

ADRIAN ROGERS

LEGACY

C O L L E C T I O N



GENESIS

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

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How to Have a True Foundation

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: October 6, 1996

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 1:1

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”

GENESIS 1:1

Outline

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- I. A God Who Is Simply Presented
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- III. A God Who Is Surely Purposeful
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Conclusion

- A. We Have a Solemn Obligation to God
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Introduction

Thus far we've been just kind of circling the woods a little bit, but now we're going to begin to start at the beginning place and build outward to try to tell you how we can have a firm, a full, a true foundation to face this world in which we live. There's no better place to start than in the starting place, which is the most read verse in all of the Bible. Now the most loved verse in all of the Bible is John 3:16. But the most read verse in all of the Bible is Genesis 1:1. More people have read that than any other verse because more people at some time or another have said, "Let's see what this book is about," and they start at the starting place. That's a good place for us to start, so I want you to open your Bibles tonight as we're talking about a Christian worldview. And we're going to start tonight at the starting place, and then we're going to build out from there.

The starting place is Genesis 1 and verse 1: "*In the beginning...*"—in the starting place—"*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.*" (Genesis 1:1) This is foundational truth. Now if you want to understand truth, you've got to enter into the temple of truth. And in the temple of truth the key is on the front door. It is Genesis 1:1. And very frankly, folks, when we come to Genesis 1:1, we come with a teacup to an

ocean of truth. We do not have the ability, nor the time, nor the insight, to exhaust this one verse, the truth of this one verse.

But there are four thoughts about God that I want to give you that come out of this one verse that will be foundational. And we're going to come back to the early verses of Genesis, and we're going to talk about what the Bible has to say about humanism, what the Bible has to say about New Ageism, what the Bible has to say about evolution, what the Bible has to say about the family, what the Bible has to say about homosexuality, what the Bible has to say about animal rights, what the Bible has to say about feminism—it's all going to come right out of the book of Genesis, and it's going to begin and come back to this one verse: *"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."* (Genesis 1:1)

I. A God Who Is Simply Presented

Now in all philosophy, really, there's only one great question: Did God make man, or did man make God? And everything else just flows out of that according to the answer to that one particular verse. Now God made man. And what you see here in this one verse, first of all, is a God who is simply presented. Write that down: "A God who is simply presented." God is not argued. God is not explained. God is not defended. God is just simply presented. *"In the beginning God..."* (Genesis 1:1) Now it might surprise you to know that the Bible writers never tried to prove the existence of God. If you try to prove the existence of God, you're going to do something that the writers of the Bible never attempted to do. And the Bible has all that you and I need for faith. It is full and it is complete. And there is no explanation in the Bible for the existence of God. God is simply presented. And God must be accepted by faith.

Now if you live very long, a skeptic will come to you, and a skeptic will throw this challenge down to you: "Prove there is a God." Don't endeavor to do it. Do not endeavor to do it. You'll be endeavoring to do something the Bible does not endeavor to do. And you just simply say to that skeptic, "I cannot prove to you that God exists." And when you say that, he will smile and act like he's won a victory, but he has not. You say to him, "Now prove God does not exist." And he can no more prove that God does not exist than you can prove that God does exist. You see, we are finite. God is infinite. And the finite can never prove nor disprove the existence of the infinite. And so the scientists have moved heaven and earth trying to prove how the world and the universe came into existence. But science can't do that, because science is limited to the study of phenomena and processes that are now existing. The scientist has to have those things that are now existing to go into his laboratory. And if he doesn't have that, he must remain silent.

That's the reason God threw out this question to Job—and I'd like to throw it out to

every scientist alive today—Job chapter 38 and verse 4: *“Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare if you have understanding.”* (Job 38:4) What He’s saying is, “You weren’t around when I did it, and so there’s no way that you can examine it.” Now, you see, folks, we must learn this, that we are not the only ones who are believers. Everybody, all almost six billion people who live on the face of the earth, are believers—everyone. Some believe in God, and some don’t believe in God. But all are believers. We believe there is a God. They believe there is no God. We accept by faith there is a God. They must accept by faith there is no God. They can no more prove that God does not exist than we can prove that God does exist.

