. Dear friend, that is the secret of joy.

Now I’ll admit that it may take some faith on your part to see this, but it is a slur on the character of God to think that you must choose between the will of God and fulfillment. You don’t. They are synonymous. And you don’t find the will of God, my friend; the will of God finds you when you surrender to Jesus. And you just surrender to Him, and then you’re going to find that you are going to be caught up in something that we call the will of God, because now He has control of your life.

## **II. Open Up Your Mind to the Word of God**

That’s the first principle. The first principle is for you to make a full and complete surrender to Him. Second principle: After you’ve done this, then you need to open up your mind to the Word of God. You need to get in to this book and begin to read this book. Why? Because a great portion of the will of God for your life is just revealed right here in the pages of God’s Word.

Now, let me give you a scripture that speaks to what I’m talking about. In Psalm 119, verse 105, the Bible says, “*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.*” (Psalm 119:105) Now, we don’t see what the future holds, and that’s all right. As long as we have a lamp, as long as we have a light, we don’t have to stumble in darkness. God’s Word is a lamp. God’s Word is a light. It enlightens our way. And as we read it, we find certain principles. You see, this book is not just a book of minute laws; it’s a book of great principles. And those principles are here to guide us in the coming year. And so much of the will of God is axiomatic and automatic as we understand the Word of God.

Now, for example, sometimes I’ve had people come to me for counseling, and the counseling session will go something like this: “Now, pastor, I’m a Christian, and I really do love the Lord, but I’ve got a problem. Now, here’s my problem. I’m married to this woman, and we’ve been married, but we’ve never really been happy. She doesn’t understand me. And perhaps we never really should have gotten married to begin with. We weren’t old enough to know what we were doing. And, pastor, I have met a woman

at work. She really understands me. And she's sweet and she... Well, pastor, I was wondering, do you think...?" "No, no, I don't." "Well, pastor, you haven't heard..." "No." "But let me explain." "You don't have to explain. That is not God's will." "But don't you think...?" "No, that's not God's will." "How do you know it's not God's will?" "I've got the Word of God, and, friend, He's not going to change it for you or anybody else. God's plan is one man for one woman till death do them part," amen?

Boy, it's time we got back to that! You see, this matter of sloughing off one mate and marrying another and then expecting God somehow just to bless it anyhow. "Oh," you say, "Brother Rogers, don't you believe in forgiveness?" I do believe in forgiveness, but I want to tell you, nobody sins with his eyes wide open but what somehow, somewhere, he suffers for it, and other people suffer for it. And it is not the will of God for your life.

You say, "Well, I've already been divorced and remarried." All right, take what you have and give it to God and ask Him to forgive you. You can't unscramble eggs. But what I'm trying to say is this: that you are not going to get God to make exception clauses to His Word. His Word is there. It is fixed. It is final. You want to know the will of God for your life? Get in the Bible. Read what the Bible has to say. These are ten commandments, not ten suggestions. And God is giving a guide for life. And the will of God and the way of God is found in the Word of God.

So that's important this new year, therefore, that if you want to make just one resolution, let me give you a good one: you're going to spend some time alone with God in the Word every day, preferably in the morning. Wouldn't that be a good way to start the day? Alone with God. And get God's Word in your heart so that God's Word becomes a lamp, God's Word becomes a light. And people don't need to be stumbling in darkness and floundering around like a ship without a mast, a sail, and a compass on a dark and stormy night, when God has given His word to lead us and to guide us. And God's Word, my friend, is to be a lamp to your feet and a light unto your path.

### **III. Begin to Pray and Ask God for Guidance**

And so, that's the second thing. If you would know God's way for a new day, number one, you just come to God and say, "Here it is, Lord, I'll do it. Whatever it is, wherever it is, however it is, I'll do it." Number two: You begin to saturate your soul in the Word of God. Let the Word of God become a part of you until you begin to live by the principles and the precepts of the Word of God. And so many of the decisions that you think are big decisions are made automatically. You don't even have to think about them. You just know that you know that it's right, because God's Word says so. Now, thirdly: Then you begin to pray and ask God for guidance, because, granted, there are a lot of things that the Bible doesn't say: The Bible doesn't say you should go to XYZ school rather than ABC school. The Bible doesn't say you ought to marry Susie rather than Mary. The

Bible doesn't say that you ought to get this job or that job. Obviously, there are a lot of ways that you need individual guidance. You need special guidance. You need particular guidance. And so, now after you've come these first two steps, after you've said, "Lord, I surrender everything to you; and, Lord, I'm going to begin to live by the principles of the Word of God," then and only then can you begin to pray and talk to God and God talk back to you.

And remember, friend, that prayer is talking with God. You know, if there's anything that gets my hackles up, it is somebody who says, "Well, will you say a prayer?" Friend, we don't say prayers; we pray prayers. Suppose I went in your house and sat down, and you said, "Pastor, say a conversation." Prayer is talking with God. And it's a two-way street. We talk to God, and God talks to us. And so many of us are saying, "Listen, Lord, your servant speaks," rather than, "Speak, Lord, your servant is listening." And what we need with God is loving prayer, lingering prayer, listening prayer, where God speaks to us as we talk with Him.

Now I will admit this is subjective. I will admit that is "spiritual." But, friend, I do believe there is a sense in which God's Holy Spirit speaks to our spirit. And the Bible says in Romans 8, *"As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."* (Romans 8:14) And Jesus, speaking of the Holy Spirit coming into this world, said He will guide you.

Now, suppose you're serving on a nominating committee, and you have to nominate a Sunday School teacher, or you have to nominate deacons for Bellevue Church. Or suppose you're on a pulpit committee and your church needs a new pastor, and there are several persons and you have to choose between them. Well, I want to ask you a question. How can you as an individual look into a person's heart and say, "This one over against that one"? You don't know their heart. And you will never know their heart. You don't know my heart. All you know is what you hear me say and what I let you know. You don't know my heart. That's the reason why you can't judge me. I don't know your heart. *"What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?"* (1 Corinthians 2:11)

But now I want you to notice in Acts the first chapter, when they were getting ready to choose a successor to Judas, who by transgression fell from his apostolic position, I want you to notice what they prayed in Acts 1, verse 24: *"And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whither of these two thou hast chosen."* (Acts 1:24) "Lord, you know their hearts. Now, Lord, you show us the ones that you have chosen."

Now, you see, the Holy Spirit can see things that we'll never see about individuals. And what I'm trying to say is, there's a sense in which the Lord subjectively leads us. That's what all these verses that I'm going to be dealing with here talk about. For

example, again in James chapter 1, verse 5, James says this—a marvelous promise from the Word of God talking about leadership: *“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering.”* (James 1:5–6) If you need wisdom, God says, “I’ll give you wisdom.” And what is wisdom? Wisdom is sanctified common sense. It is the leadership of the Holy Spirit from the inside. Subjective, yes; mystical, yes; but real, absolutely! *“It shall be given him.”* In answer to prayer, you ask God. And in this coming year you’re going to need wisdom. Time after time after time after time again, you’re going to have make decisions, and God will give you wisdom if you’ll ask Him for that wisdom.

Let me show you again what I’m talking about. In Acts chapter 13, verse 2, the early church was trying to discover how to spread the gospel, and the Bible says, *“As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted,”*—that is, as they prayed and fasted—*“the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.”* (Acts 13:2) Now, that verse tells us that God had a work for Barnabas and Saul, He had a will for them; but it also shows us that God can speak concerning that will not only to them, but to the larger body.

Now, how did God speak? Do you think that they were in a prayer meeting and the Lord said, “Hey, fellows...”? No, no. He’s never spoken to me that way. Frankly, I kind of hope He never does. No, He speaks to the spirit in that *“still small voice”*—that’s what the Bible calls it. (1 Kings 19:12) As God said to this church, *“Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them,”* as they prayed, God answered from heaven, and God spoke, and God gave direction. And there is a subjective sense, there is a mystical sense, in which we hear the Word of God.

God called Nehemiah, and God said to Nehemiah, “I want you to go and rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. I want you to set up a government there. And I want you to put things in shape.” (Nehemiah 1) A tremendous job God gave to Nehemiah, because everything was in ruin, in disarray. He didn’t know how to do it, but he was a man of prayer. And in Nehemiah chapter 7 and verse 5, he said, *“And my God put into my heart to gather together the nobles, and the rulers, and the people, that they might be reckoned by genealogy.”* (Nehemiah 7:5)

Now, the point being that God put it in his heart. And there are things, friend, that God will put in your heart if you get quiet and listen to Him. And frankly, that’s one of the reasons for fasting. And one of my resolutions this year deals more in the area of fasting. I don’t want to be too public about that, but to say this: that there’s something about fasting that enables us to say no to those outward desires and drives and things that fashion us and mold us. Fasting is not a way of showing how tough we are, or a good way to lose weight, or just some way to buy the favor of God. No, what it is, it’s a

way to heighten and to sensitize the spiritual part of us so that we can hear God speaking. It's not, dear friend, that God is not speaking; it is that we are not hearing, that we're not where we bring ourselves to where we can hear the Lord.

Now, let me say something right here. I need to be careful at this point, and I want to put in a balance here and a check, because there are a lot of people who think that they're obeying God and they're not obeying God. They're obeying, perhaps, a demon spirit, and they're hearing voices and seeing visions. And those voices are not from God and those visions are not of God. And so, there must be a check here. When I talk about that inner light, when I talk about the Spirit speaking to your spirit and the impulse of the Holy Spirit, remember that it always must be cleared and checked with the Word of God.

Now, God may lead you in a specific thing, but He'll never lead you contrary to the Word of God. Do you remember what happened there in 2 Peter the first chapter when Peter is talking about being an eyewitness of the transfiguration? We have here in our city what we call Eyewitness News. Peter was an eyewitness to the transfiguration. Peter said, "We were with Him on the holy mount." Peter said, "We heard a voice from the most excellent glory: 'This is my beloved Son.'" Peter saw Moses and Elijah there with Jesus, and Jesus was transfigured right before his eyes. Peter saw it all, and he describes it. But then he says a remarkable thing there in verses 17 through 19. He says this: "*We have also*"—listen to this now—"*a more sure word of prophecy.*" Talking about the Bible, Peter says, "More sure than my vision. More sure than the voice is the Word of God." Did you get that? "*A more sure word of prophecy.*" (2 Peter 1:16–19)

And, friend, if it does not jive with the Word of God, if it does not square with the Word of God, don't think that God has written in an exception clause for sweet little you. He has not. It is God's Word. It is not going to change. It is settled forever in heaven. And we have "*a more sure word of prophecy.*" Yes, He may speak to us as an individual. Surely He may say, "*This is the way; walk ye in it.*" (Isaiah 30:21) But never, no never, never, never will it be contrary to the Word of God! More sure than the voice, and more sure than the vision.

I want to say something else—I want to say something else: that when He does lead you subjectively and intuitively in the Spirit, He's never going to lead you compulsively. Now, if you just find a compulsion, something that seems to be shoving you; if you find something like a spiritual hand between your shoulder blades shoving you, that's not the voice of God. He leads. He leads. He does not shove. He does not drive. These compulsions are not of God. He doesn't shout. He doesn't twist an arm. Friend, that's the reason it's so easy to say no to Him. The Holy Spirit is like a dove, easily frightened—takes His flight. Not in the earthquake, not in the fire, but in a still small voice He'll speak to you. (1 Kings 19:12)

You see, the shepherd leads his sheep. The butcher drives them. Jesus said, *“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me”*—*“they follow me.”* (John 10:27) Learn to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit of God who’s going to speak to you quietly and gently. And that’s the reason you must spend time to hear Him.

I want to say something else about knowing Him subjectively and knowing the will of God in your spirit. Friend, He will continue to speak. You know, sometimes we are in prayer and perhaps we get an impression. And we say to ourselves, “Well, is this impression from the Lord? Is God speaking to me? Is God telling me to do this or that? How am I going to know? Was it merely autosuggestion? Did I think it up, or is this really an impulse from the Lord? How am I going to know?” Well, do this: Say, “Lord, if this is you speaking, speak again. Confirm it. Tell me again.” He will continue to speak as long as you want to know.

Little Samuel was asleep, and the Lord spoke to him. And he went to Eli and said, “Did you call me?” This time the Lord actually spoke to him vocally. He said, “No, I didn’t call you. Go back to sleep.” The second time the Lord said, “Samuel,” he went to Eli and said, “You called me?” He said, “No, go back to sleep.” The third time, he said, “Listen. That must be the Lord. If He calls again, you say, ‘Speak, Lord, your servant hears.’” And he did.

Now, the point is, God will keep speaking if you really want to know. You know, a sweet verse says that, *“The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.”* (Proverbs 4:18) God’s revealed will to you is like a sun coming up. At first, it’s dark. And then, it is gray dawn. And then, it’s the twilight zone. And then, it’s light. And then, it’s high noon. *“The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day”*—the full-orbed revelation of God’s glory.

And so you just simply say, “Lord, I want to know,” and, “Speak to me,” and, “God, if this is you, confirm it; speak again”—especially if it’s a big, major decision. But what I’m saying is this, dear friend: There is a sense in which God can put something in your heart. And how we need to learn to be sensitive to the voice of the Spirit! But if you’ve not come, number one, and said, “Lord, here I give my life away,” and made that full surrender; and, number two, if you are not walking according to the principles and precepts of the Word of God, I doubt very seriously if you’re ready to hear that still small voice of the Spirit. Pray. Talk to God. And expect God to speak back to you.

I could give you illustrations of where things like this have happened in my own heart and in my own life, where God impressed my spirit to do thus and such a thing. I did it, and it proved to be the will of God and the way of God in such a way that I’m quite certain it was not just simply happenstance.

#### IV. Do Not Be Afraid to Use Your Mind

Now, let me give you the fourth principle: Now, after you've done these other things, don't be afraid to use your mind. After your mind has been cleansed, dedicated, sanctified, use it. Now, go back to our scripture in Romans chapter 12, verses 1 and following. The Bible says, *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be transformed"*—now, watch this—*"by the renewing of your mind."* (Romans 12:1–2) When you come to the Lord in a full surrender, He gives you a new mind. He renews your mind. "You are renewed," Paul says in Ephesians also, "in the spirit of your mind." (Ephesians 4:23) Now, what did He renew that mind for: to put it in mothballs? It's time that some Christians got their brain in gear.

Now, listen, friend. You're not prohibited from using your mind in knowing the will of God. You can use your mind. You should use your mind. Jesus said we're to "love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, and"—you finish it—"with all our"—what?—"mind." (Matthew 22:37) Paul says, *"We have the mind of Christ."* (1 Corinthians 2:16) *"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."* (Philippians 2:5) We need to learn to think God's thoughts after Him and to use our minds to know the will of God. And that's not unspiritual, that's not humanistic, to use your own mind. You say, "But doesn't the Bible say, 'Lean not unto your own understanding'?" (Proverbs 3:5) Yes, it does; but it doesn't say not to use it. Just don't lean on it.

And let me explain what I'm talking about. Your mind here still must be subject to the Word of God. You don't lean on it, but you do use it. Example: Simon Peter was out fishing one night—a commercial fisherman, fished all night. He hadn't caught one smelly little old fish. Jesus, standing from the shore, says to him, "Cast your net on the other side of the ship." Now, Jesus is talking to a commercial fisherman, who might have said, "Hey, don't you know we've fished all night? There are no fish out there. If there were, we would have caught them." But Peter says to Jesus, "And we have toiled all night and taken nothing. Nevertheless, at thy word, I will." Now, that's a pretty good place to be: "Nevertheless, at thy word..." (Luke 5:1–5) In other words, "Even when it doesn't make sense, if the Word of God says it, we'll do it—even when it is contrary to our so-called, vaunted human knowledge."

But this doesn't mean that Peter at another time should not have used his mind. Let me give you another verse—Proverbs chapter 22, verse 3. The Bible says, *"A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished."* (Proverbs 22:3) *"A prudent man foreseeth evil"*: you know, a wise man sees a recession coming, he puts some money in the bank. *"The prudent man foreseeth the evil, and*



*hideth himself*": now, that means if you see calamity coming, and you're prudent, there's nothing wrong with making plans. A man says, "Well, I'm just going to trust God." But if he's a prudent man, he'll foresee the evil and he will hide himself.

Now, what all of these verses are saying is that common sense will tell you some things. Friend, you don't even need a Bible to tell you some things.

One of my memories of hearing a man preach when I was a little boy was a man telling why he didn't drink liquor. He said when he was a little boy he saw a man who was drunk trying to get in an automobile. And this man was so drunk that he left one leg hanging outside the car door, and he was trying to slam the door, and he kept slamming the door on his leg and wondered why he couldn't get it shut. And this man said, "When I was a little boy, I stood there and watched that man as he kept slamming the car door on his leg and was so drunk he couldn't feel it and so stupid he didn't know the difference." He said, "I made up my mind then I wouldn't drink." And he said, "Scripture had nothing to do with it: it was just stupid," amen?

Shakespeare said, "What fools men are to put an enemy in their mouths that steals their brains away!"

Now, what I'm trying to say is, there are certain things common sense tells you: "A prudent man foresees the evil, and he hides himself." So, use your mind. Don't be afraid of your mind. Again, *"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God."* (James 1:5) Now, what is wisdom? It's common sense—sanctified common sense. It's not feeling warm around the heart and wet around the lashes and goose bumps all over—shiver in your liver. That's not what it is. It is sanctified common sense: the mind of God in you. So you use your mind.

## **V. Do the Will of God as You Know It Day by Day**

Now, the final principle, and I'll be finished, as we're discovering God's way for a new day. Now, let's recapitulate before I get this final thing. First of all, you just come to the Lord and just give it all to Him. Have you done that? Just say, "Here it is, Lord God. I just present myself to you." Secondly, you saturate yourself with the Word of God and begin to live by the principles of the Word of God. Thirdly, you pray and expect God to speak back to you, and get those impulses of the Spirit checked out by the Word of God. Fourthly, you use your mind cleansed and renewed by the Holy Spirit. And after the Holy Spirit has cleansed your mind and renewed your mind, then you use your mind. And don't be afraid to trust your mind as your mind is superintended by the Word of God.

Now, the fifth and final thing is this: After you've done these other things, you do the will of God as you know it day by day. Now, that's so important. Friend, it's hard to steer a ship that's not moving. And so many people are looking for God's plan out yonder, like

it's a blueprint or like it's a map. God doesn't give us a blueprint. God doesn't give us a map. If so, we would take our eyes off Him and put our eyes on the map. And I want to tell you again that the will of God for your life is not something you find: it finds you. It's not like an Easter egg hunt. You just simply come to the Lord. It is a relationship with the Lord. And once you enter into this relationship with the Lord, then, day by day, as He tells you, you do what He tells you. And then, you go walking in the light. And God doesn't show you the future. All God shows you is the past. And so you come to the place, and after a while you look over your shoulder and you say, "Isn't it wonderful what God has done?" And you can say, "Hitherto hath the Lord led us. I mean, God led us this way."

He doesn't show us where; He shows us from whence we have come as we're looking back. So you just do God's will today. Listen. The way to know God's will for your life is to do it for the next fifteen minutes, see? And part of that includes listening to me. Now, listen. That's the way to know God's will for your life: just in the little things.

Let me give you another verse of Scripture that is so applicable right here in Luke chapter 16 and verse 10—listen to it: *"He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much..."*—you know what that means? If you can't be trusted in the little things, you can't be trusted in the big things—*"He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much."* (Luke 16:10)

Now, God says, "If you've not been faithful over those things, who's going to commit to your hand other things." (Luke 16:11) I mean, if you can't be trusted today to speak a kind word, if you can't be trusted today with a nickel, why should you be trusted with hundreds of thousands of dollars tomorrow? God is building your character. And, dear friend, today—today, this day—you be faithful in those small things. God doesn't want you to know the future. It would blow your mind if you did know the future. He just wants you to follow Him a step at a time.

You know, there's an interesting story in the Bible where Abraham sent his trusted servant to seek a bride for Isaac. And that servant went out and he came back, and this is how he reported in—in Genesis chapter 24 and verse 27, here's what he said: *"And he said, Blessed be the LORD God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth:"*—and then he said this significant thing—*"I being in the way, the LORD led me."* (Genesis 24:27) Now, that's kind of hard. It sounds like he was standing in somebody's way. But that isn't what it means. What it literally means is, "As I was going, God led me"—"As I was on my way, being in the way, the Lord led me." And that's the way God's going to lead you.

Now, if you're going to sit here and say, "Now, God, show me what it is, and I'll write it all down, and then I'll do it," no: get busy for Jesus, and do those things that you know that you ought to do.

*You ask, "What is the will of God?"  
Well, here's the answer true;  
"The nearest thing, that should be done.  
That He can do—through you!"*

—E. C. BAIRD

That's the will of God right now today. I mean, if it means just picking up a piece of paper off the parking lot out there in the church; if you say, "This is God's house and God's place and God's property, and I want it to look nice; and, Lord Jesus, unto you I'll pick up a piece of paper," you be faithful in that which is least. It may turn into something else. Indeed, it will. You just see somebody that needs a smile, and you give them a smile. If you'll just have an opportunity to give out a gospel tract, and that's all, do it! And you're going to find out that those small things will turn into the big things. I'm glad God doesn't let us know the future. Number one: It takes the romance out of it. Number two: It might scare us to death.

When I was in college, a boy came through Memphis, Tennessee, and came back down to our college down in Florida. He said to me, "Adrian, guess what I did!" I was about twenty years of age then. He said, "Guess what I did!" I said, "What did you do?" He said, "I went through Memphis, Tennessee, and went in and saw Dr. R. G. Lee." Now, if you don't know who Dr. R. G. Lee is, he's the former pastor of this church, one of the all-time great preachers of all history. He'd rank up there with Spurgeon and all of the others, and a man in his own rank head and shoulders above most all other preachers. He was one of my heroes—I mean, a real hero. And for him to say, "Guess what I did! I went through Memphis, Tennessee and saw Dr. Lee," would be like Bob Sorrell saying, "Adrian, guess what I did! I went through Washington and stopped in and saw Ronald Reagan."

My first thought was, "So, how did you get in to see him?" And he said, "Well, I just asked his secretary if I could go in and see him for a few minutes." And I thought, "Well, how did she know who'd he'd see?" And then also, I didn't know that pastors had secretaries. I knew some churches had secretaries. But I mean, here this pastor had a secretary. And I said, "What did you all do?" He said, "Well, we talked about the Lord for a while and then we had prayer." I thought to myself, "Man, I'd like to do that, but I wouldn't want to bother a busy man like that. And he wouldn't want to see me, or anything else." But I tried to conjure up in my mind what that office would look like, and so forth. Now, remember, I'm a twenty-year old boy.

The years came and passed. And by God's grace and infinite mercy, I became the pastor of this same church, was sitting in that same office behind that same desk, having forgotten this episode that took place many, many years ago, when my secretary buzzed the intercom and said, "Pastor, Dr. Lee's out here. He wants to know if he can

come in and see you for a few minutes.” I said, “Yeah, let him in.”

Now, let me tell you something. Had you told that preacher boy there at Stetson University that one day he would be pastor of this church, it would have blown a gasket. It almost does now. And I don’t know what I’m doing here, really—I mean, by the grace of God; I know that it’s of God. But what I’m trying to say is this: that I’m glad that God did not put a heavy on a boy and say, “Now, Adrian, here’s my plan for your life. You’re going to graduate from Stetson, and you’ll pastor the Fellsmere church. Then, after you pastor the Fellsmere church, you’re going to go to New Orleans Seminary, and at New Orleans Seminary you’re going to pastor the church down there at Waveland for a while. And then after you graduate from seminary, then, Adrian, I want you to move to Florida. And you’re going to have a baby and the boy’s going to die. But that’s going to break your heart and make you a better preacher, and so forth.” And I’d have been worried about that and this, you know, and having to face that the whole time. “And then, Adrian, after that, you’re going to pastor here in Fort Pierce, and you’re going to stay here for a little over six years. And then, Adrian, after that I want you to go to Merritt Island, and there you’re going to pastor at Merritt Island for eight years. And then, you’re going to go to Bellevue Baptist Church and you’re going to be Dr. Lee’s pastor.”

I’m glad He didn’t do it that way. That’s not the way God leads. God doesn’t give you a plan like that. God just said to this boy, “Look, I’ve called you. You’re mine. Today, obey me.”

## **Conclusion**

Now, friend, you do God’s will today. And you, being in the way, will be led of the Lord. And you’ll know God’s way for a new day.