Now when I said we don’t have proof, I didn’t mean that we don’t have evidence. There’s incredible evidence. I mean, if you have a creation, common sense tells you you must have a Creator. As we’ve said before, “Nothing plus nobody equals everything” is the creed of the atheists. I mean, it’s pretty stupid, really. Excuse me. I’m not supposed to say that. It’s pretty non-intelligent.

Now, you know, to look for scientific proof of God would be like taking a piano apart looking for a song. God is not subject to scientific proof. Now whether you believe in God or not is not a matter, therefore, of intellectualism. It’s not a matter of the mind. It’s a matter of the heart. The Bible says, in Psalm 53, verse 1, *“The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.”* (Psalms 14:1; Psalms 53:1) Now when the Bible uses the word *fool*, it does not mean the man who is mentally deficient; it means the man who is morally deficient. The word *nabal*, or *fool*, does not deal with the intellect. It deals with integrity; it deals with morality. And what God is saying is that a man with a wicked heart is the kind of a man who denies God.

And how did they get to be fools? Well, the Bible tells us, in Romans 1, verse 22, *“Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.”* (Romans 1:22) And they must maneuver themselves into not believing in God. Romans 1, verse 28, says, *“And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind.”* (Romans 1:28) And so when the Bible says, “The fool has said in his heart there is no God,” (Psalms 14:1; Psalms 53:1) what it literally means is, “The fool says, ‘No God for me.’” It doesn’t literally say, “The fool has said in his heart there is no God,” but it literally says, “The fool has said in his heart, ‘No God,’” just like you might go through the cafeteria line and say, “No dessert.” And the fool says, “No God. I do not want God.” But when he refuses God, and when he says there is no God, something inside tells him that he is lying, and he knows that he’s lying.

I told you before of a trucking firm whose headquarters is in Atlanta, Georgia. And that trucking firm gives a test to all of the prospective employees. It is a lie detector test. And one question on that lie detector test is this: Do you believe in God? And not everybody said they did. There were some who said they did not believe in God. But

everyone who said they did not believe in God, the lie detector said, he's lying—he's lying—everyone—because down in the human heart there is that residual thing that the Bible says, "*God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith,*" (Romans 12:3) and Christ is that light that "*lighteth every man that cometh into the world.*" (John 1:9)

So "*in the beginning God,*" He is just simply presented—a God who is simply presented. Don't get into the difficulty of trying to prove that God exists. You can give evidences for God, but the proof that God exists is beyond you. But God does exist, and He is a God who is simply presented.

II. A God Who Is Sovereignly Powerful

Now here's the second thing I want you to learn about this God. He is a God who is sovereignly powerful. Look again at this verse: "*In the beginning God*"—did what? He—"*created.*" (Genesis 1:1) He created. His mighty power, Paul says, in Romans, is seen through the creation. (Romans 1:20) Only God has creative power. Only God has originating power. The Hebrew word for create is *bara*, and it's used about fifty times, and it means "to make something out of absolute nothing."

Turn to Romans chapter 4 for a moment, and let me point that out again. In Romans 4, you're going to see it, and then we're going to look at Hebrews 11. Look in Romans 4 and verse 17—Paul is talking about the faith of Abraham: "*(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.*" (Romans 4:17) What that simply means is, God is the only One who can make something out of nothing.

And then turn to the book of Hebrews, if you will, and look with me in Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 3. There again we have the same idea that God makes something out of nothing: "*Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.*" (Hebrews 11:3) That is, God is the One who makes something out of nothing, the only One who can. Man cannot create anything, and man cannot destroy anything. All man can do is to change the form.

People talk about the laws of nature. There are no laws of nature. There are God's laws that nature obeys. Science simply discovers those laws. Science does not create those laws any more than Columbus created North America because he discovered it. You see, in the beginning, God made something of nothing.

An eloquent black preacher said—and I quote—"God stepped from behind the curtain of nowhere and stood upon the platform of nothing and spoke a world into existence." I like that. You see the handiwork of God in what He made. A tiny cell, one cell, just one cell in the human body, is so incredibly wonderful—just one cell. And there

are 100 trillion cells or more in your body.