# God's Guidance

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** October 7, 1979

**Main Scripture Text:** Jeremiah 10:23

*"O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself:  
it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."*

JEREMIAH 10:23

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Guidance Is Promised
- II. Guidance Is Personal
- III. Guidance Is Provisional
  - A. Meekness
  - B. Willingness
  - C. Obedience
- IV. Guidance Is Practical
  - A. How to Know God's Will for Your Life
    - 1. Presentation
    - 2. Transformation
    - 3. Revelation
  - B. How God's Will Finds Us
    - 1. Concentration
    - 2. Continuation
    - 3. Communication

Conclusion

## Introduction

Now tonight, I want us to think—we're going to take a respite from our studies on the miracles of Elisha. We're not finished with them yet, the miracles of Elisha, but tonight we're going to take a respite—and I want us to think tonight about God's guidance—God's guidance. And, I want you to read with me a verse of Scripture in Jeremiah chapter 10 and verse 23. Jeremiah makes a confession to the Lord, and it's a confession that I ought to make, an acknowledgment that you need to make. Jeremiah chapter 10 and verse 23: Jeremiah says, *"O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."* (Jeremiah 10:23) Isn't that a great verse? *"O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."* (Jeremiah 10:23)

The question is often asked—and perhaps asked me more than any other question that I’m asked as a pastor: How can I know God’s will for my life? Sometimes people are talking about their life in general. Sometimes they’re talking specifically about some detail, some job, some marriage, some movement. But, they’re wanting to know, “How can I know God’s way, God’s plan, God’s guidance for my life?” And, many men do not know. Somebody has described our age as “an age of guided missiles and misguided men.” Man is like a clever creature who has lost his way in the darkness, and he is floundering around.

And yet, life is but a succession of choices. If you wanted to give a description of life, it is but one choice after another. We have to choose between right and wrong, and sometimes that’s not always easy. But then, sometimes we have to choose between good and best, and sometimes that’s very hard. Life would at least be a little easier if we could just choose between right and wrong, but when we have to choose between good and best, then it gets even harder. And, I don’t want to settle for the good when I could have the best. I want to know God’s will for my life. You want to know God’s will for your life. Wisdom is knowing God’s will; victory and success is doing it. And so, we want to talk tonight about God’s guidance for you. Now, there are three or four things I want us to notice in this straightforward and somewhat simple message, but pertinent message.

## **I. Guidance Is Promised**

The first thing I want us to notice is guidance is promised, and what a wonderful thing this is for us to know—that God has, without hesitation, without equivocation, God has promised to guide His children.

Let me give you some verses. If you’re taking notes, jot them down. You may wish to turn to them. Isaiah 58, verse 11: *“the LORD shall guide thee continually”* (Isaiah 58:11)—a wonderful promise. Listen to this one—Psalm 32 and verse 8: *“I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.”* (Psalm 32:8) And then, let me give you another one—Proverbs chapter 3 and verse 6: *“In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he [will] direct thy paths.”* (Proverbs 3:6) What wonderful promises these are! And, these are just a few of the many promises where God has definitely, deliberately, distinctively promised to guide us. We have a Father above us controlling all things. We have a Savior before us who gave us an example, who is leading the way. We have the Holy Spirit within us, impressing our hearts to know God’s will for our lives.

And, let me say here parenthetically and incidentally, but not with a lack of importance, guidance is not merely for young people. You know, often in seminars for young people, the subject is, “How Young People Can Know God’s Will for Their Lives.” But, when people get to be senior saints, sometimes people stop talking to them about

knowing God's will for their lives, but it's just as important for them to know God's will for their lives. Everybody needs to know God's will for their life. You say, "Well, I blew it. When I was a teenager, God wanted me to preach, or wanted me to be a missionary, wanted me to be a lawyer, a doctor, or wanted me to marry this person and I married that person," and, and, whatever it is. And, you feel that you missed it. But, wait a minute, friend—God's guidance is always perpetual, and you cannot outmaneuver God. You can't back God into a corner, where God says, "Well, I want to help you, but now I can no longer help you." You surrender everything to God.

And, even if your life as a senior person is a life that has not known and not walked in the will of God, I want to give you a promise. It's Joel chapter 2 and verse 25: "*And*"—God says—"*I will restore [unto] you the years that the locust [has] eaten.*" (Joel 2:25) Isn't that wonderful? God will give you a new chance; God will give you a new start, and God will take your life now, no matter what it is and what has happened to it. Somebody has well said, "God can mend a broken life if you give Him all of the pieces." Just pick up the fragments of a wasted and a ruined life and say, "Here it is, Lord. Now, from henceforth—even these sunset years of my life—I want to know your will, and I want you, God, to restore unto me the years that the locusts have eaten." And so, the first thing we notice is that guidance is promised.

## **II. Guidance Is Personal**

Now, the second thing I want us to notice is this: that guidance is personal—is personal. God guides us as individuals. Now, God has His way in the great sweep of history, and God, it seems, is moving nations on the face of the globe like checkers on a board. And, God is behind history, and God deals with nations—that is true. But, God guides us one at a time; God deals with us as individuals. Guidance is a very personal thing. The Bible teaches that "*the very hairs of [our] head are...numbered.*" (Matthew 10:30; Luke 12:7) And, you see, God does not deal primarily with people in mass, but as individuals, and He has as many methods of giving guidance and as many plans as He has people. Every person is an individual, and you don't need to try to be anybody else. God made you uniquely you.

Now preachers—young preachers especially—have a problem because they will listen to some other preacher that they will admire, and they'll try and be like that preacher. You know, I started out, and I said, "Well, boy, if I could be like W. A. Criswell, if I could be like Billy Graham, or if I could be like Hyman Appleman, or if I could be like Vance Havner, if I could be like one of these men..." And then, it dawned on me that the best I could ever be would be a second-rate imitation Billy Graham, a second-rate imitation W. A. Criswell. But, you know, I can be the best Adrian Rogers there is, you see, as good as that may be or as bad as that may be. But, God made me uniquely me,



and God made you uniquely you. And, God has a plan for your life, and God has a wonderful plan for your life.

And, you know, sometimes we think that God is really not interested in little old me. A little fellow was reciting the model prayer, and he said, “Our Father, which art in heaven, how does He know my name?” But, He does—He knows our name. And, you know, if you look at this universe and you see the sun that holds the mighty planets in orbit—yet that same sun ripens a little bunch of grapes like it had nothing else to do. And, the great God that runs the universe is the God that knows the very hairs of your head. It is the God who has directed your steps, the God who knows your pathway, and the God who has a very personal plan for you. God has a personal plan, an individual plan, for every man, woman, and child in this building tonight.

### III. Guidance Is Provisional

Now, the third thing I want you to notice—not only is guidance promised and not only is it personal, but guidance is provisional. Now, you don’t know God’s guidance automatically. God has attached some provisions to finding or to knowing His will for your life.

#### A. Meekness

One of these provisions that God has demanded is a spirit of meekness. Now, meekness is not weakness, but the word *meekness* means “yieldedness”—“yieldedness.” In olden times, when a horse would be broken—a fine stallion—they didn’t want to cripple the horse; they did not wish to take from it its strength, or its power, or its fire, but they wanted that horse to be able to respond to a rider, to respond to the reins, to respond to the spurs, to respond to the whip, to do this and to do that, to start, to stop, to do all of these things. And, when that horse had been broken, rather than saying, “The horse had been broken” in the old English, they used to say, “He had been made meek. He had been ‘meeked.’” Now, Jesus says, “*Blessed are the meek*”, (Matthew 5:5) but here’s the verse I want to give you—Psalm 25, verse 9: the Bible says, “*The meek will he guide in judgment*”—“*The meek will he guide in judgment.*” (Psalm 25:9) Now, are you surrendered to the will of God? Are you yielding to the reins? Are you listening to the impulse? There must be a spirit of meekness.

There’s an old story I even hesitate to tell, but many of you remember the story of the man who brought his mule to the mule trainer. And, the first thing the mule trainer did was to take a club, like a two by four, and hit that mule right between the eyes. And, the man said—and the poor mule slumped to his knees—and the man said, “You’ve almost killed my mule. I didn’t bring him for you to beat him. I brought him for you to train him.” He said, “Well, I have to get his attention first.” Now, I think that God



sometimes has to get our attention, sometimes, that we are yielded to Him.

You know, the Bible says, “Be not like the horse, or the mule, who must have a bridle in his mouth, lest he come nigh thee.” (Psalm 32:9) Don’t be mulish. A mule is backward about going forward. We need to be—we need not to be—mulish. We need to be meek. We need to let the Lord have His way, to yield ourselves, to be pliable in God’s hands. Some of us are so rigid and so recalcitrant that God cannot guide us.

All right, and so, guidance is provisional, and one of the provisions is meekness. “*The meek will he guide [with] judgment.*” (Psalm 25:9)

## B. Willingness

Another of God’s provisions is willingness—very similar. In John 7, verse 17, Jesus said, “*If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine*” (John 7:17)—“If any man will do God’s will, if any man wants to do God’s will, if any man wills to do God’s will...” Do you know, so many times when we come to God and we’re saying, “Lord, show me,” we don’t really want God to show us? We want God to superimpose—or, excuse me, we want God to rubberstamp—the plans that we already have.

You know, architects tell us that many times, when people want a house and they come to an architect, they don’t really want an architect. All they want is somebody to agree with the plans they’ve already drawn out on a brown paper bag. They already know what they want. And, whether that’s good or bad, they’re just coming to him to get him to confirm and point up what they’ve already decided on.

Well, many people come to God that way, and they say, “Now God, here is what I want,” and they pray and they pray and try to talk God into getting God on their side.

As a matter of fact, I’ve had people come to me and ask about a course of action—maybe they want a divorce or something like that—and I show them what God’s Word says, and you know what they say? They say, “Well, I’ll pray about it.” I say, “Forget it.” You don’t have to pray about God’s will when He just says, “This is wrong, and this is right.” You see, what they mean is, “I’m going to go keep on talking with God until I convince myself that God’s going to break His Word just for me.” See? God’s not going to do that. And, you say, “Well, I’ve already been divorced.” Well, God “*will restore...the years...the locust [has] eaten.*” (Joel 2:25) God’s not out of it. And, you may be divorced and remarried, and you say, “What should I do?” Well, you can’t unscramble eggs. You’re in a situation right now that you take and you give that situation to God and ask God to take it and bless it. And, God is so good. He “*will restore...the years...the locust [has] eaten.*” (Joel 2:25) And, God is a wonderful God, and God is not the kind of a God that holds a grudge. I thank God for that. But, what I’m trying to say is this, ladies and gentlemen: that so many people get themselves into situations and so many people get themselves into messes because they are not willing for God’s will to be done in their

lives. Now, you must be meek; you must be guidable. And then, you must be willing; you must submit to the will of God.

Now, God will allow you to do things that are not His will, and you get into bad trouble. Because—because—God permits it doesn't mean that God's in favor of it. Sometimes people say to me, "Well, if God didn't want it to happen, He wouldn't have let it happen." That's one of the stupidest things I've ever heard. Do you think God wants rape, and murder, and arson, and pillage, and hatred to happen? There are a lot of things that happen that God doesn't want to happen. That's what some people think, you know. You see, God permits things that are not His will.

Remember when Balaam wanted to cast a curse on Israel in order to rake off some dividends on the side? Maybe you don't remember that passage of Scripture over there in the Old Testament, but Balaam went to God to get permission because Balaam was a preacher and he wanted permission to do this from God. He asked God, and God wouldn't give him permission. He asked God, and he asked God; and finally, God allowed him to go. And, Balaam thought that he had God's will, but he didn't have God's perfect will; he had God's permissive will, and he almost got killed doing it. God will allow you... God will give you some things that you ask for sometimes that are not His will for you to have. The Bible says in the Old Testament, *"He gave them [the desires of their heart and] sent leanness into their [souls]."* (Psalm 106:15) Sometimes we beg, and connive, and twist, and sometimes we try to superimpose our will upon God's will, and we get ourselves in an awful mess because we're not sensitive to know the will of God.

### C. **Obedience**

And again, dear friend, not only meekness and willingness; there simply must be obedience. The Bible says in Proverbs chapter 3, verse 6: *"In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."* (Proverbs 3:6) Now, what does that mean? That means you do God's will in the little things as well as the big things. *"In all thy ways acknowledge him."* (Proverbs 3:6)

You know, somebody says, "Well, I want to know God's will about whom I should marry." All right, are you acknowledging God's will in your finances? Are you acknowledging God's will in your recreation? Are you acknowledging God's will in your witnessing? Are you acknowledging God's will in the other areas of your life? The Bible says, *"In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he [will] direct [your] paths."* (Proverbs 3:6) You see, you can't just niche some little area out and say, "God, I want your will, and I want to know your will in this life, but forget about the rest of it." No, no. *"In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he [will] direct thy paths."* (Proverbs 3:6) Let me tell you something, friend: *to know God's will in the big things, do God's will in the small things.*

Don't forget that. To know God's will in the big things, be sure to do God's will in the small things. For the Bible says, *"He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in [that which is] much."* (Luke 16:10) Be obedient. Be obedient to the Lord. That's one way to know the will of God.

#### **IV. Guidance Is Practical**

Now, let me go on and say that not only is guidance promised, and not only is guidance practical, and not only is guidance provisional, but I want to say that guidance is very, very practical—very, very practical. It's not primarily a matter of visions, and ecstasies, and feelings. God has a way of guiding.

I want us to turn now to Romans chapter 12 for just a moment. This is a verse and a passage that we come back to over and over again, because, in my estimation, it is one of the most pungent and practical in all of the Bible. And, here we're looking in Romans chapter 12—that deals with knowing God's guidance—Romans chapter 12, verses 1 and 2: *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind"*—now, notice this next statement—*"[in order] that"*—*"that ye may prove"*—or, *"that you may know"*—*"what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."* (Romans 12:1–2)

##### **A. How to Know God's Will for Your Life**

Would you like to know God's will for your life—God's will that is good for your life, God's will that is perfect for your life, God's will that is acceptable for your life? Would you like to know that? Well, here's what God says to do to do it.

##### **1. Presentation**

Now, the first thing is that you present yourself to God. Now, it's very simple: you just present yourself to God. *"Present [yourselves] a living sacrifice."* (Romans 12:1) You bring to Him everything and give it all to Him. Present yourself to Him. Don't say, "Now Lord, show me your will and then I'll see if I want to do it." That's not the way to find God's will. The way to find God's will is to say, "God, whatever it is, I'll do it."

Now, that's hard to do. We don't want to do that. Have you ever had anybody say—does your wife or husband ever come to you and say something like this: "Honey, will you do something for me?" What's your first thought? What is it? What is it? "What do you want me to do?" "Well, don't...never mind what it is; just will you do it?" You say, "Well, now wait a minute—you tell me first, and then I'll let you know whether I want to do it or not." And, they just say, "Well, just trust me—just trust me. Tell me you'll do it." Well, you know, you have to love a person a whole lot or else be a liar to say, "All right,

I'll do it"—right?—"I'll just do it. Whatever you say, I'll do it before you tell me."

Well, dear friend, that's exactly what God says to you: "Will you do it?" You say, "What?" He says, "Never mind. Will you do it? Just trust me. Just hand to me a blank sheet of paper with your name signed at the bottom and say, 'God, fill it in.'" *"Present your bodies a living sacrifice."* (Romans 12:1) Don't talk about dying for Jesus if you're not willing to live for the Lord Jesus. And, don't be afraid to hand God this blank check, because in the light of Calvary, it's very reasonable—it's *"your reasonable service."* (Romans 12:1) Jesus Christ died for you in agony and blood, and you can trust someone who loved you so much that He sent His Son to die for you, amen? And, you see, it's reasonable. It's not unreasonable that He would ask you this. Somebody says, "That's unreasonable to ask a person to do something"—that someone who loved you so much He gave His Son for you. So, there must be, first of all, a presentation—a reasonable presentation.

## 2. Transformation

And, when there is this reasonable presentation, then there's going to be this renewing transformation. Look—look at it: *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed"*—that is, "squeezed into"—*"this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind."* (Romans 12:1–2) Now look: presentation, transformation; presentation, transformation; presentation (verse 1), transformation (verse 2).

Now, this word *transformed* is a very interesting word. It's the word from which we get our English word *metamorphosis*, which means "a change of form," but it literally means where the inner nature comes to the surface—that's what a transformation is.

For example, the inner nature of a caterpillar is a butterfly, but you'd never know it—would you?—till that caterpillar crawls up into the cocoon, into the chrysalis, and it dies to itself, as it were. And then, there is a metamorphosis; there is a transformation. And, out of the cocoon comes a gloriously beautiful Monarch butterfly. This is a metamorphosis.

And, incidentally, there, in the gospels, where the gospels speak of the transfiguration of the Lord Jesus Christ, where you read in your Bible the word, *"He was transfigured,"* (Mark 9:2) is the same word, *metamorphosis*, because what happened at the transfiguration? Do you remember when Jesus Christ went up on that exceedingly high mountain with Peter, James, and John, and there appeared to him Moses and Elijah? And then, the Bible says that His clothing became radiant like snow, His face like the noonday sun. (Mark 9:3) And, all of the glory—the Shekinah glory—and the effulgence of God—that was the inner nature of the Lord Jesus Christ. That which was on the inside began to be apparent on the outside, and that's the same word. He was

transformed. He was transfigured. He was metamorphosed. Now, that's the same word that's used here, when the inner nature comes to the surface.

What is the inner nature of a Christian? It would be better if I would ask, who is the inner nature of a Christian? Jesus. We are made "*partakers of the divine nature*" when we get saved. (2 Peter 1:4) But, many people don't see Jesus in us. They don't see our nature. They do not know what our real nature is, because rather than being metamorphosed, we are conformed. And, this world tries to squeeze us, and mold us, and hold us in and to keep us out, and people look at us and they don't see Jesus. What they see is the distortion as we're conformed to this sinful, and vile, and lustful world. But then, there comes a man, a woman, a boy, or girl who says, "I want the will of God for my life. I want God's guidance in my life, and I'm going to take God's recipe." And, that person so presents himself to God that a transformation takes place, and the inner nature of that Christian (if, indeed, he is a Christian) comes to the surface and he is transformed.

### 3. Revelation

Now, the third step—and here it is so beautiful; this is the practical part of it: first of all, there is that presentation; then, there is that transformation; and then, there is that revelation. You want to know God's will? There it is. And, you will know "*what is that good, and [perfect], and [acceptable], will of God.*" (Romans 12:2)

The will of God is not something that you find. People say, "Oh, I want to find the will of God." No, the will of God finds you. You see, it's not your job to discover God's will; it's God's job to reveal God's will to you.

Suppose I say to my son, "David, there's something I want you to do, and if you'll do it, I'll reward you handsomely. And, if you don't do it, I'll beat the daylights out of you." "Well," he says, "since you explained it to me, I'd like to do it. What is it, Dad?" "All right," I say, "now Son, this is what I want you to do." And, he says, "Well, what do you want me to do, Dad? I'm going to do it." And, I say, "No, I'm not going to tell you. You find out." "Well, you mean, Dad, you've got a will for me. You want me to do it. You're going to reward me if I do it and punish me if I don't. You're not going to tell me?" "That's right. You know, it's your job to discover my will for your life." Now, you see, look, friend—if I have a plan for him, then it's my duty to reveal it to him. It is his duty to place himself in such a position not that he will find God's will, but that he will hear God's will.

You see, it is not that God is not speaking; it is that so many of us are not listening. God's will will find us. When we come to that place of presentation and come to that place of transformation, then we'll come to that place of revelation.

## B. How God's Will Finds Us

Now, how will God's will find us? Well, let me just give you some other little things here very quickly, and we'll be finished, because we said it's very practical.

### 1. Concentration

Now, we've read verses 1 and 2 of Romans 12; let's read verses 3 and 4: for the Bible goes on to say, *"For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."* (Romans 12:3) How am I going to know God's will for my life? Three times in this verse he uses the word think—think, think, think. Very practical—it's the word *concentration*. Just concentrate—spiritually concentrate, meditate, think. God gives you the ability to think His thoughts after Him. The Bible says, *"We have the mind of Christ."* (1 Corinthians 2:16) You see, when our mind is renewed by this metamorphosis, then we ought to use it. You see, there is the renewing of our minds (in verse 2). When there is the renewing of our minds (in verse 2), there ought to be the using of our minds (in verse 3), amen?

Don't be afraid to use your renewed mind. When God guides you, He doesn't wipe out your mind and zap you with a vision, primarily. You think God's thoughts after Him. And so, you're *"not to think of [yourself] more highly than [you] ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."* (Romans 12:3) You see, God has given you a spiritual gift, and God has a spiritual calling for you. And, don't you think that you're being humble by saying, "Oh, poor, little old me. God can't use me." That's a lie, and that's a libel against God. God has given to you a spiritual gift, and God has a plan for your life. And, here's the wonderful thing about the grace of God: *the grace of God exalts a man without inflating him and humbles him without debasing him.* We are what we are by the grace of God, and that's wonderful. And so, you just simply come to God, and you let God think His thoughts after you—or you think God's thoughts after Him, rather. And so, there is concentration.

### 2. Continuation

And then, look, if you will—there is continuation—verses 6 through 8: *"Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: [or] he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity"* and so forth. (Romans 12:6–8) Now, what do I mean by "continuation"? I mean, here's a man who's got a little faith, but he thinks God wants him to preach; he thinks God wants him to prophesy. Then, *"prophesy according to the proportion of faith."* (Romans 12:6) You may not start wide-open, but God gives you a little faith; God gives you an indication this is the way you ought to go. Then, go that



way.

See, there's a danger: some people are so afraid they're going to make a mistake that their whole life is one great big mistake. They don't do anything. You see, if you've got a little faith—you think prophecy is God's will for your life—do it! Start out, and be amendable; be guidable. But, it's hard to steer a ship that's not moving. You see, follow God's will, and say, "God, this is what I think is your will. This is what I think you want me to do." And, sometimes you may make a mistake. Paul *"assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit [forbade him]."* (Acts 16:7) But, at least he was moving. He wanted to go. And God, because Paul was walking in the stream of the Spirit, God guided him by taking hold of the tiller of his life. And so, there's concentration, continuation.

### 3. Communication

One last thing: There is communication, or consultation. Look, if you will, in verses 4 and 5: *"For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another."* (Romans 12:4–5) Don't forget to consult with other people when you're seeking God's will for your life.

You see, don't ever say to me, "What I do is none of your business, Mr. Rogers." It's very much my business. What this hand does concerns this hand very much, and what my eyes do concerns my feet very much. Now, my eyes and my feet might get in an argument, and my eyes say, "Well, I'm not going to have any fellowship with my feet—those feet down there." And so, my body's walking along, and there's a hole. And, my eyes say, "I'm not going to tell those feet," and the feet step in the hole. And, the body comes up with a black eye.

Now, what happens is we're members one of another; we're in this thing together, folks—can't get out of it. It is your business what I do; it is my business what you do. And, it's up to you to help me find the will of God for my life, and it's up to me to help you to find the will of God for your life. And, you'll know the will of God and find the will of God in the New Testament Church quicker than any place else on the face of the earth, walking in God's Spirit, walking in God's Body.

### Conclusion

And so, here it is—look; here it is—guidance is promised; guidance is personal; guidance is provisional; guidance is practical. There is that presentation that gives that transformation that gives that revelation. And, how do you get that revelation? By concentration: Use the mind God has given you. By continuation: Do God's will as you know it. And, by consultation: In fellowship with one another and in praying one for the other, the Spirit of God will lead us to know and do His perfect will. Oh, friend, how sweet it is to walk in the will of God! It means more than having a million dollars in the

bank to say, “I’m in God’s will and doing God’s will for my life.”

Let’s bow together in prayer. Heads are bowed; eyes are closed—no one stirring, no one looking. Father, thank you for the message tonight from your Word that has blessed, and warmed, and strengthened our hearts. And Father, we thank you for the message in song that has inspired us and lifted us. And now, dear God, we pray—we pray for those who are not saved, that they shall come to know Jesus Christ as their personal Lord. And, bless them in this invitation. O God, save the lost, and bring them to Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Now, look at me. If you’re an unsaved person, the way to find God’s will for your life is to begin by giving your heart to Jesus Christ. For the Bible says, “*The Lord is...not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*” (2 Peter 3:9) God’s will for you is not that you go to hell. If you go hell, don’t say, “God sent me to hell.” You’ll have to say, “I sent myself to hell.” “[God] is...not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9) God’s will for you tonight is that you would come to repentance—that is, come to a change of mind where you change your mind about sin, about self, about salvation, about all of it, and say, “God, I’m tired of going my way. I’m going to go your way.” That’s repentance—a change of mind. And, repentance and faith are heads and tails of the same coin. The Bible speaks of repentance toward Christ and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ—or, “*repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.*” (Acts 20:21)

Are you willing tonight to say “yes” to Christ? Are you willing to trust Him? You may say, “Brother Rogers, I don’t even know what words like *repentance* mean.” Well, friend, you don’t have to know the meaning of words to know Jesus. All I’m asking you is this: Will you give your heart to Jesus Christ? Will you yield to Him? Will you trust Him? Will you say, “Lord Jesus, take my life. Forgive my sins. Save me. Make me your child. Guide me in this life, and receive me into Glory”? He will—He will. The Bible says, “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.*” (Acts 16:31) And, I want to tell you, on the authority of this book that I preached from tonight, if you will receive Christ, if you will trust Christ tonight, He will forgive your sins; He’ll come and give you that inner nature that we were talking about; and one day, perhaps sooner than you realize, He’ll take you to heaven.

Now, when we sing our invitational hymn in a moment, the counselors and the ministers of our church are going to be standing at the heads of each of these aisles. And, I’m going to ask you, if you tonight will receive Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, to leave your seat and come forward. And, let your coming forward be your way of saying openly and publicly that you’re trusting Christ. “*The scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.*” (Romans 10:11) Jesus said, “If you’re ashamed of me and my words before this sinful and adulterous generation, then I’ll be ashamed



of you when I come in the glory of the Father with the holy angels.” (Mark 8:38) There’s something about coming forward that is sweet to our hearts, that blesses the church, that shames the devil, and gives glory to Jesus—and that’s why I ask you to do it tonight. So, when we sing, you’ll trust Christ. I want you to come.

If you have trusted Christ and you’ve never made it public, I want you to come. And, if you, tonight, need to transfer your membership to Bellevue, I’m asking you to come to let Him have His way in your life. And, remember this: *the way to know God’s will in the big things is to do God’s will in the everyday things.* Some of you who are church members, who need to move your membership—you need God’s will about everything else. Then, do God’s will about this, if it is, indeed, God’s will for you. You come.

And, those of you who want to know God’s will for your life and you’re not saved, well, I can tell you, first of all, it’s God’s will that you get saved, and it’s God’s will that you get saved tonight. I don’t have to guess about that.

# A New Start

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** December 26, 1982

**Main Scripture Text:** Jeremiah 18:1–8

*“O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel.”*

JEREMIAH 18:6

## Outline

Introduction

I. The Potential of a Responsive Life

II. The Problem of a Resistant Life

III. The Promise of a Repentant Life

IV. The Peril of a Rebellious Life

Conclusion

## Introduction

Now, tonight, I want to talk to you on “A New Start.” We’re facing a brand new year, and I want to speak on this subject: “A New Start.” Would you like to start all over again?

Well, you can. Someone penned these words:

*I went to the throne with a quivering heart.*

*The year was done.*

*“Hast thou a new leaf for me, dear Father?” I said,*

*“I have spoiled this one!”*

*He took my leaf, all stained and blotted,*

*And gave me a new one, all unspotted,*

*And into my sad heart smiled.*

*“Do better now, my child.”*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

And our Father from heaven is about to take this old year that we have spoiled and spotted. And we’ll crumple it up and discard it in the grave of God’s forgetfulness. And God is about to give us a brand spanking new year. And what we do with it is up to us as we depend upon Him.

Now I believe that Jeremiah has something like that in mind. We looked this morning in Jeremiah 10. I want you to turn to Jeremiah 18 now—Jeremiah 18—and let’s read the

first four verses. And if you did not bring a Bible with you, I want to suggest that you take the Bible from the pew in front of you and turn to Jeremiah 18. Now, here's what it says: *"The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words. Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it."* (Jeremiah 18:1–4) Notice, especially, verse 4: *"...he made it again another vessel."*

Now, the art of pottery is one of the arts that has remained virtually unchanged down through the years. People make pottery today essentially as they made pottery centuries ago. Now, what happens is this: The workman takes a piece of stiff, ugly clay and he starts to work it. First of all, he will slice it into slices and cut it and crush it and twist it and cut it and crush it and twist until it's soft and pliable. And he knows just the right consistency that he wants the clay to be. And then, he does what they call "throwing" the clay. He puts it on a wheel. And that wheel is revolving around and around and around. The thing that makes the wheel go round is that beneath the potter's table, especially if he's an old-fashioned potter, is a treadle, and he pumps the treadle. And as he pumps the treadle with his foot, it causes the wheel to go round, and he can control the speed of the wheel and the force of the wheel. And then, the potter takes that clay and he starts to caress it within and without with his fingers as it's turning. He works on the inside and on the outside at the same time. And the clay gets all over his hands. And he adds liquid as he wants and keeps the consistency of the clay just at a certain consistency. And he makes a beautiful vessel. He takes something that is ugly and something that is seemingly worthless and with his talented fingers he caresses it and molds it until there emerges a thing of beauty.

Now, God said to Jeremiah, "Jeremiah, I want you to go down to the potter's house. And I want you to see what the potter is doing, because I'm going to use what the potter is doing as an object lesson. I want to teach you something of my ability to make things over anew." Now, in the analogy that the Lord is going to give to Jeremiah, as we're going to see in a moment, the potter represents God Himself. The clay represents us ourselves. And the potter's wheel represents the rounds of life, the vicissitudes of life, the events of life. And God uses these things to mold us and to make us.

Now, as I was studying this scripture and thinking over it this past week, there are four things that came to my mind, and I think four tremendous lessons that would be great for all of us as we get ready to enter into a new year.

## **I. The Potential of a Responsive Life**

And the very first thing is this: I want you to see the potential of a responsive life—that

is, a life that responds to the touch of God. I want you to see what kind of a potential there is. You see, God—as I tried to preach and say this morning—has a plan for every life. You're very important to God. God wants to make something beautiful out of your life. Now, you see, apart from the touch of God, we are but a lump of clay. Actually, that's what we are, physically. We are made of the dust of the earth when we were first made, but the analogy here is a spiritual analogy.

Now, what is a lump of clay? Well, in the first place, it's unclean. In the second place, it's seemingly worthless. It's unlovely. It is totally helpless. And there it is. But the Lord looks at us and the Lord sees beyond what we are by nature. And the Lord sees what He can make of us. And so He takes this clay, unclean, unlovely, and unable to do anything, and He takes it in His own hands and He begins to mold it. Now you may say, "Well, I don't need Him to do that. I can mold my own life." And that may be why some of us are as moldy as we are: that we have tried to do for ourselves what can only be done by the touch of the Master's hand. And so, as you respond to Him, as we tried to say this morning, as you say, "Here I am, Lord; I present my body a living sacrifice, totally, completely holy to you," then He's able to shape us within and without by the turn of the wheel.

Now, the turn of the wheel illustrates and speaks of the vicissitudes of life, all of the events of life. Now, the thing to remember is this: that not only does He shape the pottery but He also turns the wheel, and that all of the events of your life happen only because God allows them to happen. And every turn of the wheel has Romans 8:28 written on top of it—that all things are working together for good to those who love God. (Romans 8:28)

Now you may not be able to understand every turn of the wheel. You don't have to.

*Not now, but in the coming years,  
It may be in the better land,  
We'll know the meaning of our tears,  
And there, some time, we'll understand.*  
—MAXWELL N. CORNELIUS

And some of you now may be hurting and you may be saying, "Why this turn of the wheel?" But Romans 8:28 is still in God's Word: "All things work together for good to those who love Him, who are the called according to His purpose." (Romans 8:28) And I'm here to tell you that He will turn every Calvary into an Easter. He'll turn every hurt into a hallelujah. He'll turn every midnight into a morning. He will turn every sigh into a song. And He'll take your tears and make a string of pearls out of them, if you'll let Him. All things—all things, all things—work together for good to those who love God.

So get a picture of yourself, a helpless, hapless, unclean piece of clay, worthless except for the touch of the Master's hand. He works it from the inside. He works it from

the outside. And He is the One who controls every turn of the wheel. And so, there is the potential of a responsive life. That's the first thing I want you to see.

## **II. The Problem of a Resistant Life**

Now, the second thing I want you to see is not only the potential of a responsive life, that is, a life that responds to the touch of the Master's hand; but I want you to see also the problem of a resistant life, because not everyone let's the Master Workman make of them what He wants to make of them. And notice again as we read here in this story: *"And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter."* (Jeremiah 18:4) The vessel is marred in the hand of the potter. Well, who is the potter? Verse 6 makes it plain: *"O house of Israel, cannot I not do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel."* (Jeremiah 18:6) So, verse 6 makes it very clear that God is the potter. And yet, the vessel was marred in the hand of the potter.

Now I want to ask you a question: Do you think that it was the potter's fault? Do you think it was the potter's failure? Of course not! The reason that the vessel would be marred in the hand of the potter is obvious: the clay is not responsive to the potter's touch. Now, either there is a hidden impurity on the inside of the clay, or the clay is stiff and will not yield to the touch of the potter's hand.

Now, that's the danger with me tonight and with you. There may be in my life some hidden impurity that you cannot see, some sin unconfessed, unrepented-of that nobody knows about but God. And God is unable to make of me what He wants to make of me tonight. Or it may be that it's not a hidden sin. It just may be the consistency of my life is such that I'm not a yieldable person, that I don't bend to the touch of the Master's hand, that I am resisting the turn of the wheel. And it may be that God is wanting me to obey, and I don't want to obey—in the area of witnessing, or in the area of giving, or in the area of forgiving, or in the area of confessing—and God is not able to make of me what He wants to make of me. And there's the problem of a resistant life. Now, friend, God is not going to force you to be anything. And your vessel and your life can be marred in the hand of the potter.

## **III. The Promise of a Repentant Life**

Now, there's a third thing that I see in this passage: Not only the potential of a responsive life, and the problem of a resistant life when the vessel was marred; but I want you to see the promise of a repentant life. Look again in verse 4: *"And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel."* (Jeremiah 18:4)

Now, what enabled Him to make it again another vessel? I mean, after all, if the clay

was stiff and unyielding, or if the clay had some impurity in it to begin with, how could He take that clay and make it again another vessel? Well, look, if you will; go on down in verse 6 and continue to read: *“O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel. At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.”* (Jeremiah 18:6–8)

Now, what is happening is this: that God here is speaking not primarily to individuals, but He’s speaking to nations. And He’s speaking to the nation Israel as a whole, and He’s saying to these people, “You’re like clay in my hand. And I wanted to make a great nation of you, but you became stiff, hard-hearted, recalcitrant. You rebelled against me. And what I wanted to do was marred. But,” He said, “just as the potter made the vessel over again, I can make this nation over again, because if they will turn from the evil—that is, if they will repent—then I’ll take this clay and I’ll reuse it and remake it.” And there is the promise, dear friend—the promise of a repentant life.

It may be that you’ve failed, and it may be that you’ve failed terribly and ignominiously. But I’m here to tell you that God is the God of the second chance. And that’s what He’s showing Jeremiah in the potter’s house. Even though the vessel was marred, if the people of that time, and indeed if the people of this time, will repent of the stubbornness, if they will repent of the impurity, if they will turn back to me,” God says, “I will remake you.”

Now, this morning, when I spoke of finding God’s will and God’s plan for your life, many of you sat there and were somewhat dejected, because you thought, “Oh, it’s wonderful that these young people are hearing this, but it’s over for me: I’ve blown it.” I want to tell you that God has a plan for the life of everybody who’s sitting in this auditorium, and God is not finished with you. If He were, He’d just take you on to heaven. And your greatest years can be out in the future. And God is the God of a second chance.

If you’ll study the heroes of the faith and study the Bible, you’ll find out that almost every one of them failed and every one of them spent a time of wasted years, and God brought them back and God gave them a second chance. Abraham did it, and God gave Abraham a second chance. You’re going to find out that Jonah did it. What a miserable flop Jonah was! God called him to be a missionary, and he fled from the Lord. And you remember the story, as he was swallowed by a whale, and so forth. But God gave him another chance. And he became the flaming evangelist at Nineveh. Jacob, who made such great promises to the Lord, failed the Lord, and yet Jacob came back to Bethel. Simon Peter cursed and swore and denied the Lord, and yet Simon Peter came

back, and God gave Simon Peter a second chance, and he became the apostle of Pentecost. You read in the Bible where John Mark forsook the Apostle Paul and went home to Mama. And yet God gave John Mark a second chance, and John Mark was the author of the Gospel of Mark.

What I'm trying to say to you tonight is this: that no matter what you've done in the past, and no matter how you have failed the Lord, God tonight will give you a second chance if you'll just simply come and turn from that evil, turn from that sin, repent of it all, and say, "Here, Lord, I want you to take what's left and I want you to use it."

We sing that song, "Fill my cup, Lord. I lift it up, Lord." We ought to sing, "Cleanse my cup, Lord. I've messed it up, Lord." And if we do—if we do—He will cleanse it and He will take it and make it again. And God is the God of a second chance. He is not finished with you. And failure is not final: *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* (1 John 1:9)

Oh, the potential of a responsive life! Oh, the problem of a resistant life! But, oh, the promise of a repentant life, even though we may have resisted! You see, God's got so much invested in you, ladies and gentlemen, He's not just going to turn you loose and let you go if you want to come back to Him.

I used to pastor was down at Cape Kennedy where those contractors invest so much in one of those great missiles. And those missiles, of course, are programmed on a computer. And before the missile is ever launched, there is what they call a flight plan that is programmed by a computer. And that missile lifts off from the pad. And I've seen so many of them as they are hurled into space. There is a trajectory, and a flight plan, and an objective. It is all worked out. But very few of those missiles fly according to that plan. I don't know that any of them fly according to that plan exactly. But what they do is, they continually make mid-course corrections. And when the missile veers to this way, then it gets off the trajectory, and so the computer goes to work. And the missile is in this particular position. The computer says because of all of these things, now here's the new flight plan, and it's flying on a new flight plan. And the motors beneath that missile begin to yaw and gimbal, and they put the missile on another plan—perhaps not the first plan, but still a plan, and a good plan. Suppose it veers off again? Then the computer goes to work again. And if the missile will respond, there's a new plan for that missile—not the original plan, but a plan nonetheless. There's a lot invested in that missile.

But I'll tell you, there is a button there—a red button. And if one of those missiles goes out and turns around, and heads back toward the Cape, they push that button, and it's all over. It just blows up. Or if it looks like it's going to endanger human life, they just push the destruct button, and it just blows up just like that.

Now, friend, I tell you this: that if you will say to the Lord, "Lord, maybe you called

me to preach when I was a youngster, and maybe the time for preaching is past; maybe you called me to be a missionary, and I missed that; or maybe you wanted me to enter into this marriage, or maybe you didn't want me to go to that school, but, Lord, I've done it, I was rebellious, there was something in my life unclean and impure; I did it, Lord, but here I am right now, wherever I am"—you may be in your second or third marriage; you may be over the hill, so far as age and strength is concerned; there may be all kinds of things that you would give a thousand worlds like this one if you could only take them back and do them again, but you can't—but I'm telling you that when you come to God tonight, and you say, "Lord, here I am; I turn from my wickedness, and I, just like a lump of clay, yield myself to you," He'll make it over anew. It may not be the vessel He was going to make the first time. The Bible says, "*He made it again another vessel.*" (Jeremiah 18:4) But He's the God of the second chance. And don't you sit around thinking, "Oh, I wish I only had another chance!" There is a plan for you, and God has something wonderful He wants to do with your life. God has something wonderful He wants to make out of you.

Dear friend, thank God for the promise of a repentant life. Here is the promise: "*O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in my hand.*" (Jeremiah 18:6) Again, verse 8: "*If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.*" (Jeremiah 18:8)

#### **IV. The Peril of a Rebellious Life**

But there's one other thing I want you to notice tonight: Not only the promise of a repentant heart, but I want you to notice the peril of a rebellious life—the peril of a rebellious life. There is an ominous part to this chapter. So many times we don't read chapter 18 in conjunction with chapter 19. But the lesson is not finished. And I want you to go over into chapter 19 and I want you to see what God says to Jeremiah the prophet.

Look with me, if you will, in Jeremiah 19, verse 1: "*Thus saith the LORD, Go and get a potter's earthen bottle,*"—it means the same thing, a vessel—"and take of the ancients of the people,"—that is, of the older people—"and of the ancients of the priests; and go forth unto the valley of the son of Hinnom, which is by the entry of the east gate, and proclaim there the words that I shall tell thee." (Jeremiah 19:1–2) And then, I'm going to skip on down to verse 11: "*And shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Even so will I break this people and this city, as one breaketh a potter's vessel, that cannot be made whole again.*" (Jeremiah 19:11) Now, just put a star by that: "...that cannot be made whole again." And then, I want you to look, if you will, with me in verse 15: "*Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring upon this city*



*and upon all her towns all the evil that I have pronounced against it, because they have hardened their necks, that they might not hear my words.” (Jeremiah 19:15)*

Now, friends, there's one kind of a bottle that can't be made over again. There's one kind of a vessel that cannot be reclaimed. And that one is the one that is hardened in its deformity. Once it is hardened, once it is fixed, once it is dried, it's no good to put it on the potter's wheel again. It's past hope. And if it's just deformed and if it's disfigured, there's nothing else you can do with it except break it and throw it away. And so, God tells Jeremiah, “You go down there and get a bottle. Take it, and take all of the elders and all of the ancients as witnesses, and break it.” And God says, “This is what I'm going to do to this city and to this people.”

One time when Joyce and I were in Israel, we went to Mount Calvary. We wanted to see it. And we'd seen it so many times from a distance, but I said, “Joyce, I want to walk right up to the foot of Calvary.” And there's a bus station there. And I said, “Let's go right to the very foot of Mount Calvary.” So we went through the bus station. And there was a small wall there. We went and looked over the small wall, and I was amazed to find over that wall a pile of broken pottery—just a pile. I would say there were three or four hundred pieces of broken pottery: someone had dumped all of the hardened, broken, deformed pottery. They make a lot of pottery there and someone used that for a dumping ground. And I told Joyce, “Would you look at all of the broken vessels at the foot of Calvary!” Vessels that started out to be a work of art, vessels that had potentiality, vessels that perhaps—no perhaps about it: the worker had something in mind with those vessels. But none of those vessels broken at Calvary could ever be used again. They were hardened, and they were brittle, and they were deformed, and they were broken—never to be used!

Now, dear friend, just as there's a bright side to what God told Jeremiah, there is indeed a dark side to what God told Jeremiah. Now, if I'm here tonight telling you that there is a second chance, there is—but up to a point. You may cross God's deadline. You may become so stubborn and so obtuse and so hardened that there won't be any hope for you; that when you get hardened in your sin and you harden your neck and you willfully and deliberately go against what God has for you, and you stay that way until you become hardened that way, there's nothing God can do for you or with you but to destroy you.

*There is a time, I know not when,  
A place, I know not where,  
That marks the destiny of men  
To glory or despair.  
There is a line, by us unseen  
That crosses every path;*

*The hidden boundary between  
God's mercy and God's wrath.*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

## **Conclusion**

What Jeremiah is telling us tonight is this: If you want a second chance, if your heart is still warm, if your heart is still pliable, He'll give you a second chance. There is the potential of a yielded and a responsive life. There is the problem of a resistant life. There is the promise of a repentant life. But there is the peril of a rebellious life.

# Hope for Broken Vessels

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** May 5, 1974

**Main Scripture Text:** Jeremiah 18:1–10; 19

*“O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel.”*

JEREMIAH 18:6

## Outline

Introduction

I. The Vessel Made

II. A Vessel Marred

III. The Vessel Mended

IV. A Vessel Mutilated

Conclusion

## Introduction

Now today, take your Bibles please, and turn in the Old Testament to the Book of Jeremiah; and, we're going to commence our reading in chapter 18, verse 1. Jeremiah 18:1. We're speaking today on this subject: "Hope for Broken Vessels."

*"The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words. Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter; so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel" (Jeremiah 18:1–6).*

I wonder how many people here today are satisfied with their lives. I wonder how many people here today say, "I'm just what I think I ought to be." I doubt that there are not many like that. I believe that most of us are saying, "Oh, would to God I had another chance. Would to God, somehow, that I could start over again."

Someone has described our generation as made up of people who would say that youth was a blunder, maturity a struggle, and old age, a regret. Isn't that sad? But that's the way it is with so many of us, blundering through our youth, struggling through our maturity, and then, looking back on all of it, and saying, "I wish that I could have done it

a different way.” Well, if that’s the way you feel today, I’ve got good news for you. Because this message today—not from Adrian Rogers, but from the Word of God—is to tell you that God wants to make your life over anew, and that God can do it, and God will do it today, if you’ll let Him.

Now I said I called the message “Hope for Broken Vessels.” We might call it “God’s Cure for Cracked Pots,” but, either way, it’s the same thing. If you’d like to get a new start, you’d like to just somehow find a fresh start with God today, I’ve got wonderful, glorious, happy news for you.

And so let’s look very carefully, therefore, into the Word of God. Notice what God told Jeremiah to do. Chapter 18, verse 1: “*The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Arise, and go down to the potter’s house*” (Jeremiah 18:1). Now what does he mean by *the potter’s house*? Boys and girls, a *potter’s house* is a place where a man called a *potter* makes pottery, or makes dishes, and cups, and bowls, and vessels. And in this day, they made these vessels, and these bowls, and these cups out of clay.

And I did some reading, and I found that that the art of pottery is one of the oldest arts in the world, and it remains virtually unchanged to this present time. What the potter does is he takes a lump, a mass of clay, and he takes it with his knife, and he cuts it up in little pieces. And then, he takes it with his hands, and begins to twist it, and shape it, and knead it, and pound it, and then, chop it up again, and twist it, and shape it, and knead it, and pound it, until all of the bubbles are out of it, ’til all of the impurities are out of it, until it is soft and pliable, until it’s just the consistency that he wants it to be.

And then, he has a thing called a *wheel*. You know, the Bible speaks, here, of the work that the potter did upon his wheels, in verse 3: “*Then I went down to the potter’s house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels*” (Jeremiah 18:3). Well, the wheel is a disc about the size of a big pizza—just about *that* size. And he has the thing where he can make it turn by a foot treadle. As he’s working there, he’s pumping with his foot, like a lady used to pump one of these sewing machines, and the wheel goes ’round, and ’round, and ’round, and ’round. And when the potter is ready, he throws this lump of clay right in the middle of that wheel, and the wheel is turning.

And then, the potter starts to caress the clay with his talented fingers on the outside and on the inside; up and down, in and out, he smoothes the clay. And there, from that unlovely, unlikely lump of clay, there comes a marvelously, beautiful vessel. Now the potter has in his mind just what he wants it to be. It may be a vessel for service, or it may be a vessel for beauty, but he has something in his mind; and, he makes this particular vessel, and a thing of beauty emerges from the clay.

Now God said to Jeremiah, “Jeremiah, you go down to the potter’s house, and you see what’s happening down there. And while you’re down there, I’m going to give you a

message for the house of Israel. You're going to hear the Word of God from there" (Jeremiah 18:2).

And so there are four things I want you to notice with me, this morning, as we look into this Word of God. First of all, I want you to see the vessel as it was made, the vessel made. Then, I want you to see the vessel marred, because it got somehow distorted. Something happened to the vessel while the potter was making it. Then, I want you to see the vessel as it was mended or remade. But then, I want you to find, finally, something very sad, and we'll save that toward the end—the last point.

## I. The Vessel Made

But first of all, let's notice the vessel made. Who is the potter? And what is the clay? Well, we can tell very easily what the message is as we read the Word of God, because look in verse 6: *"O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel"* (Jeremiah 18:6). And so God is the potter. Mankind is the clay. God is the master workman, and God wants to make something beautiful out of your life. We are the clay.

Job said, in the Book of Job, *"Thou hast made me as the clay"* (Job 10:9). This is true physically. We're made of the dust of the earth. A little fellow asked his mother, "Mother, is it true that we came from dust and will return to dust?" And his mother said, "That's true." He said, "Well, then, there's somebody under my bed, either going or coming." Well, we're made of dust. We are clay.

But not only is it true physically, but it is also true spiritually. You see, as you look at clay, clay is unclean. As you look at clay, clay is unlovely. And as you look at clay, clay is unable to do anything about it. That's what man is like spiritually: unclean, unlovely, unable. We're just like a helpless, hapless, lump of clay. But the idea is that, just as a potter can take some clay like that, and form it, and make something useful out of it, God can do the same thing with us spiritually.

And so verse 6 says, "Cannot I do with you as this potter is doing with the clay?" (Jeremiah 18:6). Now there are some folks who say, "I don't need God to mold my life. I'll do it myself." We see them all around us, and they're pretty moldy. They're going to do it themselves. And they call themselves a *self-made man*.

One man bragged in an assembly to Abraham Lincoln that he was a self-made man. Abraham Lincoln said, "I'm glad to hear that. That relieves the Almighty of a fearful responsibility."

Now there are a lot of us who like to think that we can mold our own lives. But no more could helpless clay mold itself into a vessel of beauty than could a human being, without the touch of the finger of God, make himself, or become what he ought to be.