Paul Doty of Harvard University said that one human cell, just one of them, is more complicated in its existence than all of New York City. I hope in a lot better shape, if it's your cell. But just take that one cell—more complicated than that megalopolis, and there are 100 trillion of them in your body! Much smaller than the cell is the atom. A billion hydrogen atoms put side by side are not as thick as the page of this Bible that I have. The atom is so small, and it's mostly space.

I read not so long ago, if you were to take all of the emptiness out of everything, squeeze all of the nothing out of it, you could put the entire earth and its remains in a two-gallon bucket. It's incredible. You think of the smallness, the intricacy of what God made. God made it out of nothing.

And then think of the incredible size of the universe. Light travels at the rate of 186,282 miles per second. That's how fast it travels. It travels so fast they can't measure it in miles; they measure it in years—light-years. Traveling at that speed, it passes the moon in two seconds. *Bang, bang*, it's past the moon. It takes it, folks, four years to reach the nearest star. That's four light-years away, four and a half light-years away, and yet light, traveling from earth, would not reach the edge of our known universe for ten billion light-years, traveling at 186,282 miles per second.

Who made all of that? How did it happen? By chance? No. God did it. *"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."*

If you see a watch, I hope you assume there's a watchmaker. If you see a water system, I hope you assume that somebody designed it. If you see a building, I hope you assume an architect. And if you see the precise atomic clocks of the universe, I hope you don't believe that happened by chance. If you see the hydrologic cycle in nature, I hope you don't believe that happened by chance. If you see the complex structure of your body, or any human body, or any organism that God has made, I hope you don't believe that that happened by chance.

The evolutionists believe that billions of years, plus time, plus chance, can turn frogs into princes. In school, they call that fairy tales. In the laboratory, they call it science. Man cannot create. All man can do is to change things. He can take simpler forms and put them into more complex forms, or vice versa, but he cannot create. So what you have in Genesis 1:1 is a God who is simply presented. He is not argued; He's just presented. *"In the beginning God..."* (Genesis 1:1)

Then you have a God who is sovereignly powerful, the God who does what He alone can do and that is to create. When we get to evolution, one of the questions I want all the kids to ask their teacher when they get to school: Where did all this primordial ooze come from? I mean, regardless, if they say, "Well, you know, there was green scum somewhere," where did the green scum come from? They say, "Life came from Mars."

Well, where did Mars come from? Where did it come from? You're cast on two alternatives: a self-existing universe or a self-existing God. And it's much easier to believe, unless you're a materialist, that God created the heavens and the earth.

III. A God Who Is Surely Purposeful

Here's the third thing I want you to learn about God. Now this is foundational. A God who is simply presented—not argued, presented. A God who is sovereignly powerful—the God who made it all, He is the creative God. The third thing: a God who is surely purposeful. Why did He do it? Well, when you look at creation, there are two things you can see in creation very easily. One is design, and the other is purpose.

Now, let me give you three reasons why God did it:

A. God Made Everything for His Pleasure

First of all, God created everything just for His pleasure. He's God, and He can do whatever He wishes. And the Bible says, in Revelation chapter 4, verse 11, speaking to the Lord Jesus Christ, who was God's agent in creation, *"Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."* (Revelation 4:11) He did it to please Himself. He created it for His pleasure.

B. God Made Everything for His Praise

The second reason He created it is for His praise. Put these scriptures down. Romans 11, verse 36: *"For of him,"*—speaking of God—*"and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever."* (Romans 11:36) Psalm 150, verse 6, says, *"Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD."* (Psalms 150:6) Everything that God created is a grand paeon in a crescendo of praise. The trees are to lift their branches and say, "Praise the Lord!" The flowers are to unfold their petals and say, "Praise the Lord!" The birds, as they spread their wings, are to praise the Lord. The stars that nestle in the bosom of the sky are to say, "Praise the Lord!" As Niagara Falls rolls and rolls and rolls, it is to say, "Praise the Lord!" God created it all for His pleasure and for His praise.

C. God Made Everything for His People

The third reason that God made it all is for His people, so you and I would have a place to live, because God was going to create a race, and God had to have a place for them to stand and sleep and eat and work. So He made it for us—a home. And when God made it, God stepped back and said that it was good.