But I want you to notice, you see, there are two things that really form the vessel—

this unlovely, unclean, unable lump of clay. First of all, there is the touch of the Father's hand, and there also is the turning of the wheel. And you'll find out that God takes these two things to mold our life: the turning of the wheel and the touch of His hand.

Now what does the wheel represent? The wheel represents the daily round of our lives—the circumstances, if you will. And that word *circumstances* means “constant turning”—the circumstances of our lives. The potter's wheel represents the round of life. And God is seeing to it that our lives are revolving around certain events. And the whole time, God is touching our lives to make out of our lives what He wants to make them.

Now we may not understand every revolution of the wheel. And there are many times we look at things and we say, “I don't know why this happened to me.” But friend, if you'll understand that you're on God's potter's wheel, then you can say, “Praise God. Hallelujah. I know that all things work together for good to those who love God, and every turn of this wheel is God making me what He wants to make me.”

Now again, you're not going to understand why your wheel turns as it does. Let me give you a wonderful passage of Scripture. Just stay there, in Jeremiah, but turn with the other finger, if you will, to Isaiah chapter 55, verse 8, and God says this concerning the turning of the wheel, *“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts”* (Isaiah 55:8–9). Did you understand that? God says, “My thoughts and your thoughts are different.” And God says, “My ways and your ways are different.” And we need to understand this: that God works on a different thought level than we do.

Have you ever heard anyone say, “Well, now, if I were God, this is what I would do?” How stupid and how profane! You don't know what God knows, so how foolish to say, “Well, if I were God...”

I heard of a man criticizing the way the Lord made things, and he said, “It doesn't make sense to me. There's the great big oak tree, and all it's got is little acorns on it.” And then, he said, “There's the little weak watermelon vine that has to bear those big watermelons.” He said, “It would make sense to me that the watermelons would be on the oak tree and the acorns would be on the vine.” About that time, an acorn hit him on the head, and he said, “I'm glad it wasn't a watermelon.”

God put this world together the way He wanted it put together. And you know, sometimes we say, “Now if I were God, I would have done it this way. If I were God, I would have done it that way.” But God says, “My thoughts are not your thoughts,” and then He says, “Neither are your ways my ways” (Isaiah 55:8–9). We just don't understand the ways of God. You know, if you ever learned this secret to get into the ways of God, oh, it will open up so many things to you. You know, the Bible says, “God made known His acts unto Israel, but his ways unto Moses” (Psalm 103:7). A lot of us

just see the acts of God, but we don't understand the ways of God. If you can understand the way God does things. You see, we, as human beings, think God ought to do things a certain way.

I imagine when the Israelites were there, in the wilderness, and they were being bitten by the fiery serpents (Numbers 21:6). I imagine that the Israelites were saying, "God, kill the serpents, kill the serpents, kill the serpents." But He didn't do that. Instead, He told Moses to put a fiery serpent upon a brass pole, and whoever looked at it would live (Numbers 21:8). God lifted up a solution in the midst of the pollution. He didn't kill the serpents, but He lifted up a solution. We say, "Why doesn't God kill the devil?" You say, "If there's a God, and the devil's so bad, why doesn't God kill the devil?" God doesn't kill the devil. God puts His Son on the cross. We need to understand the ways of God, you see. We don't understand.

I imagine when the apostle Paul was making havoc of the Church. His name then, of course, was Saul—Saul, who was persecuting the Christians. And I imagine there were some Christians who were praying, "O Lord, O Lord, kill Saul. Strike him dead." But God didn't strike him dead; God struck him alive. God saved him, and the one they wanted removed God made the mighty apostle, and, I believe, the greatest Christian who ever lived.

I'm saying that God's thoughts are not like our thoughts. God's ways are not like our ways. And we may not understand it all. We may have to wait 'til we get to Heaven—not now, but in the coming years. It may be in the better land we'll know the meaning of our tears. And there, someday, we'll understand. But I tell you something, friend: All things work together for good to those who love God when you're on His potter's wheel (Romans 8:28). He is making you what He wants to make you.

And He'll turn every Calvary into an Easter. He'll turn every midnight to noonday. And He'll turn every sigh to a song. And He'll take every tear, and string them, and make a diadem of pearls for you. God knows what He's doing, and God is working. The turning of the wheel of life and the touch of the Master's hand is God's plan to make out of you a beautiful and a fitting vessel for His use. Now God says, "Cannot I do with you the same as this potter is doing with the clay?" (Jeremiah 18:6). And so the first thing I want you to see is a vessel made.

## **II. A Vessel Marred**

Now the second thing I want you to see is a vessel marred. Notice in Jeremiah 18, verse 4: *"And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter"* (Jeremiah 18:4). It was marred in the hand of the potter. Now why?

Do you think the problem was in the hand of the potter? Do you think that the potter didn't have enough skill, didn't have enough art? Do you think that, somehow, the potter

had failed? No, that's not the point at all; because, in this particular instance, God is the potter, and there's nothing wrong with God's art. God knows what He's doing. I'll guarantee you the problem was not in the potter but in the clay. Can you say "amen" to that? It's in the clay.

Now what was wrong with the clay? Well, it doesn't take much sense to understand that there was a hidden impurity; there was something beneath the surface, some flaw, some impurity, in the clay that kept it from being what it ought to be. And that may be why your life is not what it ought to be. Down deep, there's some secret sin. Your wife doesn't know about it. Your mom, your dad, don't know about it. Your pastor doesn't know about it.

*Oh, there's a big difference between character and reputation. Reputation is what others think about you; character is what God knows about you.* There's a big difference. You may be able to hide it from other people, but there is a hidden impurity. And that's what happened to this vessel.

Or, perhaps, there was something else. Maybe it wasn't a hidden impurity; maybe the clay was just not pliable enough. Maybe the clay was stiff clay. Maybe it was unyielding clay. And you see, there are two things that can keep your life from being what it ought to be. One is secret sin, and the other is outward rebellion. Either secret sin, hidden impurity, or stiffness, unyieldingness, where you won't say, "Have thine own way, Lord, have thine own way. Thou art the potter, I am the clay. Mold me and make me after Thy will, while I am waiting, yielded and still." But you won't yield to the will of the Lord.

The Lord is telling some of you to witness, but you won't witness. No wonder the vessel is marred. The Lord is telling some of you to give, but you won't give. The Lord is telling others of you to forgive, but you won't forgive. The Lord is speaking to your heart. God is saying, "Confess this particular sin," but you won't confess it. There is somebody that you ought to go to and apologize, but you're so puffed up with pride; and, you won't do it, and the clay becomes reticent. The clay becomes stiff. The clay becomes unyielding. And somehow, it is marred in the hand of the potter. But I tell you, dear friend, the problem is not with the potter. There's either an impurity in the clay, or the clay will not yield to the touch of the potter's hand. And so here, the vessel is marred.

And that's where many in this building find themselves, this morning. You say, "O God, if I would be honest, I know I've not been as pliable in Your hands as I ought to be. O God, if I would be honest, I would confess there have been things in my life, sins in my life, that have kept me from being what I ought to be."

### **III. The Vessel Mended**

And so the third thing I want you to notice is the vessel mended, or the vessel remade;



because, not only was it made and marred, but, bless God, it was remade. Notice the last part of verse 4. I want you to see the grace of our lovely Lord. *“And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter; so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it”* (Jeremiah 18:4). That’s glorious. *“He made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it”* (Jeremiah 18:4).

I’ve got great news for you: There is still hope for you. And why could God make this vessel again? Because, it (the clay) was still soft enough. It had not finally hardened. It was still pliable enough. It was still in the hands of the potter; and so, the potter could make it over again. God is the God of the second chance. And I want to tell you today, dear friend, that God, here, was primarily speaking to the nation Israel, and God was telling the nation Israel, “I am willing to give you a second chance.”

Look, if you will, in Jeremiah chapter 18, and get the Lord’s own interpretation of making the vessel again. Notice, beginning in verse 6: *“O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel. At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it, if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it, if it do evil in my sight”—that is, if there’s sin in the clay—“that it obey not my voice”—that is, if it’s stiff and rebellious clay—“then will I repent of the good with which I said I would benefit them”* (Jeremiah 18:6–10).

Now what is God saying? God is saying that a nation can have a second chance. I believe that America was meant to be a vessel in the hand of the Lord. I believe that God wanted America to be His bastion of spiritual truth and His place where He sent the gospel out to the world. But I believe that vessel has been marred in the hand of the Lord; and, I believe that we, right now, as a nation, are a vessel fit for destruction. But I believe we can repent, and God will make us over. I believe that. I believe God says, “When I’m going to destroy a nation, if that nation will repent,” God says, “I will change My mind concerning the things that I said I was going to do with that nation.”

But what is true about nations, what was true about ancient Israel, what is true about modern America, is also true about individuals. I’m talking to some backsliders, today. And as a backslider, I want to tell you, dear friend, that God can give you another chance. You study the Bible. There was old Jacob. Jacob went to a place called Bethel. There, he met the Lord. There, he saw angels going up and down a ladder. He spoke to the Lord, made a covenant with the Lord, just told the Lord he was going to tithe, told the Lord all of these things, and was blessed of God and became a prince of Israel. And then, he got away from God, got off into sin and idolatry and all of these other things, terrible things. But the Bible tells us how Jacob went back to Bethel, and God gave him

another chance (Genesis 35).

I think of Jonah. What a flop Jonah was as a preacher. God said to Jonah, “Jonah, I want you to go down to Nineveh and preach my Word,” and Jonah went the other way (Jonah 1:2). He didn’t want to preach to the Ninevites. The clay was stiff and rebellious. But God had a plan for old Jonah. He spent the night on a *foam blubber mattress*, and then, brother, he hit the ground running. The thing I like about Jonah is this, that the Bible says, “The word of the Lord came unto him again the second time” (Jonah 3:1). God gave him another chance.

I think of Simon Peter—Simon Peter, who cursed, and swore, and denied Jesus. What a field day the gossips must have had. Listen to the ladies in the church as they criticize him: “Well, there’s old Simon Peter; he cursed in front of a teenage girl. I never did have much confidence in Reverend Simon Peter anyway. I’m through with him.” Well, I thank God that God wasn’t through with him, aren’t you? I thank God that God gave him another chance.

I think of Samson, who got his hair cut in the devil’s barbershop, and ended up grinding at the mill, blinded, disgraced. But I think of Samson who prayed to the Lord and said, “God, give me another chance.” And there, as he pulled down the temple of the fish god and slew more of God’s enemies in his death than he did in his life, I say, “Thank God, God is the God of another chance” (Judges 16).

And I want to tell you, dear friend, that God can take you, right now, where you are, and make out of your life another vessel. Did you know I’m talking to some ladies, today, who were called to be missionaries, but now you’re 50, 60, 70 years of age, and it’s almost unthinkable that you would go to the mission field. You married the wrong man. You got out of the will of the Lord, and you say, “Now what can God do with my life? I missed God’s plan.” Friend, He’s got another plan. Isn’t that great? He’s got another plan. God is never out of it. He made it again another vessel.

I tell you, God can mend a broken life, if you’ll give Him all the pieces. Just turn it over to Him. Just say, “Here it is, Lord.” We sing that song: “Fill my cup, Lord, I lift it up, Lord.” We ought to sing, “Fix my cup, Lord; I’ve messed it up, Lord. We’ve broken it, but here it is, Lord. I yield it to You, just like it is. I don’t know why I’ve been so obstinate. I don’t know why the hidden flaws beneath the surface in my character. But now, O God, right now, O God of Jacob, O God of Samson, O God of Simon Peter, O God who gives the second chance, make it again. Make my life over anew.” And I’ll guarantee you, if you mean business with God, you can walk out of this auditorium, today, with a brand new start. God is so good. There is hope for the backslider. God wants to give you a second chance.

#### IV. A Vessel Mutilated

But now, I want you to notice, finally, not only a vessel made, and a vessel marred, and a vessel mended, but I want you to notice a vessel mutilated. Because, you see, so many times when preachers preach from this text, they don't get the whole truth. They stop one chapter too soon. And I want you to continue to read and find out what happened here.

Now God is saying to Jeremiah, "Jeremiah, you go down to the potter's house, and I'm going to teach you something that is My word" (Jeremiah 18:2). And the message continues in chapter 19, verse 1: *"Thus saith the LORD, Go and get a potter's earthen flask, and take of the ancients of the people, and of the ancients of the priests"* (Jeremiah 19:1). And then, read verse 10: *"Then shalt thou break the flask in the sight of the men that go with thee"* (Jeremiah 19:10). He said, "You go get a bottle, a vessel, and you get some of the leaders of Israel," and then, He said, "You take that bottle that you have and break it right in their sight." Then He said, "You point your finger at them, and this is what you say to them, verse 11: *"And shalt say to them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Even so will I break this people and this city, as one breaketh a potter's vessel"*—now watch it—*"that cannot be made whole again"* (Jeremiah 19:11). *"That cannot be made whole again"* (Jeremiah 19:11).

There is the vessel that can be remade. There is the life that can be restored. There is the God of the second chance. But God said to these people, "You watch what I'm going to do." He said, "Do you see this clay vessel; you see this clay pot? Watch it as it is smashed to smithereens. And all the king's horses and all the king's men will not be able to put it together again."

What's He talking about? God is saying that people can go on in their sins until the clay is set, until it is hardened, until it is brittle, until it is fixed—fixed in a state of deformity, fixed in a state of impurity, like a twisted old bottle, no good but to be smashed and thrown to the potter's field. That may happen to some lives here today.

Now please listen to me. Ladies and gentlemen, I want to tell you that you can cross God's deadline. I want to tell you that you do not need to sit back and rest in the gospel of a second chance. I want to tell you that God is the God of a second chance. And I want to tell you that God can take anybody's life, no matter how badly it's messed up; and, God can give you another chance.

But I'm going to tell you, friend, that's not always true, because there comes a time, sometimes, when a life gets so hardened in its sin that God gives that individual up. In front of every unsaved man there is a deadline, and if he crosses that deadline, he is just as doomed, just as damned, as though the iron gates of Hell had shut closed behind him. In front of every life there is a deadline.

*There is a time, I know not when;*

*there's a place, I know not where,  
That marks the destiny of men  
to heaven or despair.  
There's a line by us not seen  
that crosses every path;  
It is the hidden boundary between  
God's mercy and God's wrath*  
—ALEXANDER, JOSEPH ADDISON

Did you know that you can go on, and on, and on, and on in your sin until, suddenly, your character, like a piece of clay, is hardened? You are fixed in that deformity, and even the Master Potter cannot do anything with you. That's exactly what God is saying in this verse.

Listen to it again: *"And shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Even so will I break this people and this city, as one breaketh a potter's vessel, that cannot be made whole again"* (Jeremiah 19:11). And why did God do that? Well, we don't have to guess. Read verse 15: *"Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will bring upon this city and upon all its towns all the evil that I have pronounced against it, because they have hardened their necks, that they might not hear my words"* (Jeremiah 19:15). The hardened neck.

You know, Jesus spoke of a time when men would have eyes and they not see. Jesus spoke of a time when men would have ears but they would not hear. People sit in a service just like this, or they listen by television, and they listen, and they listen, but they don't hear. They look, and they look, but they don't see; because, they've got the hardening of the neck and hardening of the heart—a hardened heart, a stiff and rebellious neck, and they have passed the point of no return.

You know what they say? They say, "Well, preachers just don't preach like they used to when I was a boy." Some of them do. You just don't hear like you used to when you were a boy. You've got a separate set of ears. There was a time when you were like clay, soft and pliable and moldable in the hand of God, but you said *no* in your obstinacy. You said, "I don't want the Word of God. I'd rather have my sin." And there comes a time, dear friend, when you'll not be able to be saved. There comes a time when you'll cross God's deadline, like a vessel that cannot be put together again, fitted for nothing but destruction, warped and blasted and ruined.

You go out in the woods, and you see an old pine stump out there. Forest fires come, and that pine stump catches fire; and, it burns and glows brightly. But then, after it burns for a long time, it goes out. Several years later, there's another forest fire, and when the flames are licking up the vegetation and burning the leaves and the dry tinder, when it comes to that old blackened stump, the stump flickers, and flames, and then

goes out quickly. There comes a time, several years later, when the old stump will just glow, when the fire sweeps through the woods. That's all—just glow. And then, there comes a time when the fire just leaps over. It is so blackened; it is so hardened; and it is so charred that it doesn't even glow.

Men sit like that in services like this. They hear the Word of God preached; and, the first time they heard the gospel preached, there was a fire in their hearts. They knew that God loved them. They knew they were sinners. They knew they needed to get right with God. But they said *no* to God and the fire went out. Again, when God tries to speak, that fire burns, but not so brightly.

## **Conclusion**

You may be sitting here, this morning, with just a glow in your heart. That's all—just a little spark. But I tell you, you may say *no* to God one time too many, and when God is blessing a congregation like this, and when other people are getting saved, and when people are getting right with God, you sit in the service and you say, “I just don't see it.” And you won't be lying—you won't see it. You'll have eyes, but you can't see. You'll have ears, but you can't hear, because no longer are you pliable in the hand of the Potter. And God says there comes a time when you'll be like a broken vessel, and a vessel that cannot be mended (Jeremiah 19:11). Oh, my friend, God is the God of a second chance, but only if you're still pliable, only if you're still willing. Bow your heads in prayer.

# A Life Made Over

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** December 29, 2002

**Main Scripture Text:** Jeremiah 18:3–6

*“O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel.”*

JEREMIAH 18:6

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Potential of a Life That Responds
- II. The Problem of a Life That Resists
- III. The Promise of a Life That Repents
- IV. The Peril of a Life That Rebels

Conclusion

## Introduction

I want you to take God's Word today, and turn, if you would, please, to the Book of Jeremiah chapter 18. We are talking today on this subject: “A Life Made Over.”

I heard of two ladies that met in the beauty shop, and one said to the other one, “Why, Mary Jones! I haven't seen you for ages! Mary, you look wonderful! I like the way you are doing your hair, Mary. And, why, Mary, you have lost weight! You look younger. You just look wonderful, Mary!” She said, “My name is not Mary Jones.” “Oh,” she said. “You have changed your name too. How wonderful!”

Well, how would you like to make your life over? I mean, totally, completely make it over. I want you to look here in the Book of Jeremiah, beginning in chapter 18 and verse 3, a vision that God gave to Jeremiah. And, here is what Jeremiah says: *“Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel”* (Jeremiah 18:3–6).

The making of pottery is one the oldest arts known to men. If I ever go to a place where there are crafts being done, and there is a potter who has that clay in his hands and that potter's wheel, I have to stop and watch. You see that potter, as he takes that

clay and he chops it, and crushes it, and chops it, and crushes it, and molds it, and squeezes it, until it is soft and pliable. And then, he has a wheel that is driven by a treadle that was driven with his foot, and that wheel is going 'round and 'round, and he takes that lump of clay, and he throws it on the wheel. And then, he begins to caress it. He puts his thumbs on the outside and his fingers on the outside, and it goes 'round and 'round. It is an amazing thing. We have all seen it. And, it is a beautiful thing to watch. A vessel of beauty, or a vessel of service, or both, emerge from that ugly clay.

Now, there are three ingredients in the making of pottery—others, but three major things that we read about here, in this process. There is the potter. There is the clay. And, there is the wheel. And, on the threshold of a new year, there is a great message for me and for you.

## **I. The Potential of a Life That Responds**

First of all, I want you to see what I am going to call today the potential—the potential—of a life that responds. You think of yourself as the clay, and see what God can do with you. Now, look in verse 6, if you will: *“O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel”* (Jeremiah 18:6). Now, God is the potter—get that down—God is the potter. He is the master workman. God is at work in your life and in my life. God says, “I am the potter.”

Now, we are His workmanship. God is working on us. Ephesians chapter 2, verse 10, says, *“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works”* (Ephesians 2:10). God wants to make out of you a vessel: something, someone, that He can use. God is the potter. And, of course, we are the clay.

Now, there is nothing very wonderful about a lump of clay. It’s ugly. It’s weak. It—in and of itself—it is totally helpless. Now, clay has three *uns* about it: it is unclean; it is unlovely; and it is unable. We are the clay. You want to say “amen” to that, or “Oh, me”? We are the clay, literally. We are made of the dust of the earth: unclean, unlovely, unable. God is the potter, and we are the clay. Now, there are some people who don’t agree that they have to have the potter to do anything for them. They think that they mold their own lives. And, we have all seen some of those moldy people.

Now, the wheel—what is the wheel? God, the potter; we, the clay. The wheel that goes 'round and 'round—that is the circumstances of life; that is what we call *providence*. But, it is the workman who turns the wheel. Not only does God caress the clay, but He is the One that arranges the circumstances of our life. He is the One that orders every turn of the wheel.

Now, many of us think there are incidences in our lives that are meaningless. But, not a blade of grass moves without God’s permission. And, over it all is arched Romans

8:28, if we love God: “For we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, for the ones that are called according to His purpose.”

I think back on my life. I think of things that might have seemed incidental. I was preaching on the street corner in Daytona Beach as a college student—on a bus bench. They made me do it, because I had the loudest voice. But, a group of us, as college boys, were over there just witnessing for Jesus. I climbed down from that bus bench and went over to meet a man dressed in a gray flannel suit, a very distinguished looking man. And, I said, “Sir, are you a Christian?” He said, “Yes, I am.” And, I said, “Ah.” He said, “My name is Doyle Carlton.” He said, “I own this hotel.” He was standing in front of a hotel. He said, “Who are you?” I said, “I am Adrian Rogers.” He said, “What are you doing over here?” I said, “Just witnessing.” And, he said, “Where are you from?” I said, “I am a student at Stetson University.” We got to know one another. That man had a great influence on my life. As a matter of fact, it is through Doyle Carlton that I came to be the pastor at Merritt Island, and from there to come to Bellevue Baptist Church—a seeming incident. I don’t think it was an incident.

I was in grammar school, and I was sitting over here; and a young girl was sitting over here. Her name was Joyce. I am sitting here; a young lady is sitting there. It was hard for me to study, because I had eyes for that girl. I walked past her desk in the sixth grade and dropped a love note. She still has it. It is church history. That girl I am married to. Well, was it just happenstance that she sat here and I sat there? Well, you can say as you wish, but I believe that there is a wheel of life, and all of us look back, and we can say, “By the grace of God, I am where I am—I am what I am.” Now, it may not make sense to you. It doesn’t have to make sense to you, as long as it makes sense to God.

Isaiah 55, verses 8 and 9—put it in the margin: *“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts”* (Isaiah 55:8–9). You see, God thinks differently. Don’t ever say, “Now, if I were God, here is the way I would do it.”

I heard about a boy who was sitting in—a farm boy—sitting under an oak tree, and he was looking out at the watermelon patch. And, he said, “You know, if I were God, I wouldn’t put the great big watermelons on that weak little vine and the little acorns on that great big tree. That seems backward to me.” And, about that time, an acorn hit him on the head, and he was glad it wasn’t a watermelon. Now, sometimes we say, “You know, if I were God, here is the way I would do it.” God thinks differently than we think, because God sees the big picture.

I heard of a person who picked up one of these bookmarks that most of us have in our Bibles, and he looked at it, and it was just a mass of tangled threads. It made no



sense at all until he turned it over. And, woven on the other side are these words: “God is love.” Now, if you look at the wrong side of anything woven, it doesn’t seem to make sense to you. And, we see from our perspective. God works on a different thought level, and God works on a different technique level. God does things differently than we do.

We sometimes would like to tell God how to do something. For example, out there in the wilderness when those fiery serpents were biting the children of Israel—if you remember that story in the Bible—they might have said, “God, take away the serpents.” But, God did not take away the serpents. God told Moses to put a brazen serpent upon a pole, and, “Everyone that looks at it will be healed.” God did not remove the serpents. He brought a solution in the midst of the pollution.

Sometimes, we say, “God, why don’t You kill the devil?” God doesn’t kill the devil; He puts His Son on the cross. You see, God’s ways and our ways are not always the same. But, you can put it down, friend, that God is the potter; we are the clay; and the wheel of life is run by the foot that will one day bear the nail prints. His foot and every turn of the wheel is ordered by God, or at least allowed by God.

Now, I want us to remember this—now, if you can’t understand right now the difficulty that you are in; if the storms that Dale sang about are in your life, and if your sails are battered; and if the old ship is creaking and groaning in a sea of difficulty—remember that one day, though you may not understand it now, you will understand that every turn of the wheel has been a part of God’s plan. *If He does not rule, God overrules.* He is going to turn every Calvary to an Easter. He is going to turn every midnight to a sunrise. He is going to turn every tear to a pearl, and string those, and make a diadem for you. God will do that.