And let me say that all of God's creation is good. Don't you ever become an ascetic; don't you ever think that material things are bad. Don't ever think for one moment that this earth and materialism is bad. It is not bad. Materialism is bad if it becomes your God. But to love the world that God made is not bad. God created it, and God said, "It is

good.” And God put Adam and Eve in a garden, and God said to them, “Help yourself.” *“Of every tree in the garden thou mayest freely eat.”* (Genesis 2:16) And the devil wants you to think negatively about God’s creation, as if God doesn’t love you. But God does love you.

Put these verses down, speaking of creation for His people. Psalm 37, verse 4: *“Delight thyself also in the LORD: and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.”* (Psalms 37:4) Psalm 84, verse 11: *“For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.”* (Psalms 84:11) *First Timothy chapter 6, verse 17: “Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.”* (1 Timothy 6:17) Why did God make strawberries? For us—for us. I mean He is a good God. Why did God create this world? *“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”* (Genesis 1:1) Why? For His pleasure, for His praise, and for His people.

IV. A God Who Is Savingly Personal

Now here’s the fourth thing I want us to learn about God tonight. Not only is this God a God who is simply presented, and not only is this God a God who is sovereignly powerful, and not only is this God a God who is surely purposeful, but this is a God who is savingly personal. Now He is savingly personal. Look, if you will, in this verse again: *“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”* Now the name for God here is the name *Elohim*, and it speaks of a personal God. We’re going to talk with you about that for a moment. The word *EI* means a God who has unlimited power. It’s the word that speaks of strength. So He is *EI*. And then the last part of that word *Elohim*, *alah*, comes from a word which means “to swear,” or “to make a covenant.” Put those two words together—*strength* and *covenant*—and what you have is a God who is Almighty and who always keeps His word. Now, think about it. In the beginning, Elohim—the One who is Almighty and who always keeps His word—created the heavens and the earth. (Genesis 1:1) That means He is savingly personal.

Now a few years ago, a movie came out called *Star Wars*. I have not seen that movie unless I’ve caught part of it on television. I don’t normally go to the movie houses, as such. I don’t think I’ve seen the movie. But I think I’ve read enough about it to know that that movie, in some way, gives a tacit recognition of a supreme being, but the supreme being in that movie is called “the Force.” You see, that’s impersonal. But in the Bible, God is not “the Force”; God is a person who has intelligence, emotion, and will.

Now we’re going to be talking about a Christian worldview. And Genesis 1:1 decimates every other worldview except the biblical worldview. For example, one worldview that some people have is atheism: There is no God. Well, you can’t believe in

Genesis 1:1 and believe that. Another worldview is polytheism: many gods. But you can't believe Genesis 1:1 and believe that. Another worldview is fatalism—that everything is just going to happen; there's nothing we can do about it. You can't believe Genesis 1:1 and believe that, because here is a loving God, who is all-powerful and always keeps His word. Another worldview is pantheism—that is, that the universe and God are the same, that everything is God. And pantheism, of course, as we're going to see, comes out of Hinduism. They believe that God is in everything, and everything is God. And so you're God, and I'm God, and the animals are God. This is the basis of New Ageism that we're going to talk about—that everybody is God, we're becoming God, and it's all wrapped up in reincarnation, and all of that. And so everything is God.

Well, don't feel too good about that if you believe in pantheism. That doesn't elevate you; that degrades you, because if everything is God, then dirt is God, and God is dirt, and you are God, and you are dirt. I mean, think about it. You see, this does away with atheism. It does away with polytheism. It does away with fatalism. It does away with pantheism. It does away with materialism. The materialist says that the universe has always existed. Carl Sagan believes that. That's much more difficult to believe than Genesis 1:1, *"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."* (Genesis 1:1) Materialism is the eternity of matter.

And so we have a God in this book who is simply presented. He is the God with whom nothing is impossible (Matthew 19:26; Mark 10:27) and who always keeps His word. But we have another word that describes this God who is savingly personal. It is the word *Elohim*, which is a plural noun. It's plural. So what it literally says is, "In the beginning Gods created the heaven and the earth." (Genesis 1:1) You say, "Well now, wait a minute, Pastor. I thought you said there's only one God." There is. But look, if you will, in verse 26: *"And God said, Let us make man in our image, and after our likeness."* (Genesis 1:26) One God who presents Himself in three persons—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. God reveals Himself in the opening verse of the Bible as a triune God.

Now, folks, *we have a God who is simply presented; we should recognize Him. We have a God who is sovereignly powerful; we should respect Him. We have a God who is surely purposeful; we should reverence Him. We have a God who is savingly personal; we should receive Him.* All of that is right here in Genesis 1:1: *"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."* (Genesis 1:1)

Conclusion

Now since Genesis 1:1 is there, and it is foundational, I want to leave you with two basic thoughts, two basic truths to live by.

A. **We Have a Solemn Obligation to God**

Truth number one: We have a solemn obligation to God because He created us. The Bible says, in Isaiah 45, verse 9, *“Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker!”* (Isaiah 45:9) Ecclesiastes 12, verse 1, says, *“Remember now thy Creator.”* (Ecclesiastes 12:1) We have an obligation to God. We are His, and twice His. Isaiah 43, verse 1: *“But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name.”* (Isaiah 43:1) We are His because of creation and because of redemption. He made us, and He bought us, and we have an obligation to Him. *“Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker!”* (Isaiah 45:9) That’s the first thought I want to leave you with tonight.

B. **God Has an Obligation to Us**

Here’s the second thought I want to leave you with tonight. Not only do we have an obligation to God, but folks, God has an obligation to us. Now I’m not being smart-mouthed when I say that. The Bible calls Him, in 1 Peter 4 and verse 19, *“a faithful Creator.”* (1 Peter 4:19) Now, what does that mean? It means that God did not make us to abandon us. You know, one of the worst things that a man can do is to father a child and abandon that child. Do you know that?

Folks, I want to tell you, when God brought us into this universe, God did not make us to abandon us. When God made the first creation, and He stepped back, and when it was finished, God said, *“It’s good.”* But then sin came into the world; it was not good anymore. But then the Lord Jesus Christ came and died on this cross to pay for our sin. And when He had finished, again He said, *“It is finished.”* (John 19:30)—*“it is done.”* And now there is a new creation for all who will believe. And so, when you give your heart to God, when you trust Him as your Lord and Savior, when you receive Christ, when the Holy Spirit comes into you, you are fulfilling your obligation to Him. You’re saying, *“You made me. You redeemed me. I surrender to you.”*

Then when He comes into you to guard you, guide you, protect you, and take care of you, He fulfills His obligation to you. And I want to tell you that the God who made you, the God who created you, did not create you to abandon you. Now we’re going to take Genesis 1:1 and the rest of these other chapters of Genesis, and we’re going to see how these truths impinge upon all of these lies that are in the world today.

Let’s bow our heads in prayer. Our heads and eyes are closed. I think of that song that says,

*It took a miracle to put the stars in place;
It took a miracle to hang the world in space.
But when He saved my soul,
Cleansed and made me whole,*

It took a miracle of love and grace!

—JOHN W. PETERSON

Would you like that miracle tonight? Then pray and ask Christ to come into your heart. Pray like this: “Lord, I believe that you created me, and I believe you sent the Lord Jesus to die for me, to redeem me. And I have an obligation to give to you my heart, my life, my all, and I do it right now.”

The God of Creation

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: January 4, 1981

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 1:1

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”

GENESIS 1:1

Outline

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Introduction

I want you to turn now to Genesis chapter 1 and verse 1. That ought to be easy enough to find—Genesis chapter 1 and verse 1: *“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth”*—*“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”* (Genesis 1:1) I believe this verse has been read more than any piece of literature in all of history, the verse we’ve just read. How many people have started out to read the Bible through and have never read it through, but at least they got as far as Genesis 1:1: *“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth”*? And they do quite well until they get to the *begats*: “and So-and-so begat So-and-so, and So-and-so begat So-and-so.” And it reads like a Hebrew telephone directory, and the names that they cannot even pronounce, and they drop out. But I believe so many people have read Genesis 1:1: *“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”* And it is a wonderful verse, and never will we even begin to exhaust the truths in this verse as we bring our little teacup minds to this great ocean of truth that is found in Genesis 1:1. But you must understand at least part of it—some of it—and you must believe all of it, because it is so foundational.