Now, this is the potential—the potential—of a life that responds. What should we do therefore? We ought to say, “Lord, You are the potter; I am the clay. Mold me. Make me after Thy will.” That is what Romans chapter 6 says we are to do. We are to yield (Romans 6:13). What is clay to do in the hand of the potter? It is to yield. May I ask you a question? Are you yielded? Can God caress you? Can God form you? Can God shape you? Can God make out of you what He wants to make out of you? That is the potential of a life that responds. Most of us dare not dream what we could be if we would allow God to have His way in our lives.

Three persons are in your seat this morning. There is the person you are now, the person you might be for evil if you turn from God, and the person you can be if you let God have His own way, and say, “Mold me and make me after Thy will, while I am waiting, yielded, and still.”

## **II. The Problem of a Life That Resists**

Now, here is the second thing I want you to notice. Not only the potential of a life that

responds, but I want you to see the problem of a life that resists—the problem of a life that resists. Look, if you will, in Jeremiah chapter 18 now, and verse 4: *“And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it”* (Jeremiah 18:4).

Now, here is the vessel on the wheel. The wheel is going 'round and 'round. The potter is caressing the vessel, putting his artistic hands on the vessel. But, something happens. It's marred; it's ruined; it's messed up. There is a problem. Now, I want to ask you a question: Where is the problem? Is the problem in the hand of the potter? Do you think that God messed up? God is the potter. The problem is not in the hands of the potter; the problem is in the clay. Now, what could be the problem in the clay?

Well, first of all, there might be some hidden impurity in the clay—some rock, something there, some impurity, something hidden that keeps the vessel from becoming what it ought to be. There may be some hidden impurity in your life that is marring what God wants to do.

Or, it may not be a hidden impurity. It might just be that the clay is not broken enough; the clay is too stiff; the clay does not yield to the hand of the potter.

Now, is there in your life right now—listen—any unclean, impure thing that stands in the way of what God wants to do in your life? Is there? Now, don't answer out loud, but answer. Is there? Or, today, are you truly yielded to the Lord? Have you said, “Lord, here I am. Make of me what You wish. Do with me what You will”? Have you done that? I mean, have you done that? Now, answer the question: Have you done that? If not, the vessel is going to be marred, and the problem will not be with the potter. The problem is with the clay.

One of the greatest Christian writers of the centuries is a man named F. B. Meyer. F. B. Meyer was a great man of God. And, I read after F. B. Meyer. And, if you go to our libraries today, our library, church library, or bookstore, you will find books by F. B. Meyer. F. B. Meyer, as a pastor, was very successful, but he was not as he ought to have been. He had two friends. One was named Charles Studd, and the other one's name was Hudson Taylor. Both of these are great names in the history of the Church: Charles Studd and Hudson Taylor. These two men seemed to have victory day by day. They seemed to have joy and power in their lives. And, F. B. Meyer watched them.

One day, F. B. Meyer went to Charles Studd, and he said, “Charlie, you seem to have a victory. You seem to have a joy. You seem to have something in your life that I don't have in my life. Tell me about it.” And, Studd said, “There is nothing that I have that you cannot have.” F. B. Meyer said, “Well, how may I have it?” Studd said to him, “Have you given everything to God?” Meyer pretended he didn't hear the question, but it sank deep into his heart. He went back to his room that night, and he began to pray, “Because,” he said, “in my heart, there has been something”—there had been

something—“that I was wrestling with, something that I did not want to yield up to the Lord. It seemed to me like a small thing, but it was standing between me and victory. And, I knew it, and I knew I had to do something about it.”

“I wrestled with God that night, until finally I came to the place where I had to do something. And, I took the keys out of my pocket—a bunch of keys—and I said, ‘Lord, here it is. Here is the key ring. This represents my life. Lord, I give it over to You.’” And, he said, “It seemed as if the Lord said to me, ‘Are all the keys there?’” He said, “Yes, Lord. They are all there, except for one key—one small key. It is a key to a little cupboard. And, that is not on the ring, Lord, but it is an inconsequential thing—just one little key.” He said, “The Lord handed the keys back to me and started to walk out the door. I said, ‘Wait, Lord. Don’t go. It’s just a little key.’ He kept walking. I said, ‘Please come back, Lord. Here are all the keys.’” He said, “Lord, I don’t even believe I can give it to You, but I will hold it out. Please take them.” And, he said, “The Lord took those keys—every one of them—and went into that little closet and began to do a work. And, my life was transformed.”

Now, I wonder, is there some little key like that in your life, some little cupboard, something you can say, “Lord, You can be Lord of all, except this,” and the vessel is marred?

### III. The Promise of a Life That Repents

Now, there is a potential of a responsive life. There is the problem of a resistant life. Have you yielded? I am asking you this question: Have you yielded? Now, here is the third thing I want you to see—and that’s the promise of a life that repents. Now, just because you may have failed, that doesn’t mean that God is finished with you. Look, if you will now, in verse 4: *“And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it”* (Jeremiah 18:4). The vessel, now, that was marred is remade. Are you ready for some good news on the threshold of a new year? You can have a brand new start. There is hope for you. *Our God is the God of a second chance.*

Now, look in Jeremiah chapter 18, verses 6 through 8: *“O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel. At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them”* (Jeremiah 18:6–8). “If you will repent of your sin, I will repent of the judgment”—that is what God is saying.

Now, here is a promise to every one of us today. Your life may be marred; your life may have been messed up by some hidden sin or some unyieldedness, some stiffness;

but God is saying to you, “Listen. I don’t hold grudges. I am the God of a second chance.” God says, “If I say to a nation I am going to judge that nation, if that nation will repent, then I will repent of the evil that I going to bring upon that nation” (Jeremiah 18:8). We must disabuse ourselves of the idea that it is too late for America. America can come back to God. The same is true of nations. It is true of churches. And, churches and nations are made up of individuals. *“If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land”* (2 Chronicles 7:14).

Now listen. This condition holds true for a life, number one, that is still pliable and, number two, that gives them all of the pieces. If your life is broken, give Him all of the pieces, but do it while it is still pliable. And, He can make another vessel out of you. Are you willing to do that? Now, if not, we are going to move into the fourth stage and the final stage.

#### **IV. The Peril of a Life That Rebels**

I want you to see the peril of a life that rebels—the peril of a life that rebels. Now, you may be here today, and you can say, “Well, I am not going to yield to God.” Then, that clay is going to be hardened. It may be a deformed vessel, but it will be hardened.

Look, if you will now, in Jeremiah chapter 19 and verse 1: *“Thus saith the LORD, Go and get a potter’s earthen bottle,”*—that is, a vessel—*“and take of the ancients of the priests”* (Jeremiah 19:1). That is, “You get the leaders, the wise people, there.” And then, verses 10 through 12: *“Then shalt thou break the bottle in the sight of the men that go with thee, And shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Even so will I break this people and this city, as one breaketh a potter’s vessel,”*—now, watch this—*“that cannot be made whole again”* (Jeremiah 19:10–11). And then, go down to verse 15: *“Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring upon this city and upon her towns all the evil that I have pronounced against it, because they hardened their necks, that they might not hear my words”* (Jeremiah 19:15).

Now, here is the peril of a life that rebels against God. You can sit in this building this morning, and I can talk about hidden impurities; I can talk about stubborn resistance; and you can be broken, and say, “Here I am, Lord. I yield myself to You. I repent. Take me; make me; mold me. Give me a new start.” Or, you can just say, “It is my life. I am going to live it the way I want to live it. I am not going to yield.” That is your privilege. But, if you do that, you are going to be hardened in that position. And, the potter, once the clay is hardened, cannot remold it. He cannot make it. God gives a second chance. If you read the Bible, you will find that the Bible is full of people to whom God gave a second chance. But, always, always, they were pliable.

Sometimes, people want to know, “Have I committed the unpardonable sin?” I get letters frequently from people who say, “I think I have committed the unpardonable sin. I am so worried.” I always write back, and say, “If you are concerned about it, you haven’t”—“If you are concerned about it, you haven’t”—“because God is still dealing with you.” A person who has committed the unpardonable sin gets so obdurate, so hardened in his sin, that God cannot speak; God cannot mold them anymore. What God is talking about now is a vessel that is hardened in deformity, and impurity, and in stubbornness has turned to hardness, and it is to be broken and broken beyond hope. In front of every man, woman, boy, and girl in this place today is a deadline.

*There is a time, I know not when.  
There is a place, I know not where  
That marks the destiny of men  
to Heaven or despair.  
There is a line by us, not seen,  
That crosses every path.  
'Tis the hidden boundary  
Between God's mercy and God's wrath.*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

“He, that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy” (Proverbs 29:1). When you cross the deadline, when you say, “I will not yield to the potter,” the clay gets hard, and then it is too late. When that happens, your spiritual sensibilities are dulled. Put this verse down. Romans chapter 11 and verse 8: “God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day” (Romans 11:8).

Did you know that there are people—perhaps, some in this building; surely, some who will hear this message by television—they have eyes, but they don’t see. They have ears, that they don’t hear. Now, they may not need a hearing aid, nor eyeglasses, but they cannot see spiritual things. Sometimes, a man may say, “Well, preachers don’t preach like they used to when I was a boy.” Some of them do. You just don’t hear like you used to when you were a boy. You have eyes, but you don’t see. You have ears, but you don’t hear. You have become hardened in your sin. You are like that vessel that is hardened. The clay is fixed and solid, and cannot be molded.

I have often used the illustration. If you go out to the South Florida acreage and woods, you might see an old pine stump out there where there has been a fire. And, the fire has been burning all of the palmetto bushes and all the pines and so forth. But, there is one stump out there that, when the first time the fire came sweeping along, that stump that had that rosin and that pine tar on it just burned brightly, then it went out. Maybe the underbrush grows up again in three or four years, and another fire comes

along. And, the fire is burning furiously. When it gets to that stump, it may ignite it again, but it burns this time not nearly as brightly, not nearly as long, and the fire goes out. There may come a time in other years when the fire is roaring and coming through. When it comes to that stump, blackened and charred, it doesn't even glow. The fire just jumps right over it. That happens in congregations. I have been preaching when the power of God's Spirit would move across the congregation like a fire, and souls would come forward, weeping, saying, "I want to give my heart to Jesus Christ." And, some will sit there like this never touched them. They don't feel a thing. The fire of God's Spirit never moves upon them. They have eyes, but they don't see. They have ears, but they don't hear.

That is the reason I want to beg of you, while the clay is soft, while the clay is pliable, even if you have messed up, come to Him. He will receive you. And, if you want to be saved, you can be saved. But, there will come a time when it will be impossible for you to come to the Lord.

Let me give you some of the most terrifying Scriptures that I know of in the Bible, and then I will be finished. Now, just jot these down, or you might want to turn to them. They are all in Romans chapter 1. Verse 21: *"Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened"* (Romans 1:21). Light refused increases darkness. Romans 1:24: *"Wherefore God also gave them up..."*—has God given up on you?—*"Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves."* He is talking about sexual immorality and perversion. Romans 1:26: *"For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature."* Then, Romans 1, verse 28: *"And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient"* (Romans 1:28). God gave them up—God gave them up. And, God gave them over.

## Conclusion

I want you to think about the Scripture this morning. Think about it. God says, "Look. I am the potter; you are the clay—unable, unlovely, but you are something in My hand. The wheel—the circumstances of life—I want to make something beautiful out of you. Respond to Me. I have a plan for your life." That is the potential of a life that responds. There is the problem of a life that resists. If there is an unyieldness or a hidden impurity, you will mess it up. But, there is the promise of a life that repents. Maybe you have messed it up. It is not too late. God made it again—another vessel. But, there is the peril of a life that rebels, when you just say, "No, I don't want You, God. I am going to have

my own way. It is my life. I am going to live it.” *“He, that being often reprov’d hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy”* (Proverbs 29:1). Once that hardened vessel is broken, it is over.

The wisest thing you could ever do would be to receive Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, if you have never ever done so. Say, “Here I am, Lord Jesus”:

*Have thine own way, Lord! Have thine own way!*

*[You are] the potter, I am the clay.*

*Mold me and make me after thy will,*

*While I am waiting, yielded and still.*

—ADELAIDE A. POLLARD

And, even if you have done that, and then said, “Lord, I blew it,” He is the God of a second chance, and He will give you a fresh start this morning. But, whatever you do, please, in the name of Jesus, do not harden your heart until the clay sets, the vessel is deformed, fit to be destroyed and never restored.



# Israel, God's Miracle Nation

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** February 5, 1978

**Main Scripture Text:** Jeremiah 31:35–37

*“Thus saith the Lord; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the Lord.”*

JEREMIAH 31:37

## Outline

### Introduction

- A. Israel Is the Geographical Center of the World
  - B. Israel Is the Spiritual Center of the World
  - C. Israel Is the Prophetic Center of the World
  - D. Israel Is the Storm Center of the World
  - E. Israel Is the Peace Center of the World
  - F. Israel Is the Glory Center of the World
  - I. The Miracle of Her Generation
  - II. The Miracle of Her Preservation
  - III. The Miracle of Her Restoration
    - A. It Is a Military Miracle
    - B. It Is a Sociological Miracle
    - C. It Is a Linguistic Miracle
    - D. It Is an Agricultural Miracle
  - IV. The Miracle of Her Regeneration
- ### Conclusion

## Introduction

Take your Bibles, please, and turn to Jeremiah—Jeremiah chapter 31—and we begin our reading in verse 35. We're speaking today on this subject: “Israel, God's Miracle Nation”—“Israel, God's Miracle Nation.” Jeremiah 31, beginning in verse 35: *“Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and...the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts is his name: If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel shall cease from being a nation before me for ever. Thus saith the LORD; If [the] heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off...the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD.”* (Jeremiah 31:35–37)



“Israel, God’s miracle nation.” It is impossible to understand Bible prophecy without understanding the nation Israel. Israel—the people and the land of Israel—are the destiny of the world. As the Jew goes, so goes the world. The Jew is God’s yardstick. The Jew is God’s outline. The Jew is God’s blueprint. The Jew is God’s program. The Jew is God’s plan. If you want to understand what God is up to, study the Jewish nation. All of the eyes of the world now are focused upon the tiny state of Israel, and so it ought to be, for there is the nerve center of the entire world.

**A. Israel Is the Geographical Center of the World**

This little nation is in the geographical center of the world. Ezekiel 5:5 says, “*I have set [thee] in the midst of the nations,*” (Ezekiel 5:5) and it’s right there. It has been called “the hub of the world.” It has been called “the navel of the earth.” If you were to go into the Church of the Holy Sepulchre there in the city of Jerusalem, you would find a spot marked with this inscription: “This is the center of the earth.” And indeed, it is. It is placed there in the mighty confluence of three continents: Asia, Africa, and Europe. It is an ancient military and economic crossroads. It is a strategic place—the geographical center of the world.

**B. Israel Is the Spiritual Center of the World**

But, not only is it the geographical center of the world; it is the spiritual center of the world, for it is here that Moses and the prophets taught. It was here that Jesus Christ was born, where Jesus Christ lived, where Jesus Christ preached, where Jesus Christ died, where Jesus Christ ascended, and it is to this spot that Jesus Christ is coming again. Yes, it is the spiritual center of the world.

**C. Israel Is the Prophetic Center of the World**

But, not only is it the spiritual center of the world; it is the prophetic center of all of the world. Israel is the only nation that has had its future minutely foretold in the pages of God’s book. It would be foolish indeed to try to discuss the future of any other nation on the face of this globe except the nation Israel, for God has made certain promises that are yea and amen in the Bible and in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The prophetic center of the earth—because one day, Jerusalem is destined to become the capital city of the entire world.

**D. Israel Is the Storm Center of the World**

Not only that—it is the storm center of the entire world, because the clouds of Armageddon are gathering and the last great battle that will be fought will be there in Israel. And, we’re going to speak on the battle of Armageddon, God willing, before we finish this series on prophecy. It is the storm center of the world.

#### **E. Israel Is the Peace Center of the World**

But, not only is it the storm center of the world; it's also the peace center of the world, because we will never have peace until Jerusalem is at peace. And, this is the reason Christians are taught to pray, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem." And, Jerusalem will never know peace until Jesus, the Prince of Peace, rules and reigns from Jerusalem.

#### **F. Israel Is the Glory Center of the World**

But, not only is it the peace center of the world; it is the glory center of the world, for when our Lord does rule and reign in righteousness, then *"the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as...waters [that] cover the sea."* (Habakkuk 2:14) And, God's glory shall spread around this world, because David's greater Son, the Lord Jesus, is enthroned and enshrined in Jerusalem.

How important it is that we study what the Bible has to say about Israel, God's miracle nation. When Frederick the Great asked his court chaplain, "Give me a proof for the inspiration of the Bible," his answer was concise. He said, "The Jews, sire—the Jews." If you want proof for the inspiration of the Bible, one of the grandest proofs, as we will see in a few moments, is God's prophetic utterances and their fulfillment to the nation of Israel. I want to show you this morning from the Word of God that Israel is a God-created nation, that Israel is a God-decreed nation, that Israel is a God-loved nation, that Israel is a God-called nation, that Israel is a God-elected nation, and that Israel is a God-protected nation. And, we want to see that from the Word of God. So, we're speaking today on "Israel, God's Miracle Nation," and I want you to notice four mighty miracles that God has performed for this nation.

### **I. The Miracle of Her Generation**

First of all, I want you to notice the miracle of her generation—that is, the miracle of her origin. You see, the history of Israel begins with a miracle, and that was the birth of Isaac by Abraham. Abraham gave birth—or, Sarah and Abraham gave birth—to Isaac when their reproductive powers were dead, when it was past the time for having children. It was an absolute miracle.

Turn to Genesis chapter 18, and let's pick up that thread of thought. Lick your fingers now, and let's use the Bible this morning. Would you please? Genesis chapter 18. I want you to notice that God's angel is speaking to Abraham, and this is what God is saying to him, beginning in verse 9: *"And [the angel] said unto him, Where is Sarah thy wife? And he said, Behold, in the tent. And he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard it in the tent door, which was behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in age; and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. Therefore*

*Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord—that is, Abraham—“being old also?”—ladies, she called him “lord.” All right. “My lord...also.” And, I don’t know what some of the libbers would do with that statement. All right, in verse 13—“And the LORD said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old? Is [there] any thing too hard for the LORD?”—“Is any thing too hard for the LORD?” (Genesis 18:9–14)*

And then, the Bible goes on to record in the New Testament what happened. And, let’s look in Romans chapter 4 for just a moment, and we’ll pick up this thread of thought and see God’s New Testament commentary. Romans chapter 4—and let’s begin reading about...well, let’s begin reading about Abraham in verse 18: *“Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither...the deadness of Sarah’s womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God.”* (Romans 4:18–20) And, little Isaac was born when Sarah was ninety years old and Abraham was one hundred years old. God gave him a son, and that, my friend, was a miracle, plain and simple.

This nation had her beginning with a miracle. It’s always been an amazement to me that some of our Jewish friends would have difficulty believing in the virgin birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, for every Jew is here because of a miracle birth. Every time you see a Jew walking down the street you can say, “There goes a miracle—a miracle—because of a miracle birth.” When Abraham was as good as dead with his reproductive powers, when the womb of Sarah was dead, God performed a miracle. And, their prophet, Isaiah, said in Isaiah chapter 7, verse 14: *“Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and [be with child].”* (Isaiah 7:14) Oh, listen, let me tell you something, ladies and gentlemen: our God is a miracle-working God. And, just as God said to Abraham so long ago, we need to be saying to people today, *“Is [there] any thing too hard for the LORD?”* (Genesis 18:14) This nation began as a miracle. There is the miracle of her generation—the miracle of her origin.

## **II. The Miracle of Her Preservation**

But, the second miracle I want you to notice is not only the miracle of her generation, but the miracle of her preservation—the miracle of her preservation. The Jewish nation is indestructible—the Jewish nation is indestructible.

Turn, for a moment, to Psalm 89, would you please? I want you to notice God’s promise to David. God says to David in verse 28: *“My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him. His seed”—and that is the Jewish people—“also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven. If his*

*children forsake my law”—and some of them have—“and walk not in my judgments”—and that has been true of many—“If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments”—and, of course, that has been true, God says—“Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes”—God says, “If my people disobey me and turn from me, I will surely chastise them” (verse 32). But, notice verse 33, and put a star by it—“Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven.” (Psalms 89:28–37) “[David’s] seed shall endure for ever,” (Psalms 39:36) thus saith the Lord, who has sworn by His holiness.*

I want to tell you that the Jewish nation is absolutely indestructible. The Jews, dear friend, may be dispersed, the Jews may be despised, the Jews may be dispossessed, the Jews may be chastised, but the Jews will never, ever be destroyed. Israel is a miracle nation. Listen, her beginning was a miracle. Her continuation is a miracle. Her consummation is a miracle. Often, the devil has tried to exterminate God’s ancient people, but he cannot do it. The king of Egypt could not diminish him. The Red Sea could not drown him. Jonah’s whale could not digest him. The fiery furnace could not burn him. The gallows of Haman could not hang him. The nations of the world cannot assimilate him, and the dictators and the despots of this world cannot annihilate him. It’s an amazing thing. When other nations—other people—leave their home, leave their land, and migrate into other places, before long, they are absorbed, they are assimilated, and they lose their distinctiveness—their characteristics—but this is not so of the Jew.

Down in West Palm Beach, Florida, where I was born and raised, three miles off the coast of Palm Beach is the Gulf Stream. It flows northward through the Atlantic Ocean. It’s a river within the ocean. It’s a remarkable thing. If you’ve ever sailed out over the blue-green waters of the Atlantic and come to the Gulf Stream, you’ll know it the second you come to the Gulf Stream, because there is a razor-sharp line of demarcation there in the water. And, no longer is the water bluish-green; it becomes deep indigo. And, it is warmer, and you can see a river flowing in the ocean, and it’s a marvel. You say, “How is this water separated? How does this water flow through the ocean and yet somehow doesn’t get mingled?” I want to tell you that Israel is God’s river flowing through the ocean of the nations, and somehow there is a separation—somehow, almost by a miracle, it seems that they are kept separate. And, for eighteen centuries, even in dispersion, the Jews have been clinging to their tradition, to their laws, to the statutes, to their language, to their culture.

The Jewish nation is indestructible. How many people have tried to destroy them? They have suffered unspeakable immoralities and atrocities under Pharaoh, under Nebuchadnezzar, under Alexander, under Nero, under the Turks, under Hitler, under the Russians, at the hands of some of their Arab friends, and, God help us, sometimes at the hands of those who claim to be Christians (but they're not true Christians). But, the Jews have suffered unspeakable and unmentionable atrocities, and yet they stand.

Do you want to know how to get rid of the Jewish race? Turn to Jeremiah 31, and let's see. Jeremiah chapter 31—here's the formula, beginning in verse 35: *"Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and...the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts is his name"*—now, listen to this *if*—*"If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel shall...cease from being a nation before me for ever."* (Jeremiah 31:35–36) God is saying, "Before you can get rid of the Jews, you would have to get rid of the laws that hold the sun, the moon, and the stars in their orbits. You would have to snatch the control of this universe from the hand of Almighty God." God is saying that you could no more diminish—destroy—this race than you could stop the sun from moving through the heavens. That's what God has said. Oh, ladies and gentlemen, the Jew is indestructible, and he stands beside the grave of his persecutors. There have been dark days for the Jewish race. But, God made a promise to David, and God made a promise to Abraham, God made a promise to Isaac, God made a promise to Jacob, and God keeps His word. That's what we learn when we study the history of the Jewish people.

What an impact they have made upon history! They're not a large people; they're a small people—less than four-tenths of one percent of the world's population. And yet, when you study, you'll find out that they have garnered about seventeen percent of the prizes—or twelve percent, rather—of all of the honors and the prizes in health, medicine, music, public life. It's an amazing thing. You study the past twenty-five years of the Nobel Prize winners, and you'll find out from one-fourth to one-third of them have had Jewish names. Now, just think, dear friend, of this small number that we're talking about: four-tenths of one percent. And yet, some twenty-five percent of the Nobel Prize winners have Jewish names—maybe thirty-three percent in the last twenty-five years. It's a remarkable thing.

You say, "Well, they haven't affected my life." They've affected your life far more than you realize. Did you know that it was a Jew who financed Christopher Columbus's voyage to discover this land in which we live? You say, "I thought Ferdinand and Isabella did it." No, it was a Jew who did that. Did you know that a Jewish member of his crew was the first to put foot upon this new soil? A Jew did that. Did you know, ladies and gentlemen, that it was a Jew, Haym Solomon, who financed, when the money was

running out, the American Revolution, and gave to General George Washington and Thomas Jefferson the money to finance the Revolution—the American Revolution? A Jew, Haym Solomon, did that. Did you know that?