You will never really comprehend anything else in the Bible unless you understand Genesis 1:1: *“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”* This is foundational truth; it is functional truth—you must believe it. You see, the key to the rest of the Bible is hung right here by the front door: *“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”* (Genesis 1:1) And so we are going to be thinking today on this subject: “The God of Creation”—“The God of Creation.” And there are four things I want us to learn about the God of creation. These, of course, are not the only four things we could say about God—how could we ever talk to you about all there is to say about God?—but four things I’ve chosen that stand out today that I want you to see as we begin this series of messages on the book of Genesis. *“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”* (Genesis 1:1)

I. The God Who Is Presented

The first thing I want you to see about the God of all creation is that He is the God who is presented—He is the God who is presented. Now, why did I choose that word *presented*? Because God is. The fact of God is not argued here, and the nature and being of God is not explained; He’s just presented. *“In the beginning God...”* (Genesis 1:1) No philosophy about it, no argument about it, no apology for it, no explanation of it, just, *“In the beginning God...”* (Genesis 1:1)

Now, let me tell you something, friend. The Bible writers never tried to explain the existence of God, nor should you—nor should you. You’re very foolish if you try to prove God. Now, as you know, people always talk about the proofs for God. There are none. There are no proofs for God. Now, don’t let that shock you. The finite can never prove the infinite, you see? The Bible writers never tried to prove God. The Bible writers present God. God doesn’t need any proof. You’re incapable of proving God. Can a man by reasoning find out God? Sometimes an atheist will swagger up to a believer, and he will say, “Prove there is a God.” That never threatens me. I just smile and say, “Prove there is no God.”

You see, the finite mind can never prove nor disprove the infinite God. He does not lie in the realm of proof. To try to prove God by looking through physical, material things would be like tearing that piano apart trying to find the “Hallelujah Chorus.” You don’t, dear friend, prove God, and you don’t disprove God. You see, you believe in God. Sometimes it’s leveled against us Christians as though it’s an accusation, “Oh, you just accept by faith there’s a God.” That’s right. And let me tell you what the unbeliever does. He accepts by faith that there is no God. He does not know there is no God. He has never proven there is no God. He accepts by faith there is no God. All men are believers. I choose to believe in God. The atheist chooses not to believe in God. It’s not that he’s an unbeliever because he has intellectual superiority.

Some of the finest minds this world has ever known have been given to the gospel of Christ. Some of them are teaching right over here at Mid-America Seminary. These men are scintillatingly brilliant who are teaching over here, who have all of the degrees, all of the accoutrements, who could be in any discipline whatever—fine, brilliant minds. They believe in God. You show me a brilliant man who doesn't believe in God; I'll show you a brilliant man who does. You show me a stupid man who doesn't believe in God; I'll show you some stupid people who do. Some of us are here. But, we believe in God. It's not a matter of intellect. It's not a matter of reason; it's beyond reason. It's not that these things are unreasonable; they are above reason. He is the God who is presented. He's not the God who is argued. And if a man doesn't believe in God, it's because he doesn't want to believe in God. He has chosen not to believe in God.

Now there is no explanation of God given in the Bible, no philosophy for God in the Bible. God is just presented: "*In the beginning God...*" (Genesis 1:1) And there's not much said about atheism in the Bible. As far as I can see, one-half of one verse deals with atheism—Psalm 53:1: "*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.*" That's it. "*The fool hath said in his heart...*" (Psalms 53:1) And then God goes on to another subject. And incidentally, this word *fool* is the word *nabal*. And it doesn't deal with a man who is lacking intellectually; it doesn't deal with a man who has rooms to rent upstairs unfurnished. That's not what it's dealing with. The word *nabal* here means the morally perverse person, not the man who has intellectual difficulties, but the man who has moral difficulties.

Notice what it says. It says, "*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.*" (Psalms 53:1) It doesn't say that the fool has intellectual difficulties. The problem with a man who doesn't believe in God is his heart and not his head. It is not that he cannot believe; it is that he will not believe, and he doesn't wish to believe. And incidentally, this verse in Psalm 53 literally says, "The fool hath said in his heart, 'No God.'"