Listen, the Jews have affected your life far more than you realize. Do you ever have a headache and take an aspirin? Did you know it was Jew, Bayer, who discovered the aspirin? Have you ever had a polio shot? Did you know that Jonas Salk and Sabin were Jews? Have you ever taken Digitalis for a heart problems? Did you know Traube, who discovered that, was Jewish? Have you ever gone to the dentist and gotten a shot before he did his work on you? Did you know that the man who discovered this process and Novocain, Einhorn, was a Jew? When you got married, you went down to the courthouse and to the health place and took a test, a Wassermann test. Did you know that Wassermann was a Jew? When you got sick and your doctor prescribed Streptomycin, did you know Waksman, who discovered that, was a Jew? When you went to the psychiatrist and were psychoanalyzed, did you know that Freud, the father of all psychoanalysis, was a Jew? When you went to the university and studied philosophy, did you know that Spinoza was a Jew? When you gave some things to The Salvation Army this past Christmas, did you know that the mother of William Booth, who was the founder of The Salvation Army, was a Jewess?

Oh, ladies and gentlemen, we could take the history of the world and pin that history upon six Jews—all history: Moses, Jesus, Paul, Karl Marx, Freud, and Albert Einstein. And, I don't mean to put Jesus Christ in that category like He's just one of the boys—I don't mean that; I'm just simply listing in the age of chronology in which they came. But, I am telling you, ladies and gentlemen, there is something about this race of people, for good or for bad, that has greatly affected this world in which we live. And, the impact of this nation, as we look back and see four-tenths of one percent...and we think of the tremendous influence of a little nation.

### **III. The Miracle of Her Restoration**

Now, I want you to think not only of the miracle of her generation, and I want you to think not only of the miracle of her preservation, but I want you to think of the miracle of her restoration, because we have seen in these days in which we live one of the grandest, mightiest miracles and confirmations of the Word of God that could ever come to pass, and that is the restoration of the people of Israel back to their land—May 14 and 15, 1948, when the Republic of Israel was constituted. Israel became a nation, and a nation was born in a day. By far—by far—the most important event of our generation has not been man going to the moon but the re-establishment of the nation of Israel. And, what a shame it would be if you did not realize what has happened.

Turn for a moment to Amos chapter 9, and look, if you will, in verses 14 and 15—



Amos 9, verses 14 and 15. Here is a promise—an immutable promise—from the Word of God: and God says, *“And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink...wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the LORD thy God.”* (Amos 9:14–15) God is saying, “I’m going to put them down. I’m going to plant them there, and they will no more be pulled up.” And, I want to say the re-establishment of Israel in their land, in my estimation, is a modern-day miracle—the miracle of her restoration.

#### **A. It Is a Military Miracle**

It’s a military miracle. You think of it: when Israel was established in 1948, they were a nation of six hundred and fifty thousand surrounded by seven Arab states of forty million people. Six hundred and fifty thousand—forty million. And, these forty million had sworn by all that they knew to be holy that they would exterminate Israel, that they would drench that soil with Israeli blood, that they would drive them in the sea, they would wipe them from the map, and they made no doubt about saying that they would do that. Up until this time, if an Israeli was caught with a gun, he could be arrested. And, they had no way to garner, except secretly and furtively, to garner their military equipment. And, they took old automobiles and buses and welded boilerplates to the side secretly in sheds to make tanks. They got hoe handles and broomsticks and painted them to look like guns. And, in the front lines they would put a gun, a broomstick, a hoe handle, a gun, a firecracker. That’s what they did—just things just like this to make it seem like they had more guns than they had.

The war broke out, and with a fury, the Arab legions swept down from the east across toward the west and on to Tel Aviv. When the Arab legion was coming, they went through some groves, and in these groves were some honeybees—some beehives, actually—thousands and thousands of beehives. The Israelis are beekeepers. After all, you can’t have a land flowing with milk and honey without bees. And so, they had the bees there. And, it just so happened that in the consternation and in the attack, these hives were turned over, and hundreds of millions of bees swarmed out and began to sting the Arab. They dropped their modern weapons in consternation and terror and fled. Later, when the bees went back into the hive, the Israelis were able to go out there and pick up the much-needed weapons.

At the same time, simultaneously, coming down from the north came the others from Lebanon and from Syria, from Iraq, and they were attacking across the Jezreel Valley, the valley of the plains of Esdraelon, coming in this way. And, when they got into the middle of that valley, a strange sickness—a dysentery—seemed to disable them. They

were so weak they could not fight. At that same moment, here came the Israelis with the weapons that they had picked up from the battle of the bees. And incidentally, the American newspaper had this headline: “The Bees Fight for Israel.” They came with those weapons and were able to capture these who were sick in the valley of Jezreel. As a matter of fact, the record reports that on one occasion, twenty thousand Arabs were captured by four hundred Israelis.

Now, don’t give the Israelis credit for that. I believe that God was not neutral. God said, “I will bring them again into their own land.” (Amos 9:15) I don’t think the Israeli cause has always been just. I don’t think the American cause has always been just. I don’t think the Arab cause has always been just. I don’t think that you can say that any cause is always just if man has to do with it. But, I want to tell you that God is over the affairs of men, and God is ruling in the affairs of men. And, God said, “I will bring them back,” (Amos 9:15) and God brought them back. It’s an amazing thing. You think of what happened in the June ’67 war—the Six-Day War. In six days, outnumbered eighty to one, God gave victory to His ancient people. I want to say that the restoration back in the land is a military miracle.

### **B. It Is a Sociological Miracle**

Not only is it a military miracle; it’s a sociological miracle. Those people came from sixty-one different countries to settle there in the little land of Israel. Can you imagine—can you imagine—six hundred and fifty thousand people from sixty-one countries trying to make one country? A sociologist said, “It will take you three generations to do that—about a hundred years before you’ll blend them into one people.” But, that same man came back and visited and said, “I have to eat my words. What I said would take three generations to do you have done in half a generation.” And, they have. Moshe Dayan said, “We don’t have a melting pot; we have a pressure cooker.” And, that’s the way they’ve gotten together. And, God has just blended them together until they have become one nation.

### **C. It Is a Linguistic Miracle**

And, if you have traveled in the land of Israel, you have felt the camaraderie, you have felt the nationalism, you have felt the patriotism, you have felt the spirit of oneness as God has brought these people by a military miracle, by a sociological miracle, and by a linguistic miracle. Did you know that Israel is one of the few nations in the world where the children are teaching to their parents the mother tongue, Hebrew, because it’s being taught in the schools? And, that language is revived. Never again, never before has an ancient language, a dead language, ever been revived. They tried to revive Latin and were not able to. Amen, those of you who studied it. All right, they’ve tried to revive it, but they’ve not been able to bring it back again. But, I want you to know that Amos—the



same Amos that I just read—could walk down through the streets of Tel Aviv or Jerusalem and carry on a conversation and people would understand him. An amazement—a linguistic miracle!

#### **D. It Is an Agricultural Miracle**

But, not only a linguistic miracle; an agricultural miracle—an agricultural miracle. If you were to go to the land of Israel and look around, you'd say nothing would grow here. Do you know what Israel is rich in? Rocks—rocks. I mean, everywhere—rocks, rocks, rocks, rocks. And, sixty percent of that land is desert, and a very sparse rainfall now because the trees have been chopped down and the land has been pillaged and raped. It only rains in the winter—and then sparsely. And, much of the land is even too dry for what we would call “dry farming.” And yet, the Israelis have gone there to the Sea of Galilee and have put huge pipes in and begun to irrigate that entire land there. Oh, I wish you could see the Sea of Galilee. You'd understand what the ancient rabbis meant when they said, “After God created the seven seas, He created the Sea of Galilee just for Himself.” Oh, that beautiful sea—that beautiful sea—there, where God has planted it there in the midst of the land. And, they have begun a massive water works to irrigate that land, and the desert has begun to blossom as a rose.

There are only six nations in the world that produce enough food for themselves and for others, and Israel is one of those nations. They've begun to grow strawberries now—such strawberries as you've never seen. They've begun to grow avocados now that they've never grown before. Those of you in the Mid-South would be interested in the cotton farming they're doing now—never grown cotton before, but they're growing cotton. The valley of Jezreel, that triangular shaped valley there where one day the battle of Armageddon will be fought, at one time was a malaria-filled swamp. And, the early pioneers had to die like flies, and they built fires there to keep the insects and the mosquitoes away. And now, I wish you could see it. It is the breadbasket of all Israel and part of Europe—a beautiful, fertile valley, as three or four crops are harvested in a single year from one piece of land. How do you explain that? I tell you, it is an agricultural miracle.

#### **IV. The Miracle of Her Regeneration**

Listen, there is the miracle of her generation. There is the miracle of her preservation. There is the miracle of her restoration, and I want to say, third—fourthly—and finally, there is the miracle that is yet to come, and that is the miracle of her regeneration, because one of these days, Jews in great numbers are going to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Messiah. I believe that with all of my heart. And, I want to tell you how it's going to come to pass, and I want to use an Old Testament book to

do it. So, would you turn, please, to the book of Zechariah for just a moment? God loves these precious people, and I love them. And, what a thrill it is to preach these prophecies from this ancient book!

In Zechariah chapter 12, the Bible teaches that dark days, like we see today, were going to come. Zechariah chapter 12, verse 3: God speaks about a certain day, and He says in verse 3, *“And in that day [I] will...make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it.”* (Zechariah 12:3) God is saying that in the last days, Jerusalem will be the focal point of world trouble and consternation. Is that not true today? The major problem in the world today is not Sino-American relations, not Détente with the Russians, not even the problem in South Africa, not even the problem in Cuba. That’s not where the major problem is. The number one, all-consuming problem in the world today is Israel, Jerusalem—*“a burdensome stone for all people.”* (Zechariah 12:3) And, God said it would happen. Ladies and gentlemen, it has been fulfilled before our very eyes. And, the Israelis are going to find the noose being drawn tighter and tighter and tighter around these people whom God loves.

Well, what’s going to happen? God miraculously is going to speak to them, and their eyes will be opened to see things that they have never seen before or never understood before. Look in chapter 12, beginning in verse 9—and I want to remind you this is an Old Testament prophecy that I’m reading: *“And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all...nations that come against Jerusalem”*—I want to tell my Israeli friends that they have an ally. He is the Lord of hosts—*“And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace”*—ladies and gentlemen, we’re saved by the grace of God—*“and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced”*—who is that? Their Messiah, who was hung upon a cross—*“and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.”* (Zechariah 12:9–10)

And, what will happen when trouble comes and when the Spirit of grace is poured out and when they begin to make supplication to the One who was crucified for them? Then, look in chapter 13, verse 1: *“In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.”* (Zechariah 13:1) Oh,

*There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel’s veins;  
And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.*

—WILLIAM COWPER

*“They shall look upon me whom they...pierced.”* (Zechariah 12:10) And actually, this scripture: *“they shall look upon me”*—should aptly be translated—*“they shall look [unto] me”*—*“[unto] me”*—*“whom they have pierced.”* (Zechariah 12:10) Oh, and what a day it

will be when sins are washed away, when the Spirit of the Lord God comes in! And oh, my dear friend, the nations of this world will all the more then want to exterminate these precious and ancient people, and it's going to look mighty dark.

Look in Zechariah chapter 14. See what will happen: *"For I will gather"*—verse 2—*"For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle"*—that's the battle of Armageddon. We're going to be preaching about that before long—*"and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished...half...the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city"*—oh, it's going to look dark, dark indeed. Oh, but praise God, notice verse 3—*"Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle"*—and notice verse 4—*"And his feet"*—whose feet? The Lord's feet—*"shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east."* (Zechariah 14:2–4) Our Lord literally, visibly, actually, bodily is going to touch down at Jerusalem. Jesus went from the Mount of Olives. Jesus is coming to the Mount of Olives. *"This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as [you've] seen him go."* (Acts 1:11) I tell you, I've stood many times on the Mount of Olives and looked up into those cloudy skies and thought, *"Behold, he cometh with clouds."* (Revelation 1:7) One of these days our dear Lord is going to come back. But oh, dear friend, He's coming, first of all, secretly, for His Church, but then He's coming with His saints—with His saints, now—at the battle of Armageddon.

Let me show you the difference. Look in the last part of verse 5: *"and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee."* (Zechariah 14:5) You see, at the Rapture, He comes for His saints. But, at the Revelation, when He touches down upon the Mount of Olives, when there's that great earthquake, when the battle of Armageddon is to be fought, the Lord Himself will come from heaven, followed by the blood-washed saints of all of the ages. And then, my dear friend, He will put down His enemies, and He will go down through that brook, Kidron, and up through that Eastern Gate, and up to that Temple Mount, and sit upon the throne of David, for God hath decreed it. And,

*Jesus shall reign where'er the sun  
Doth his successive journeys run;  
His Kingdom [spread] from shore to shore,  
'Til moon shall wax and wane no more.*

—ISAAC WATTS

And, He shall sit upon the throne of His father, David. And oh, dear friend, there's great days coming for this old world!

And, aren't you glad we have the Bible? Aren't you glad we have the Word of God? I tell you, you take a man of God and put in a dungeon with a candle, and he'll know—and a Bible—and he'll know more about what's going on than all the wiseacres in the

Pentagon and the U.N. and the House and the Senate put together. We've got the Word of God—the Word of God. And, the Word of God is sure. And, the same God that brought this nation into existence—the same God that preserved this nation, the same God that restored this nation—is the God who will pour out upon them the Spirit of supplication. *“And they shall look upon me whom [they've pierced].”* (Zechariah 12:10) As the Jew goes, so goes the world.

The disciples were asking Jesus, “When will these things be?” (Luke 21:7) And, Jesus told them the parable of the fig tree. Remember, in the Bible, that the fig tree was a symbol of Israel. And, Jesus said, “Watch the fig tree. When it begins to bud, you know these things are very near, even at the door.” (Luke 21:29–30) *“Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”* (Revelation 22:20)

## Conclusion

Let's pray. Father in heaven, we're so grateful for your Word, so grateful for your great plans. And, we pray, Lord God, that if there are those here not ready for the Second Coming of Christ—who are not ready to live, not ready to die, not ready for Jesus to come, not ready for anything until they have received you—help them, that today they will say an everlasting “yes” to Jesus Christ. And Father, bless others who need to make spiritual decisions and lead them to do it. Give them, dear Lord, the freedom to do it. We bind away every evil influence, and we pray that the Holy Spirit would draw men and women to Jesus. In whose name we pray. Amen.

# There Is Nothing Too Hard for God

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** June 2, 2003

**Main Scripture Text:** Jeremiah 32:17

*“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

## Outline

Introduction

I. The Majesty of God’s Limitless Power

- A. There Is No Promise Too Hard for God to Keep
- B. There Is No Prayer Too Hard for God to Answer
- C. There Is No Problem Too Hard for God to Solve
- D. There Is No Person Too Hard for God to Save

II. The Mystery of Man’s Limiting Power

- A. An Unwilling Spirit
- B. An Unconcerned Attitude
- C. An Unreasonable Mindset
- D. An Unclean Lifestyle
- E. An Unbelieving Heart

Conclusion

## Introduction

Find God’s Word—Jeremiah chapter 32. Jeremiah, in the Old Testament, was the weeping prophet. And, verse 17 is the verse that we’re going to read in a moment. When we look at the world with all of its trials, troubles, and tribulations, its heartaches, its problems, its calamities, its distresses, we sometimes ask this question: “Where is God? Why doesn’t He step in? Why doesn’t He do something? And, we look at our own lives, and we have problems on top of problems. And, it seems that our problems have problems. And, we wonder, “Why doesn’t God move? Is it that God is not able? Is the situation too big, too large, too strong, too difficult for God?” The title of our study tonight is, “There is Nothing Too Hard for God.”

Listen to what Jeremiah said in Jeremiah chapter 32 and 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). Now, what Jeremiah says: "Lord, if You could make the universe, You can do anything. You made the Heaven and the Earth by Your great power."

You know, we live on one of nine planets that circle the sun. And, the sun, 93 million miles away, gives more energy in one second than mankind has produced from creation. The sun is much, much larger than the Earth—800,000 miles in diameter. The sun, if it were hollow, could hold a million planets like ours. And, our sun is just one of millions of suns and stars—billions in our galaxy; and, it's basically a minor star. There is one star in our galaxy that gives off 10 million times the power generated by our sun, and one million stars the size of our sun could fit within that one star. So, our sun is a measly little sun, 93 million miles away. And, our galaxy stretches, from rim to rim, hundreds of light years—from rim to rim, thousands of light years—light traveling at 182,282 miles per second. And, our galaxy, the Milky Way, is a relatively small galaxy. And, God alone knows how many galaxies there are, and God made them all.

God just spoke them into existence. Isaiah says, in Isaiah chapter 40 and verse 26, *"Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things..."*—last night, I looked up into the starry heavens. It was a clear night—*"Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names..."*—how many stars in the universe? I don't know. But, God not only knows their number; God knows their names—*"he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth"* (Isaiah 40:26). He keeps all the stars in their orbit. Now, what Jeremiah is saying: "O Lord God, who made the heavens? By your great power, your stretched-out arm. God, there is nothing too hard for Thee."

Now, I'm going to preach an unorthodox message tonight. Rather than three, or four, or five points—only two points. But, don't get excited. There are some sub-points.

## **I. The Majesty of God's Limitless Power**

But, I want you to think tonight about the majesty—the majesty—of God's limitless power. Jeremiah answered the question, but in Genesis, Abraham has the question—Genesis 18, verse 14: *"Is any thing too hard for the LORD?"*—*"Is any thing too hard for the LORD?"* (Genesis 18:14). As a matter of fact, that's really God's question to Abraham, not Abraham's question. God is telling Abraham that he's going to have a son in his old age, and Abraham's a little quizzical about it. And, God says, "Hey, is anything too hard for Me?" Jeremiah gives the answer: "There is nothing too hard for the Lord" (Jeremiah 32:17). Now, let me tell you some things that God can do, because nothing is too hard for Him.

### **A. There Is No Promise Too Hard for God to Keep**

Friend, there is no promise too hard for God to keep. I've not counted them, but somebody said there are 30,000-plus promises in the Word of God, and every one of them is *yea and amen* in the Lord Jesus Christ; and, God will keep His word. Titus 1, verse 2, says that God cannot lie (Titus 1:2). There is no promise in this book that God cannot keep. Do you believe that? If God made the promise, God cannot lie. There is no promise too hard for God to keep.

### **B. There Is No Prayer Too Hard for God to Answer**

And, there's no prayer too hard for God to answer. Jeremiah 33:3 says, "Call unto me, and I will show thee great and mighty things that thou knowest not." Sometimes, when a friend has a problem, and it's a minor problem, we pray and ask God to handle it. But, if it's a major problem, we somehow just seem to back away and believe that somehow, some way, it's going to be too difficult to God. But, what did Jesus say? Jesus said, in Matthew 21, verse 22, "*And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive*"—all things (Matthew 21:22). When you ask in prayer and believe, you'll receive.

*Thou art coming to a King  
Large petitions with thee bring;  
For His grace and power are such,  
None can ever ask too much.*

—JOHN NEWTON

There's no prayer too hard for God to answer.

I was in Moscow, Russia, shortly after the Soviet system had collapsed, preaching in Red Square. I thought, "Dear God, how did I ever get in Red Square, preaching the gospel on the Orthodox Easter?" A great 30,000-dollar soundstage was there. And, I was preaching on national television—the Russian television—preaching the gospel with no holds barred, no fetters—preaching Jesus Christ. But, before I had a chance to get up and preach, the weather began to cloud up, and the storm clouds began to roil, and the rain began to patter. I was with my dear friend, Dr. Bill Bright. We were in a little motor home, waiting to go out to speak and to do the program. Somebody came back there and said, "There's an emergency. The Russian officials have said we must close down the entire thing"—because we had electric wires running all over the ground—"and if it rains, it could be dangerous. And, we're going to have to cut it all off and close it all down." Now, folks, we had come from across the ocean—hundreds of us—and we'd spent these dollars there in Moscow. And, God had opened up the door to preach the gospel nationwide on television on Easter. And the crowds were gathering—thousands.

We said, “We can’t close this down.” The man said, “You have to.” “But, we prayed. We have the program. We’re ready.” He said, “I’ll give you 10 minutes. If it doesn’t stop raining in 10 minutes, it must be closed down.” We went to God in prayer, and we prayed like this: “Ah, Lord God, there’s nothing too difficult for You. God, You see these clouds. You see this rain. God, if the rain doesn’t stop in 10 minutes, it will be closed down.” Joyce and I have a video of a little group standing under some scaffolding, looking up into the rain and singing, “Stop the rain, Lord. Stop the rain. Stop the rain, Lord. Stop the rain.” Eight minutes—it’s raining. Nine minutes—it’s raining. Nine-and-a-half minutes—it is raining. Ten minutes—God took a squeegee and just wiped the clouds away. And, a bright blue sky appeared, and we preached the gospel. Well, you say, “Adrian, that was a coincidence.” You can believe what you want. I believe it is a God who hears the prayers of His people when we’re praying in faith and praying in His will. There’s no prayer too hard for God to answer. Now, God allows us to have some obstacles, that we might learn to pray in faith.

### **C. There Is No Problem Too Hard for God to Solve**

Listen, friend. There is no problem too hard for God to solve. Do you have a problem? God specializes in things that seem impossible. Now, God may not solve your problem the way you want Him to solve it. God says here, in Isaiah chapter 55, verses 8 and 9, *“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts”* (Isaiah 55:8–9).

When you were a little boy or girl, did you ever wonder how high up is? I still wonder that. How far can you go before you reach the edge, the end, the terminus? Infinity? How high are the heavens above the earth? That’s how high God’s ways and God’s thoughts are above our thoughts.

Now, therefore, God may not solve the problem the way you want Him to solve it. God may do it on a different time level, because God lives in eternity and we occupy time. God may do it in a different technique level. We may be telling God how to do it, and God says, “No, I’m not going to do it that way.” I can imagine, when Saul was making havoc of the church, the church was praying, “Oh, God, strike him dead.” God didn’t strike him dead; God struck him alive, and he became the mighty apostle. God works in a different technique level than we work—a different time level.

I heard of a boy sitting under an oak tree one time, and he looked up there in that oak tree and saw that mighty oak and little acorns growing on it; and then—he was a farm boy—and he looked over and saw the watermelon vine with a watermelon on it. And, the boy mused, and he said, “You know, if I were God, I would put the watermelons on the mighty oak and the acorns on the little vine. It makes sense to me.”



About that time, an acorn hit him on the head. He said, “I’m glad it wasn’t a watermelon.” I’m telling you, God works differently than we do. But, there’s no problem—no problem—too hard for God to solve.

#### **D. There Is No Person Too Hard for God to Save**

And, there’s no person too hard for God to save. God can save anyone, if he’ll come to Him. *“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool”* (Isaiah 1:18).

When I used to pastor in Fort Pierce, Florida, we would meet every morning—a group of us—for prayer. We met at about seven in the morning for months, and months, and years. We saw God do some wonderful things. We decided one time that we would pray for the meanest man in our city. So, we had to have an election to find out who the meanest man was. And, this man was a mean man. He was a drunkard, a brawler. At this particular time, he had a gunshot wound. His girlfriend had shot him in the hip, and the bullet was still lodged in his hip. His girlfriend was jealous of him, because the man was spending too much time with his own wife, and so she shot him. This man was a gambler and a fighter. As a matter of fact, he was the kind of man who one time stole a hog out of the back of the game warden’s truck. That’s the kind of man he was. But, we began to pray for this man. I went to see him, and I’m telling you, it was like taking candy away from a baby, as he prayed and asked Jesus Christ to come into his heart. There is no man too hard for God to save. Now, that’s what Jeremiah says: “Ah, Lord God! You made it all. There is nothing too hard for Thee” (Jeremiah 32:17). Now, that’s the majesty of God’s limitless power.

## **II. The Mystery of Man’s Limiting Power**

Now, here’s the second point: I want you to see the mystery of man’s limiting power—God’s limitless power; man’s limiting power. Did you know that puny man can limit Almighty God? You say, “Impossible.” No. Listen to me now. Psalm 78 and verse 41—put it down: *“Yea, they turned back...”*—he’s talking about Ephraim and the children of God—*“Yea, they turned back”*—now, listen to this—*“and limited”*—limited—*“the Holy One of Israel”* (Psalm 78:41). They—men, puny man, two-legged man whose breath is in his nostrils—they turned back and limited the Holy One of Israel. There’s nothing too hard for God. God can do anything. And yet, they limited God.

Now, the word *limited*, here, in the Hebrew language—I’m certainly not a Hebrew scholar—but it literally means, “to set a horizon,” or, if we could make a verb out of the word *horizon*, “they *horizoned* the God of Israel.” That is, the horizon is as far as you can see. You get up on a tall building, and you look, and the curvature of the earth falls

away. And so, the horizon is as far as you can see. There's more, but you can't see further, because there is a horizon. Well now, what the Bible says here is that these people said, "This is as far as we can see. This is all we can see that God can do." So, they limited God. That's the way it's translated in the King James Scripture. They put a horizon on God. God, the mighty Maker, is limited—*horizoned*—by man himself. God allows this. You say, "Well, I thought God was Almighty." He is, but here's a mystery: the Almighty allows Himself to be bound.

Let me give you an example. Jesus Christ was in the Garden of Gethsemane. They came to carry Him away to judge Him and to crucify Him. I'm going to read the scripture to you from Matthew chapter 27, verses 1 and 2: "*When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death:*"—now, watch this—"*and when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor*"—"when they had bound him" (Matthew 27:1–2). Now, this is Jesus. This is the One who really made the universes. "*All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made*" (John 1:3). This was God of very God in human flesh; and yet, they bound Him. They fettered Him. They handcuffed the Lord of Glory. Now, that's an amazing thing: that Jesus Christ would allow Himself to be bound. It wasn't that He had no control over the matter. I mean, He didn't have to let them bind Him.

When the disciples wanted to defend Him, when Peter wanted to defend Him, Jesus said to him, in Matthew 26, verse 53, "*Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?*" (Matthew 26:53). "Peter, I don't need you to defend Me." Ha—144,000 angels leaning over the battlement of Heaven with a drawn sword, saying, "Jesus, just say the word. We'll come down there." Listen. It wasn't that Jesus was helpless; it wasn't that He was overpowered. But, He allowed them to bind Him. I read in the Bible where one angel killed 185,000 Assyrians. I wonder what 12 legions of angels could do. Somebody did the arithmetic and said it's 13,750,000,000 that 12 legions of angels could destroy. He could have called these angels, but He didn't.

Now, here's the Lord Jesus. The chief priests, the scribes, the elders come, and Jesus holds out His hands. There's no struggle. He allows them to fetter Him, to handcuff Him, to bind Him. Think about it. Those were healing hands. Those were hands that wanted to bless. Those were hands that cooled fevered brows. Those were hands that straightened crippled limbs. Those were hands that unstopped deaf ears and opened blind eyes. Those were hands that fed the multitude. Those were omnipotent hands—nothing too hard for those hands. But, they bound those hands. And, the One who could have called 12 legions of angels to set Him free allowed them to do just that. The mystery of man's limiting power—God's limitless power; man's limiting power.

Now, let me tell you today how you, if you're not careful, can limit God—how you can bind the hands that want to bless. Let me tell you some fetters that people use today, some handcuffs that you may be using, to bind the hands that want to bless.

### A. **An Unwilling Spirit**

First of all, I want to mention an unwilling spirit. Write it down: an unwilling spirit. Jesus Christ was coming down the Mount of Olives towards the City of Jerusalem. And, halfway down the Mount of Olives—I've been to this spot many times, when I visited the Holy Land—He stopped. He's riding a little colt, a little wild Syrian donkey, and He stops, and He weeps. Great salty tears course down His cheeks. And, the Greek language literally says, "He sobbed with a broken heart." And, here's what He said: "*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings,*"—now, watch it—"and ye would not!" (Matthew 23:37). "I would, but ye would not. You were unwilling. I wanted to bless. I would have reached out, and I would have brought you into My bosom. Jerusalem, I would have blessed you. I have so much for you, but you said *no*. You've bound My hands, the hands that want to bring peace and comfort and hope and salvation."

You must be willing. Did you know there are some people here tonight who are not saved? God wants to save you, but you're not willing. I'll give an invitation. When I finish this message, I will reach out my arms, and I will say to you, "Please come to Jesus." But, if you're not willing, there are not enough angels in Heaven or out of Heaven to drag you down this aisle. God would not allow it.

There was a man named George Wilson in American history who was sentenced to death, to be hung by the neck. Some people went to the governor of the state and pleaded for the man's life, and said, "Please do not hang this man, George Wilson." The governor was moved in mercy and wrote a pardon. The pardon was sent to the prison warden. The prison warden read it and thought, "George Wilson will be so glad to hear that he's been pardoned." They went to George Wilson and read the pardon to him. He said, "I will not accept it." They said, "What?" He said, "I will not accept it." "What do you mean?" "I do not accept the pardon. You must carry out capital punishment." They didn't know what to do. They had a legal problem. Here a pardon has been offered, but the person won't receive it. Shall they force him out, or shall they continue with the execution? It went to the high court, and the high court adjudicated it this way: that the pardon is rendered invalid, and the man must be hanged if he refuses the pardon. The man was unwilling. Jesus said, "I would have blessed you, Jerusalem, but you would not."

There are some people who believe in something called *irresistible grace*—that if God's going to save you, He's going to save you whether you want to be saved or not.

But, friend, that's not so. You have the privilege, the dubious privilege, to say *no* to the Lord. He said, "I would, but ye would not." God has limitless power, but man has limiting power. An unwilling spirit can tie the hands of Jesus.

### **B. An Unconcerned Attitude**

I'll tell you something else that will tie the hands of Jesus, and that's an unconcerned attitude—not an unwilling, but just simply indifference. Jesus, in the Book of the Revelation, is talking to the church at Laodicea, and here's how He describes Himself there. In Revelation chapter 3 and verse 20, He says, "*Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him*" (Revelation 3:20). Now, He has limitless power. Do you think there's any door that could keep out the Lord of Glory, if He wanted to open that door, to knock it down, to blow it away, or to pass through it without opening it at all? And yet, we have here in the Bible Jesus standing at the door knocking.

Holman Hunt has painted a picture. You've seen it: Jesus with the lantern, knocking at the door. The vines have grown over the door. Someone is on the inside. Jesus is wanting to come in. But, if you look at Holman Hunt's painting, you'll find there no latch on the outside; the latch is on the inside. And, evidently, the person on the inside can hear the knocking but is so unconcerned that they don't open the door. It breaks my heart to say it, but I've preached long enough to know that some preaching is like pouring water on a rock. People are not concerned. Jesus is knocking at their heart's door. He wants to come in. He wants to have fellowship with them, but they limit the Holy One of Israel. I don't know how much of God you have, precious friend, but I'll tell you this much: you have all you want. If you don't have any more, it's because you don't want any more. He wants you, but you can be indifferent.

### **C. An Unreasonable Mindset**

I'll tell you another way that you can limit the Holy One of Israel: not only by an unwilling spirit, not only by an unconcerned attitude, but an unreasonable mindset. There are some people who are so unreasonable that their lack of reason handcuffs the Lord Jesus. That's the reason the Bible says, in Isaiah 1:18, "*Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.*" But, if you refuse to reason, if you refuse to use the God-given ability to be reasonable, you can fetter our Lord and your sins will remain as scarlet. They will never become white as snow, because you will not come and reason with the Lord.

Have you ever listened to some of the unreasonable ways that people think and talk and act when it comes to spiritual things? You talk to somebody and say, "I want to invite you to church." And, they say, "Well, no. I don't think I want to go to church."

“Well, why not?” “Well, when I was a little boy, my mother made me go to church, so I don’t think I’m going to come.” I imagine his mother made him take a bath when he was a little boy also; so, now he doesn’t take a bath anymore. Somebody says, “Well, there are hypocrites down there at the church.” I say, “Well, do tell.” There are hypocrites in every area of life. You can buy a dozen eggs, and one of them can be a hypocrite. Some lawyers are shysters. Some doctors are quacks. Some money is counterfeit. But, if you’re in difficulty and need a lawyer, you find one. If you’re sick, you find a doctor. And, you’ve not yet burned all of the cash that you have because some money is fake. You know better than that. You know that the hypocrite only proves the validity and the worthwhileness of the real. Why do men counterfeit hundred dollar bills? Why don’t they counterfeit gum wrappers? You see, it’s the counterfeit that pays tribute to the real. Every hypocrite is a testimony to the validity of the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

“Oh, well, I’d like to be a Christian, but there’s just so much to give up.” The only thing God asks you to give up are things that will hurt you. It’s like a person saying, “Well, I’d like to be healed, but I don’t want to give up my cancer.” *“The LORD thy God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly”* (Psalm 84:11). What I’m trying to say is, if you have an unreasonable mindset, you can use silly, superficial, asinine reasoning and say *no* to God, but when you stand before Jesus Christ at the judgment and realize that you have fettered Him by an unreasonable spirit, and your sins, therefore, still are as scarlet, when they could be white as snow, you’ll say, “What a fool I’ve been!”

#### **D. An Unclean Lifestyle**

Man can limit God. You can limit God by unwillingness. You can limit God by unconcern. You can limit God by unreasonableness. I’ll tell you another way you can limit God: by an unclean lifestyle. Did you know if you harbor sin in your heart tonight, dear Christian friend, you have limited God and kept God from answering your prayers? Put this Scripture down—Isaiah chapter 59, verses 1 and 2: *“Behold, the LORD’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: 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 59:1–2). What’s He saying? Has God failed to answer prayer because He’s weak—God’s hand is palsied and shriveled? Has God failed to hear your prayer because His ear is heavy, and God says, “Ah, what did you say? I can’t hear you”? No. God is well and alive. God’s arm is mighty. God’s ear is keen. *“Ah Lord GOD...there is nothing too hard for thee”*—nothing (Jeremiah 32:17). But, He doesn’t answer prayer, because your sins have separated between you and your God, and your iniquities have hid his face from you. You have limited the Holy One of Israel. You have fettered Jesus. You have handcuffed the God, who wants to bless,

by uncleanness and an unclean lifestyle.

I think all of us have heard the story of the little girl that slipped her hand down in the prized heirloom vase, and they couldn't get it out with soapy water and everything else. The little girl's hand was in the vase. Finally, in desperation, they took a mallet and broke the vase. And, there, in her chubby little hand was the penny that she would not let go of; holding on to the penny rather than let her fingers slip out of the vase. What is it you're holding on to? Is it worth God not hearing your prayers? Is it worth limiting, setting a horizon, on the Holy One of Israel? Is it worth fettering and handcuffing the hands that want to bless? "The Lord's arm—hand—is not short, that He cannot save. His ear is not heavy, that He cannot hear. But, your sins have separated between you and your God, and your iniquities have hid His face from you" (Isaiah 59:1–2).

### **E. An Unbelieving Heart**

One last thing that may limit our Lord, that may fetter our Savior, that may handcuff the hands that want to bless you, and it, perhaps, is the culmination of all of these—and it is an unbelieving spirit, an unbelieving heart. Now, all sin is terrible, but the worst sin—the mother sin, the father sin, the sin of all sins—is unbelief. Unbelief is devastating. Jesus worked in Nazareth. He was a carpenter's son—born in Bethlehem, raised in Nazareth. Now, the Bible says, in Matthew chapter 13 and verse 58, "*And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief*" (Matthew 13:58). Could He do mighty works? Absolutely! Did He have miracle-working hands? Absolutely! Was there anything too hard for Him? Absolutely not! And yet, the Bible says, "*He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief*" (Matthew 13:58). Faith—belief—is the channel through which the risen Lord pours His life into you.

## **Conclusion**

Now, that's the message, really, in two points: The majesty—the majesty—of God's limitless power. There is no prayer too hard for God to answer. There is no promise too hard for God to keep. There is no person too hard for God to save. There's no problem too hard for God to solve. "Ah, Lord God, there is nothing—nothing, absolutely nothing—too difficult for Thee" (Jeremiah 32:17). The only thing that lies outside God's power is that which lies outside His will. But, we can limit God. We can limit God by our unwillingness, by our unconcern, by our unreasonableness, by our uncleanness, and by our unbelief. Now, I think, folks, we're pretty foolish if we bind those blessed hands, the hands that want to bless.

Bow your heads in prayer, and just go down through the list. Have you been unwilling? Have you been unconcerned? Have you been unreasonable? Are you unclean? Are you unbelieving? Any of these things can bind the hands that want to bless. Now, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, remember what Jesus said:

“O, Jerusalem, Jerusalem... I would have gathered you, even as a hen does her chicks, but ye would not” (Matthew 23:37).

And, I said, at that point in the message, I’m going to give an invitation for people to receive Jesus Christ, but you have to be willing. I wonder tonight, are you willing? As Jesus Christ stretches out from Heaven His nail-pierced hand and says, “I want to save you,” as He stretches down a hand of love, are you willing to reach up with a hand of faith and put your hand of faith in that hand, that nail-scarred hand?

Would you like to be saved? Would you pray a prayer like this? Pray it from your heart: “Dear God, I’m a sinner, and I’m lost. And, oh, God, I need to be saved. Jesus, You died to save me, and You promised to save me, if I would trust You. I do trust You. Come into my heart. Right now I turn from sin. I put my hand of faith in Your hand of grace. I give You my heart and my life. I trust You now as my Lord and Savior. Take control of my life and begin this moment to make me the person You want me to be. Save me, Lord Jesus. In Your name I pray. Amen.”



# Mighty Prayer

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** September 8, 1993

**Main Scripture Text:** Jeremiah 33:3

*“Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.”*

JEREMIAH 33:3

## Outline

### Introduction

- I. The Command to Pray
    - A. Make Prayer a Habit
    - B. Designate a Time and a Place for Prayer
    - C. Make That Time and Place the Optimum for You
    - D. Take Some Equipment with You
    - E. Begin Your Quiet Time by Reading God’s Word
    - F. Pray About Things All Through the Day
    - G. Keep a Record of Your Prayer Requests and Answered Prayers
    - H. Put on the Whole Armor of God as You Pray
    - I. If You Are by Yourself, Pray Out Loud
    - J. Pray About Those Things That Draw Your Attention Away
  - II. The Confidence to Pray
    - A. God’s Answer May Be Specifically Delivered
    - B. God’s Answer May Be Strategically Delayed
    - C. God’s Answer May Be Significantly Different
    - D. God’s Answer May Be Sovereignly Denied
  - III. The Conquest of Prayer
- Conclusion

## Introduction

One of the sweetest invitations to prayer is found in Jeremiah 33, verse 3, where God gives us this command and this invitation at the same time. He says this: *“Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not”* (Jeremiah 33:3).

Now, you don’t have a failure in your life but, when properly analyzed, it is a prayer failure. There’s not a sin in my life or yours that proper prayer would not have avoided. There’s not a need in my life or yours that proper prayer cannot meet. If prayer is anything, then it is almost everything. And yet, most of us have difficulty praying. The



man standing here has never ever in all of his life been satisfied with his prayer life. And, I don't think you're satisfied with yours. For many of us, it's an exercise that we do out of duty. For some, it maybe an alternative to action, and an excuse for laziness. For most of us, it's a source of power that is untapped.

Now, your spiritual life and mine will not rise above our prayer lives. We've got to learn how to pray. Now, in this passage of Scripture, Jeremiah is in trouble. And, he's in trouble for preaching the truth. And, Zedekiah the king has put him into prison. And, there in prison, God mercifully speaks to him, and God invites him to pray. And, that's the background for Jeremiah 33:3, where God says, *"Call unto me, and I will answer thee."*

## I. The Command to Pray

I want you to notice with me the command that God gives. I didn't say the request, or even the invitation, but the command that God gave. God commanded Jeremiah to pray. He said to Jeremiah, *"Call unto me."* Jesus said, *"Men ought always to pray"* (Luke 18:1). Paul said, *"Pray without ceasing"* (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Now, this is a command from Almighty God, and it is God that takes the initiative. God says to Jeremiah, *"Call Me."*

You ever have anybody give you a card with their unlisted number on it? I mean, an important person, and say, "Call me?" On one occasion, a president of the United States did that for me. He said, "Well, if you can do this, let me know. Here's a card. Call me." And, he put a number on it. I don't even know what I did with that card. I misplaced it. I've just thought about that. I don't know what happened to it. But, you know, if somebody who is very important gives you his unlisted number, and says, "Call me," that is a great privilege.

Now, this is Almighty God who has come to Jeremiah, and He says, "Call upon Me!" Go back to chapter 32 and look in verse 17. Behold the kind of a person that has given this invitation. Jeremiah says, *"Lord God, behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and [outstretched] arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee: thou shewest lovingkindness unto thousands, and recompensest the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them: the Great, the Mighty God, the LORD of hosts, is his name"* (Jeremiah 32:17–18). Folks, that's the One who says, "Call on Me!" That's the One who has given us His private number. Jeremiah 33:3—there it is. Here's my number, and I want you to call me. It is my invitation to you. Now, most of us can't pick up the phone and call a lot of the big shots in government and business and entertainment, but there's not a one of us that cannot contact Heaven.

Don't ever say there is nothing you can do, because you can pray. And, prayer not only is something you can do; it's something all can do, because God has asked us to

pray, because God has invited us to pray, because God has commanded us to pray. Failure to pray is a sin. But, this is also an invitation, and failure to pray is an insult. It's also a privilege, so failure to pray is folly. It's also an opportunity, so failure to pray is a tragedy. And, when we don't pray, we sin against God, we insult God, we deny ourselves a privilege, and we enter into a colossal tragedy. And yet, sometimes, we fail to pray.

I want to tell you ten things that help me to pray, ten little lessons that I've learned about prayer. And, you can jot them down. I'm not going to stretch any of them out, but I just want to share with you. And, I share them as a learner, not as a person who is a scholar or a graduate of the school of prayer.

#### **A. Make Prayer a Habit**

Number one: Make prayer a habit. Habits are made by starting over when you fail, day by day by day, until prayer becomes a habit.

#### **B. Designate a Time and a Place for Prayer**

Number two: Designate a time and a place for your prayer. Now, don't fail to pray if you're not at that time or at that place, but have a time and a place where you pray.

#### **C. Make That Time and Place the Optimum for You**

Number three: Make that time and that place the optimum for you. Don't read some biography about somebody who prayed at a particular hour, or the morning, or night, or something, and try to emulate that person. Find that time when your mind is the keenest, when your attention is the strongest. For some of you, that may be right after you awaken. For some, it may be after that first cup of coffee. For some, it may be after the children have gone off to school. But find that best time.

#### **D. Take Some Equipment with You**

Next: when you go pray, take some equipment with you. Take your Bible. Take your notebook. Take your pen. Take your devotional materials. It would be almost unthinkable for me to try to have a quiet time without a Bible and a notebook. I expect God to say something. When God says something, I want to write it down. I've told you before that the weakest ink is better than the best memory.

#### **E. Begin Your Quiet Time by Reading God's Word**

Now, begin your quiet time by reading God's Word. Don't pray and then read the Bible. Read the Bible and then pray. What God says to you is more important than what you say to God. And, your prayer will be engendered and enlivened and enthused and instructed and guided when you get into the Word of God.

#### **F. Pray About Things All Through the Day**

Next: Not only should you have that special time and place, an optimum time, but also,

learn to pray about things all through the day. The Bible says, “*Pray without ceasing.*” One of the things that has blessed me about reading the life of Dwight L. Moody, who was the Billy Graham of his day, is this; his biographer said this: “He never made long prayers, but he was never long without prayer.” Isn’t that beautiful? “He was never long without prayer.” Prayer was to him a way of life. And whenever a matter came up, he prayed about it. I have a habit of praying for churches when I drive past the church; praying for individuals when I write them a letter. Answering my correspondence is also for me just a time of prayer. Opportunities—I pray over the newspaper many times. If I see where there’s a crime that’s been committed, I lay my hand on that newspaper, lift another hand to heaven, and I say, “God, get that man.” I tell Jesus on him. That’s right. I do. And, just pray through the newspaper. Pray through the magazines. As you read the Bible, you say, “Lord, what does that mean? Explain it to me.” And, talk to God. I find myself in the automobile just telling the Lord I love Him, or just saying, “That’s beautiful, Lord, isn’t it?” Talk to God constantly, but have a quiet time when you go into your closet and pray.

#### **G. Keep a Record of Your Prayer Requests and Answered Prayers**

Now, keep a record of your prayer requests and your answered prayers. I don’t do this as well as some people, but I do it. I have a book, and in that book I enter prayer needs and requests, things that I prayed about. I got it down the other day, and I began to go backward in it, and, I looked back about 10 years—a little more than 10 years; 25 years, I suppose. I was incredibly blessed to see how many prayers God had answered. Some of them I might have forgotten to thank Him for, or perhaps thanked Him for then, but failed to continually be thankful for answered prayer. It will increase your faith if you keep a prayer journal. Record your requests; record your answers.

#### **H. Put on the Whole Armor of God as You Pray**

Another thing that will help you when you call upon the Lord is to put on the whole armor of God as you pray, because prayer is warfare. You know, all of the artillery will come against you when you pray, isn’t that true? I mean, the dog will bark, the beans will burn, the baby will cry, the doorbell will ring, you will get sleepy, your mind will go wandering, so you have to put on the whole armor of God when you pray.

#### **I. If You Are by Yourself, Pray Out Loud**

If you are by yourself, pray out loud. There’s something about praying out loud, vocalizing your prayer, that keeps your mind from wandering. Pray out loud when you pray, if you’re in private. I don’t think it’s a good idea to pray out loud if you’re in a crowd. Somebody will think you’re talking to yourself and have lost your mind.

## J. **Pray About Those Things That Draw Your Attention Away**

Now, speaking of your mind, here's the tenth thing. If your mind is like my mind, your mind wants to run away when you pray. Sometimes it's hard to stay focused until you really break through, is that not true? And thoughts come to you, and you will begin to pray, and when you begin to pray, you begin to think, "Well, I need to do thus and such a thing." Well, here's a secret I read somewhere, and I put it into practice, and it works wonderfully. If the thing that draws your attention away from your prayer is that important, evidently, that is what is really on your mind, so pray about it. You see what I'm talking about? If, for example, I get down to pray, and the Lord says, "You've got a sermon to prepare," and I've been praying for the sick, well, I'll just say, "I'll pray for that sermon right now," and I pray about that, and get that down. And, that thing that's gnawing at my mind and pulling my mind away becomes the very focal point of my prayer and, evidently, that's the thing that's in my subconscious, and that's the thing that I really desire. And, *"What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them"* (Mark 11:24).

## II. **The Confidence to Pray**

So, those are some things that will help you as you pray, I hope, very practically, things to pray as you pray. And now, here's a second thing I want you to see. I've talked to you about the command to pray. God says, in verse 3, "Call upon Me." Now, with the command, I want you to notice the confidence that comes with that command. Here's God's promise. Listen to it: *"Call unto me, and I will answer thee."* Now, either that is true, or it is not true. Which is it? It is true. God, Almighty God, has said, *"I will answer thee."*

Now, whether you understand it or not, it is true. God does answer. And, He doesn't send someone else. He says, *"I will answer thee."* Suppose you send a request to Washington to complain about something. Your doorbell rings, and there was the President on your doorstep, and said, "I came to answer your request"—I mean, the President came. God Himself says, "I'm the One who's going to answer you. I personally am going to answer you."

Now, when God answers, He may do it in one of four ways.

### A. **God's Answer May Be Specifically Delivered**

That answer may be specifically delivered. I, like you, have asked God for things, and I have received the answer so instantaneously, so miraculously, so factually and real, that no one can convince me that it was mere happenstance or coincidence. I think all of us have prayed, those of us who have been on the trail very long, we have prayed and the answer has been specifically delivered.

### **B. God's Answer May Be Strategically Delayed**

But, sometimes the answer may be strategically delayed. God does not always answer immediately. That doesn't mean He's not going to answer. *"Therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you"* (Isaiah 30:18). And, with God, timing is more important that time. So the answer may be strategically delayed.

### **C. God's Answer May Be Significantly Different**

Sometimes the answer may be significantly different. You may ask God for one thing, and He gives you something better. The Apostle Paul, in 2 Corinthians chapter 12, had a thorn in the flesh that he asked God to remove, and God didn't remove it. But, God answered his prayer, not by giving Paul what he asked for, but by giving Paul something better than he asked for. What was better than the removal of the thorn? The added grace (1 Corinthians 12:7–9).

### **D. God's Answer May Be Sovereignly Denied**

And so, sometimes we ask, and we don't know what to ask for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered (Romans 8:26), and sometimes the answer maybe sovereignly denied. You ask God, and He says, "No, not going to answer that prayer." Not because your heart is wrong—you just asked for something wrong. And, God loves you too much to give you something that will hurt you.

Now, I think all of us have thanked God for answered prayer. I tell you what I have done—I have really done this: I have thanked God for unanswered prayer. Have you? You ought to.

Mrs. Billy Graham said, "I thank God for unanswered prayer. If God had answered my prayer every time I asked, I would have married the wrong man five times."

You know, we're praying for things; we say, "Lord, this is what I want; do this," or "do that," and God says, "You don't know what you're asking—you don't know what you're asking."