Now you say, "What's the difference between 'There is no God' and 'No God'?" Well, here's the difference. For example, we're finished with the holidays for a while, and most of us, like your pastor, have determined they are going to lose at least ten pounds. All right now, when somebody serves us a meal, and after we finish the meal, they say, "Would you like some pie?" And you say, "No pie." That doesn't mean there is no pie. You just mean, "No pie for me; I don't want any." You really want some, but you say, "No pie." All right, so no pie.

Now this is what the fool is saying. That's literally what this verse is saying: "The fool has said in his heart, 'No God.'" That is, "I don't want any, thank you." That's what he's saying. You see, that is, "No God for me." In his heart of hearts, he knows better. Evolution and atheism and all of that is a bias against God. It is not because a man has reasonably, logically figured it out. All of that is really not logical.

The atheist, do you know what he believes? That nothing times nobody equals everything. That's not even logical, is it? Of course not! You see, it's not that he has figured it out. It's not that he's forced upon it by logic. He does not want the idea of God. "The fool hath said in his heart, 'No God.'" (Psalms 53:1) God is not argued in the Bible; God is presented in the Bible. He is the God who is presented. "*In the beginning God...*" (Genesis 1:1) And the reason that people don't believe in God is found in 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.*" (Romans 1:28) They did not like to retain God in their knowledge. The idea of God gives them an uneasy feeling, so they think that if they can get rid of the idea of God, they can get rid of that uneasy feeling. But they never really get rid of it.

You know, a man never really gets rid of this uneasy feeling of not having God in his heart. He's like a man who bought a new boomerang and killed himself trying to throw the old one away. It just keeps coming back and coming back and coming back.

"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." (Psalms 53:1) They don't like to retain the knowledge of God in their mind. And you find in Genesis 1:1 that He is, number one, the God who is presented, not argued, not philosophized, not explained, not apologized for. Just here it is, folks: "*In the beginning God...*" (Genesis 1:1)

II. The God Who Is Powerful

All right now, the second thing I want you to notice about the God of all creation: Not only is He the God who is presented, but He is also the God who is powerful, because it says, "*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.*" (Genesis 1:1) He is the God of all creation. Therefore, He is the God of all power. And the word for *created* here is the Hebrew word *bara*. It's used about fifty times in the Bible, and it always speaks of something that only God can do—that is, to make something out of nothing.

Now man cannot create. Only God can create. It means "to make something out of nothing." Hebrews 11, verse 3—I like it. It puts it this way: "*Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made [out] of things which do appear.*" (Hebrews 11:3) Anything you make, you make out of something else, right? But the things that we see were not made out of things which do appear. By faith we understand it. The only way you will understand it is by faith. By faith we understand that by the Word of God the worlds were framed. God spoke, and it was so. *Ex nihilo*—out of nothing, God made it all. And that speaks of the mighty, mighty power of God.

I like what an eloquent black preacher had to say about it. He said that God stepped from behind the curtain of nowhere, and stood on the platform of nothing, and spoke a universe into existence. Amen? "*In the beginning*"—"In the beginning God created the

heaven and the earth.” (Genesis 1:1) And as you look—as you look at His creation—my, how amazed we ought to be!

Your body is made up of trillions of cells—100 trillion cells in the human body. And Paul Doty of Harvard University said that every one of those 100 trillion cells is more complicated than New York City. And I hope yours are in a whole lot better shape. More complicated—one of those minute little cells, 100 trillion in every human body, give or take a few. But, you see, the cell, small as it is, is not the smallest unit. Smaller than that is the atom. And the atom is mostly empty space. We think this is hard in substance. But, you know, if you were to take the nothingness out of everybody—the more than four billion people on the face of this globe—if you were to squeeze the emptiness out of it, you could put us all—all four billion plus—in a gallon pail. You see, we’re mostly nothing. You already knew that, didn’t you? The smallness—the smallness—of the atom.

And then you think of the vastness of the universe. Light travels at more than 186,000 miles a second. And if you were to catch a light beam and start traveling, you’d be to the moon in two seconds. Four years, you’d be to the nearest star. But, friend, I want to tell you, traveling at 186,000 miles a second, you would go more than ten billion years before you’d reach the edge of the known universe. And who knows what’s beyond that? The vastness of this mighty universe. And God spoke, and it was so. And God made it all out of nothing.