I can think of some prophets in the Bible who asked God to kill them. Moses asked God to kill him. Elijah asked God to kill him. Jonah asked God to kill him. We'd be in the soup if God always answered our prayers. I mean, answered, "Yes." The answer may be "No," but God says, *"Call unto me, and I will answer thee."*

## **III. The Conquest of Prayer**

Now, here's the third and final thing: the command, the confidence, the conquest. Listen to it: *"Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not."* You see, God has revealed Himself as a God who is able to do anything that He wishes. Look again in chapter 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). Look again in verse 27—God gives His credentials: "*Behold...*"—this is chapter 32, verse 27—"*Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?*" (Jeremiah 32:27). "I am the Lord! I can do whatever I want."

We have people today who have difficulty with miracles. How can you have difficulty with miracles if you believe in creation? If you can get past Genesis 1:1, you're home free. People talk about the laws of nature. There are no laws of nature. They're God's laws that nature obeys. God doesn't obey nature's laws; nature obeys God's laws. It's God who made those laws. It's God who made the whole thing. And, God who made it can do with it as He wishes. Don't let anybody tell you that the age of miracles has passed. Genesis 18, verse 14, asks the question: "Is there anything too hard for the Lord?" (Genesis 18:14).

The problem is not with God and His ability. You might put in your margin Matthew chapter 17, verses 19 through 21: "*Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out?*" Here was a demon-possessed boy. And, the disciples had gone through their incantations and their contortions, and their pleadings and their cries and their shoutings. And, the demon didn't budge. "*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*"—nothing. "*Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting*" (Matthew 17:19–21).

Now, Jesus said, "The reason for my Father's failure to answer is not because of His inability, but because of your unbelief." Jesus said, "If you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you can say to a mountain, 'Skip away'" (Matthew 17:20). The least amount of faith is greater than the greatest amount of difficulty.

Well, God says to Jeremiah, "Call upon Me. I'll show you great and mighty things that you don't even know about." I think the idea is this. It's something you've never seen and something you cannot conceive. When I read that, the verse that came to me is a verse that I think would be a favorite of many of us—Ephesians chapter 3, verses 20 through 21. Paul, thinking of the greatness of our Lord, gives this turn of phrase when he says, "*Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen*" (Ephesians 3:20–21).

## Conclusion

*There's no prayer too hard for God to answer. There is no problem too big for God to solve. There is no person too lost for God to save. There is no promise too difficult for*



*God to keep.* “Call unto me, and I will...show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.” Well, you say, “If I ask God something outside of His will, will He hear me?” Of course not! *“This is the confidence we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us”* (1 John 5:14).

It’s wisely been said, “Nothing lies outside the reach of prayer except that which lies outside the will of God.” You don’t want anything that’s not God’s will for you, do you? You see, God’s will is not something you have to do. It’s something you get to do. *God’s will is what you’d want for yourself if you had enough sense to want it.* God loves you. *The only thing that lies outside the reach of prayer is that which lies outside the will of God.* But there is no problem too big, no promise too difficult, no person too lost—there’s nothing that God cannot do.

And, actually, when you look at this passage of Scripture where God says, “Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things,” it’s really in the context of national problems. Don’t you have kind of an uneasy feeling about everything that’s happening in the world today? Well, God had been telling Jeremiah, “Hey, Jeremiah, everything’s in control.” Now, there’s Babylon. There’s the captivity. All of these things are going to happen, and in chapter 32, beginning in verse 36 and going on through verse 40, He begins to talk about His plan for Israel. He talks about the Babylonian captivity. Then, He talks about their coming back to the land. Then, He talks about the coming Kingdom of Christ. And then, He tells Jeremiah to pray.

In prayer, we unite with God in regulating the nations and operating the universe. I don’t understand it all. God prophesies what He’s going to do, and nothing that we do can stop it. And yet, we’re told to pray for His Kingdom to come. We know it will come. Yet we’re told to pray. We know there’s going to be a captivity, and a return, and the coming Kingdom of Christ, and yet we’re told to pray.

I was thinking about prayer, and I was thinking what a weapon prayer is in a time of national calamity, or in any kind of calamity. I thought about our missile prayer: the one we have that can be fired from any spot. It travels undetected. It travels at the speed of thought. It hits the target every time. And, it can have a delayed detonation. Jesus prayed, in John chapter 17, for me. He said, “Not only do I pray for these that believe on me now, that You give me, but I pray for them that will believe on me through their word” (John 17:20). He might as well have put my name in there. You can begin to pray now, if you’ve got little babies in your home, for the people they’re going to marry, and it hits the target. And, you can pray with delayed detonation. And, here’s the best thing: Satan has no defense against your missile. There is no anti-prayer missile. “Call upon Me”—in time of trouble, in time of calamity—“and I will hear you.” Folks, I didn’t make that promise. God said it. Jeremiah 33, verse 3: *“Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things”*—things that you don’t even know



about, things that are exceedingly, abundantly above all that we can even ask or think. Would you pray, “Lord, teach me to pray”? Not, “Lord, teach me how to pray,” but, “Teach me to pray”—“to pray.” We need to pray. These are desperate days, and God’s people need to pray.

# Mighty Prayer

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: October 18, 1995**

**Main Scripture Text: Jeremiah 33:3**

*“Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.”*

JEREMIAH 33:3

## Outline

### Introduction

#### I. The Command

- A. Make Prayer a Habit
- B. Designate a Time and Place
- C. Make That Time and Place the Most Optimum for You
- D. Take Some Equipment with You
- E. Make Prayer a Habit
- F. Pray About Things All Through the Day
- G. Keep a Record of Prayer Requests and Answered Prayer
- H. Put On the Whole Armor of God as You Pray
- I. If You Are By Yourself, Pray Out Loud
- J. Pray About the Thing That Is Really on Your Mind

#### II. The Confidence

- A. The Answer May Be Specifically Delivered
- B. The Answer May Be Strategically Delayed
- C. The Answer May Be Significantly Different
- D. The Answer May Be Sovereignly Denied

#### III. The Conquest

### Conclusion

## Introduction

Find in the Old Testament the book of Jeremiah, a very familiar verse, chapter 33 and 3. I want to talk to you tonight about prayer, “Mighty Prayer.” This, indeed, is a prayer meeting.

One of the sweetest invitations to prayer is found in Jeremiah 33, verse 3 where God gives us this command and this invitation at the same time. He says this: “Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.”

Now you don’t have a failure in your life but what, properly analyzed, it is a prayer failure. There’s not a sin in my life or yours that proper prayer would not have avoided.

There's not a need in my life or yours that proper prayer cannot meet. If prayer is anything, then it is almost everything. And yet, most of us have difficulty praying. The man standing here has never, ever in all of his life been satisfied with his prayer. And I don't think you're satisfied with yours. For many of us, it's an exercise that we do out of duty. For some, it may be an alternative to action and an excuse for laziness. But most of us, for most of us, it's a source of power that is untapped. Now your spiritual life and mine will not rise above our prayer lives. We've got to learn how to pray.

Now in this passage of Scripture, Jeremiah is in trouble. And he's in trouble for preaching the truth. And Zedekiah the king has put him into prison. And there in prison God mercifully speaks to him and God invites him to pray. And that's the background for Jeremiah 33:3 where God says, "Call unto me, and I will answer thee..."

## **I. The Command**

I want you to notice with me the command that God gives. I didn't say the request or even the invitation, but the command that God gave. God commanded Jeremiah to pray. He said to Jeremiah, "Call unto me." Jesus said, "Men ought always to pray." Paul said, "Pray without ceasing." Now this is a command from Almighty God, and it is God that takes the initiative.

God says to Jeremiah, "Call me!" Have you ever had anybody give you a card with their unlisted number on it; I mean, an important person and say, "Call me." On one occasion a president of the United States did that for me. He said, "Well, if you can do this, let me know. Here's a card. Call me," and put a number on it. I don't even know what I did with that card, Bob. I misplaced that. I've just thought about that. I don't know what happened to it. But, you know, if, if somebody who is very important gives you his unlisted number and says, "Call me," that is a great privilege. Now this is Almighty God, Almighty God who has come to Jeremiah and He says, "Call upon me."

Go back to chapter 32 and look in verse 17, and behold the kind of a person that has given this invitation. Jeremiah says, "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: Thou showest lovingkindness unto thousands, and recompensest the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them: the Great, the Mighty God, the LORD of hosts, is his name. "Folks, that's the one who says, "Call on me." That's the one who has given us His private number, Jeremiah 33:3. He said, "There it is. Here's my number. And I want you to call me. It is my invitation to you."

Now most of us can't pick up the phone and call a lot of the big shots in government and business and entertainment, but there's not a one of us tonight that cannot contact heaven. Don't ever say there is nothing you can do, because you can pray. And prayer not only is something you can do; it's something all can do. And

because God has asked us to pray, because God has invited us to pray, because God has commanded us to pray, failure to pray is a sin. But this is also an invitation, and failure to pray is an insult. It's also a privilege, so failure to pray is folly. It's also an opportunity, so failure to pray is a tragedy. And when we don't pray, we sin against God, we insult God, we deny ourselves the privilege, and we enter into a colossal tragedy, and yet, sometimes we fail to pray.

I want to tell you ten things that help me to pray, ten little lessons that I've learned about pray. And you can jot them down. I'm not going to stretch any of them out, but I just want to share with you. And I share them as a learner, not as a person who is a scholar or a graduate in the school of prayer.

#### **A. Make Prayer a Habit**

Number one: Make prayer a habit. Habits are made by starting over when you fail day by day by day until prayer becomes a habit.

#### **B. Designate a Time and Place**

Number two: Designate a time and a place for your prayer. Now don't fail to prayer if you're not at that time or at that place, but have a time and a place where you pray.

#### **C. Make That Time and Place the Most Optimum for You**

Number three: Make that time and that place the most optimum for you. Don't read some biography about somebody who prayed at a particular hour of the morning or night or something and try to emulate that person. Find the time when your mind is the keenest, when your attention is the strongest. For some of you, that may be right after you awaken. For some, it may be after that first cup of coffee. For some, it may be after the children have gone off to school. But find that best time. There's nothing magical about any time.

#### **D. Take Some Equipment with You**

Next: When you go to pray, take some equipment with you. Take your Bible. Take your notebook. Take your pen. Take your devotional materials. It would be almost unthinkable for me to try to have a quiet time without a Bible and a notebook. I expect God to say something. If God says something, I want to write it down. I told you before that, ah, the weakest ink is better than the best memory.

#### **E. Make Prayer a Habit**

Now begin your prayer time by reading God's Word. Don't pray and then read the Bible. Read the Bible and then pray. What God says to you is more important than what you say to God. And your prayer will be engendered and enlivened and enthused and instructed and guided when you get into the Word of God.

#### **F. Pray About Things All Through the Day**

Next: Not only should you have that special time and place, an optimum time, but also learn to pray about things all through the day. The Bible says, “Pray without ceasing.” One of the things that has blessed me about reading the life of Dwight L. Moody, who was the Billy Graham of his day, is this: His biographer said this: “He never made long prayers, but he was never long without prayer.” Isn’t that beautiful? He was never long without prayer. Prayer was to him a, a, way of life. And whenever a matter came up, he prayed about it.

I have a habit of praying for pastors when I read church bulletins. Ah, ah, praying for churches when I drive past the church. Praying for individuals when I write them a letter. I, my, my answering my correspondence is also for me just a time of prayer. And if you get a letter from me, it could very well be that I have prayed for you as I have written that letter. Opportunities. I pray over the newspaper many times. If I see where there’s a crime that’s been committed, I lay my hand on that newspaper, lift another hand to heaven, and I say, “God, get that man!” I tell Jesus on him. That’s right. I do. And just pray through the newspaper. Pray through the magazines. As you read the Bible, you say, “Lord, what does that mean? Explain it to me.” And talk to God. I find myself in the automobile just, just telling the Lord I love Him or just saying, “That’s beautiful, Lord, isn’t it?” Talk to God constantly, but have that quiet time where you go into your closet and pray.

#### **G. Keep a Record of Prayer Requests and Answered Prayer**

Now keep a record of your prayer requests and your answered prayer. I don’t do this as well as some people, but I do it. I have a book, and in that book I enter pray needs and requests, things that I’ve prayed about. I got it down the other day and I began to go backward in it. And I looked back about ten years, may, a little more than ten years, fifteen years, I suppose. I was incredibly blessed to see how many prayers God had answered, some of them I might have forgotten to thank Him for or perhaps thanked Him for then, but failed to continually be thankful for answered prayer. It will increase your faith if you’ll keep a prayer journal. Frankly, I need to do a better job of that, though I do it. Record your requests. Record your answers.

#### **H. Put On the Whole Armor of God as You Pray**

Another thing that will help you when you call upon the Lord is put on the whole armor of God as you pray because prayer is warfare. You know, all of the artillery of hell will come against you when you pray, isn’t that true? I mean, the dog will bark, the beans will burn, the baby will cry, the doorbell will ring, you will get sleepy, ah, your mind will go wandering, so you have to put on the whole armor of God when you pray.

### **I. If You Are By Yourself, Pray Out Loud**

If you are by yourself, pray out loud. There's something about praying out loud, vocalizing your prayer, that keeps your mind from wandering. Pray out loud when you pray if you're in private. I don't think it's a good idea to pray out loud if you're in a crowd. Somebody will think you're talking to yourself and lost your mind.

### **J. Pray About the Thing That Is Really on Your Mind**

Now, speaking of your mind, here's the tenth thing. If your mind is like my mind, your mind wants to run away when you pray. Sometimes it's hard to stay focused until you really break through, isn't that not true? And thoughts come to you and you will begin to pray. And when you begin to pray, you'll begin to think, *Well, I need to do thus and such a thing*. Well, here's a secret I read somewhere and I put it into practice and it works wonderful. If the thing that draws your attention away from your prayer is that important, evidently that is what is really on your mind, so pray about it. You see what I'm talking about? If, for example, I get down to pray and the Lord says, "You've got a sermon to prepare." Well, and I've been praying for the sick. I say, "Well now, wait a minute. I'll just pray for that sermon right now." And I pray about that and get that done, and then that thing that's gnawing at my mind and pulling my mind away becomes the very focal point of my prayer. And, evidently, that's the thing that's in my sub-conscious, and that's the thing that I really desire. "What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe, that you'll receive them, and ye shall have them."

So those are some things that will help you as you pray, I hope, very practical things to pray as you pray, ah, to pray, ah, hopefully, effectively, as you pray.

## **II. The Confidence**

Now here's a second thing I want you to see. I've talked to you about the command to pray. God says in verse 3, "Call upon me." Now with the command I want you to notice the confidence that comes with that command. Here's God's promise: Listen to it. "Call upon me, and I will answer thee..." Now either that is true or it is not true. Which is it? It's true. It's true. It is true. God, Almighty God, has said, "...I will answer thee..." Now that's confidence. Whether you understand it or not, it is truth. God does answer. And He doesn't send someone else. He says, "...I will answer thee..."

Suppose you sent a request to Washington, complained about something, your doorbell rang, and there was the President on your doorstep. Said, "I came to answer your request." I mean, he, the President came. God Himself says, "I'm the one who's going to answer you. I personally am going to answer you." Now when God answers, He may do it one of four ways.

#### **A. The Answer May Be Specifically Delivered**

That answer may be specifically delivered. I, like you, have asked God for things and I have received the answer so instantaneously, so miraculously, so factually and real that no one can convince me that it was mere happenstance or coincidence (amen). I think all of us have prayed, those of us who've been on the trail very long, we have prayed and the answer has been specifically delivered.

#### **B. The Answer May Be Strategically Delayed**

But sometimes the answer may be strategically delayed. God does not always answer immediately. That doesn't mean He's not going to answer. "Therefore, will the Lord wait, that He may be gracious unto you." And with God, timing is more important than time. So it may be strategically delayed.

#### **C. The Answer May Be Significantly Different**

Sometimes the answer may be significantly different. You may ask God for one thing and He gives you something better. The apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians chapter 12 had a thorn in the flesh that he asked God to remove, and God didn't remove it. But God answered his prayer not by giving Paul what he asked for, but for giving Paul something better than he asked for. What was better than the removal of the thorn? The added grace. And so, sometimes we ask and, ah, "We don't know what to ask as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered."

#### **D. The Answer May Be Sovereignly Denied**

And sometimes the answer may be sovereignly denied. You ask God, and He says, "No, I'm not going to answer that prayer, not because your heart is wrong. You've just asked for something wrong." And God loves you too much to give you something that will hurt you.

Now I think all of us have thanked God for answered prayer. I tell you what I have done. I have really done this. I have thanked God for unanswered prayer. Have you? You ought have to (amen). Mrs. Billy Graham said, "I thank God for unanswered prayer." Said, "If God had answered my prayer every time I asked, I would have married the wrong man five times." You know, just, we, we're praying for things. We say, "Lord, this is what I want. Do this or do that." And God says, "You don't know what you're asking. You don't know what you're asking." I can think of some prophets in the Bible asked God to kill them. Moses asked God to kill him. Elijah asked God to kill him. Jonah asked God to kill him. We'd be in the soup if God always answered our prayers. I mean, answered yes. The answer may be no. But God says, "Call upon me, and I will answer thee..."



### III. The Conquest

Now here's the third and final thing. The command, the confidence, the conquest. Listen to it. "Call upon me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not." You see, God has revealed Himself as a God who is able to do anything that He wishes.

Look again in chapter 32, verse 17: "Ah Lord GOD! Behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and outstretched arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee:" Look again in verse 27. God gives His credentials. "Behold..." This is 32:27: "Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: Is there anything too hard for me? I'm the LORD. I can do whatever I want."

I have people today who have difficulty with miracles. How can you have difficulty with miracles if you believe in creation? If, if you can get past Genesis 1:1, you're home free (laughter). People talk about the laws of nature. There are no laws of nature. They're God's laws that nature obeys (amen). God doesn't obey nature's laws. Nature obeys God's laws (amen). It's God who made those laws. It's God who made the whole thing. And God who made it can do with it as He wishes. Don't let anybody tell you that the age of miracles has passed. Genesis 18, verse 14 asks the question again. "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" The problem is not with God and His ability. You might put in your margin Matthew chapter 17, verses 19 through 21: "Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out?" Here was a demon-possessed boy. And the disciples had gone through their incantations and their contortions and their pleading and their cries and their shouting, and the demon didn't budge. "And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, that 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 to you." Nothing!

It's God who made those laws. It's God who made the whole thing. And God who made it can do with it as He wishes. Don't let anybody tell you that the age of miracles has passed. Genesis 18, verse 14 asks the question again. "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" The problem is not with God and His ability. You might put in your margin Matthew chapter 17, verses 19 through 21: "Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out?" Here was a demon-possessed boy. And the disciples had gone through their incantations and their, ah, contortions and, ah, their pleadings and their cries and their shouting, and the demon didn't budge. "And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, that 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 to you." Nothing! "Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." Now Jesus said, "The reason for My,

ah, Father's failure to answer is not because of His inability, but because of your unbelief" (cough). Jesus said, "If you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you can say to a mountain, 'Skip away.'" And the least amount of faith is greater than the greatest amount of difficulty.

Well, God says to Jeremiah, "Call upon me. I'll show you great and mighty things that you don't even know about." I think the idea is this is something you've never seen and something you cannot conceive. When I read that, the verse that came to me is a verse, I think, that would be a favorite of many of us. Ephesians chapter 3, verse 17, or verses, ah, 20 through 21. Ephesians 3, verses 20 through 21, where Paul, thinking of the greatest of our Lord, gives this peon of praise when he says, "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us. Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end, amen."

*There's no prayer too hard for God to answer. There is no problem too big for God to solve. There is no person too lost for God to save. There is no promise too difficult for God to keep.* "Call upon me.... and I will show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not." Well, you say, "If I ask God for something outside of His will, will He hear me?" Of course not! "This is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask him anything according to his will, he heareth us." It has wisely been said *that nothing lies outside the reach of prayer, except that which lies outside the will of God.* Now you don't want anything that's not God's will for you, do you? You see, God's will is not something you have to do; it's something you get to do. God's will is what you'd want for yourself if you had enough sense to want it. God loves you. The only thing that lies outside the reach of prayer, ah, the only thing that, it is that which lies outside the will of God. But there is no problem too big, no promise too difficult, no person too lost. There's nothing that God cannot do.

And, actually, when you look at this passage of Scripture, where God says, "Call upon me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things...." it's really in the context of national problems. Don't you have a sense, an ominous sense, about history right now? Now don't you have kind of a, an uneasy feeling about everything that's happening in the world today?

Well, God had been telling Jeremiah, "Hey, Jeremiah, everything's in control. Now there's Babylon. Ha, there's the captivity. All of these things are going to happen." And in chapter 32, beginning in verse 36 and going on through verse 40, He just tells Jeremiah what's going to happen. He begins to talk about His plan for Israel. He talks about the Babylonian captivity. Then He talks about their coming back to the land. Then He talks about the coming kingdom of Christ. And then He tells Jeremiah to pray.

In prayer, we unite with God in regulating the nations and operating the universe. I

don't, I don't understand it all. God prophesies what He's going to do, and nothing that we do can stop it. And yet, we're told to pray for His kingdom to come. We know it will come, yet we're told to pray. We knew there was going to be a captivity and a return and the coming kingdom of Christ, and yet we're told to pray.

## Conclusion

I was, this afternoon, when I was thinking about prayer, and I was thinking what a, what a weapon prayer is in a time of national calamity or in any kind of calamity. I, ah, I've been preparing a message on Babylon. And I got to thinking about Hussein. By the way, he, you know, he was, they had an election Sunday. One person was on the ballot, Hussein. You had your choice—vote for me or die. So I was thinking about this guy, Saddam Hussein. And I was thinking about his missiles. You know, he's rebuilding his missiles now and he's dabbling in chemical warfare again, and he's moving heaven and earth to build a bomb like was dropped on Hiroshima.

I thought about our missile. The one we have can be fired from any spot. It travels undetected. It travels at the speed of thought. It hits the target every time. And it can have a delayed detonation. Jesus prayed in John chapter 17 for me. He said, "Not only do I pray for these that believe on me now, that you give me, but I pray for them that will believe on me through their word." He might as well put my name in there (amen). You can begin to pray now if you've got little babies in your home for the people they're going to marry. Pray a prayer for delayed detonation. And it, it hits the target. And, and you can pray with delayed detonation. And here's the best thing: Satan has no defense against your missile. There is no anti-prayer missile. "Call upon me in a time of trouble, a time of calamity, and I will hear you." Folks, I didn't make that promise. God said it. Jeremiah 33, verse 3: "Call upon me, call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, things that you don't even know about, things – they're exceeding abundantly above all that we can even ask or think."

Let's bow in prayer. Heads are bowed. Would you do what I'm doing in my heart right now? Would you pray, "Lord, teach me to pray?" Not, "Lord, teach me how to pray," but "teach me to pray, to pray." We need to pray. I want you to pray for me, that my prayer will be more strategic. I don't want to be a hypocrite about prayer and ask you to do something that I don't do. And let's together deepen our prayer life and sharpen our focus. These are desperate days, and God's people need to pray. "Help us to pray, dear Lord. In Jesus' name, amen."

Now look up here. The way to pray is to be able to say, "Father, Father, our Father." And God can't be your Father until you're saved and born into His family. You get into God's family by being born into it. The Bible calls it being born again. When you receive Christ as your Lord and Savior and Master, that moment that He becomes your elder

Brother, your Savior, your Mediator between God the man and God the Father. When you receive Him, you're born into God's family, and you can pray in Jesus' name. You can call in the name of Jesus. He said, "If you ask anything in my name, I'll do it." You can't ask in His name until you receive Him as your Lord and Savior. Now if you're not saved, you need to get saved tonight. If you're not certain that you're saved, you need to get certain tonight. And should there be someone in this building tonight that doesn't know Christ, or you're not absolutely certain if you died right now you'd go to heaven, when we sing an invitational hymn, I'm going to ask the ministers to stand at the head of each of these aisles. And I'm going to ask you to do something very wonderful. I'm going to ask you to leave your seat and come forward and tell that minister, "I need to be saved, "or, "I'm trusting Jesus." Put it in your own words. I think he'll know why you're coming. What we want to do is give you some Scripture, answer any questions, and seal your decision in prayer, and you can go home tonight, if you will receive the Lord Jesus, saved, and on your way to heaven, and as saved as anyone on this platform, as saved as the apostle Paul if you'll trust Christ tonight by faith. For the Bible says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Believe He is the Son of God. Believe that He paid your sin debt with His blood on the cross. Believe that God raised Him from the dead. Believe that He can save you and will save you if you'll trust Him. And when you do, every sin will be forgiven, Christ will dwell in you, and heaven will be your home.

Now there are some others here tonight, and you may need a church home. If you believe as we believe, and you know you're saved, and you want to place your membership here, I invite you to come when these others are coming. And I want you to tell the minister that you want to place your membership here. Just say, "I want to place my membership here," and he'll tell you how may become a member of Bellevue Baptist Church.

If you need somebody just to pray with you tonight, you've got a burden, a heartache, you need special prayer, you come also. Let's stand together as we sing.