Now, dear friends, when I say there are no proofs for God, I don’t mean there are no evidences for God. You understand the difference between proof and evidence? I mean, if you see a watch, then you say there must be a watchmaker, right? What about the atomic clock of the universe? You think that just happened? These laws—scientists don’t create these laws; they discover them. They’re no more able to create them than Columbus was able to create North America. He discovered it. You look at the water system in the city of Memphis, Tennessee, you say, “If there’s a water system, there must be an engineer who designed it.” What about the hydrologic cycle in the atmosphere, as God’s processes of hydrology go on? Do you think that just happened? We look at a building like this and the beautiful new buildings we’ve just occupied, and we see these buildings: design and purpose. We say, “There must be an architect.”

Well, what about the human body? *“For I am fearfully and wonderfully made,”* (Psalms 139:14) the psalmist says. Dear friend, as we look around, everywhere we see that He is a God of might and miracle and power. He is a God of power, and we see it in Genesis 1:1. The evolutionist believes it all just happened and that billions of years will turn frogs into princes. I don’t believe it.

You need to learn the difference between making something and creating something. People can make things. When you make something, you take a simple

form and put it into a more complex form.

My wife can make biscuits, but she doesn't create them. Now she does it with creativity, but she does not create biscuits. She just takes already existing materials and puts them together, and therefore she makes and bakes biscuits. She does not create them. You see, to create you have to make something out of nothing, and only God can do that.

I read in the newspaper a while back where the newspaper said, "Scientists Create Life in Laboratory." *Whoopee do!* Let me tell you something, friend. No scientist ever created anything. He can't do it until he starts making something out of nothing.

I used this illustration before, but suppose your father is a master builder—I mean, he's a builder of fine homes—and you watch your father studiously, see what he has done, and then in your father's absence you take your father's building plans, you take your father's tools, you take your father's materials, and you build a chicken coop. And then when you finish that chicken coop, you stand off, stick out your puny chest, and say, "You see that chicken coop? That proves my father doesn't exist."

You see, that's what men do when they come into the laboratory and take God's materials and God's tools and God's methods, and make some lifelike substances, which are not life in the true form of the word. Dear friend, rearranging by genetic engineering that which God has already brought into existence, that's not creation; that's making something. And in many instances, it is distorting something. And I'm fearfully afraid of what mankind is able to do and what mankind will do with his so-called vaunted knowledge and wisdom. But only God has the power to create.

III. The God Who Is Purposeful

So He is the God who is presented. He is the God who is powerful. The third thing I want to say about this great God that's presented in Genesis chapter 1, verse 1: He is the God who is purposeful—He is the God who is purposeful. "*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.*" (Genesis 1:1) He made it all. And why? He had a reason for doing it. He had a purpose for doing it. And we don't have to guess at the reason. We don't have to guess at the purpose. I want to give you three reasons why God made it all. What was His purpose?

A. He Made It for His Pleasure

First of all, He made it for His pleasure. Jot in your margin there Revelation chapter 4 and verse 11: "*Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power:*"—why? Now, listen to it—"*for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.*" (Revelation 4:11) God made it for His pleasure. He made it because He wanted to, and He didn't have to get your opinion. He didn't have to get your permission. As He said to Job, "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the

earth?” (Job 38:4) “I did it because I wanted to.” He is a sovereign God, and He just did it because He wanted to. They were created for His pleasure.

B. He Made It for His Praise

But not only were they created for His pleasure; they were also created—all things—for His praise. Listen to this verse in Romans 11 and verse 36: *“For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever”*—*“For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever.”* (Romans 11:36) Now, what does that mean? It means the same thing that Psalm 150, verse 6, means when it says, *“Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD.”* (Psalms 150:6) Everything that’s created is created to bring glory to Him, for His praise. Therefore the trees lift their leafy arms and say, “Praise God!” And the beautiful flowers lift their petals, and they say, “Praise God!” And the bird on the wing says, “Praise God!” And the mighty oceans heave with their billows and say, “Praise God!” And Niagara rolls and rolls and rolls, and says, “Praise God!” And you, my dear friend, were made to praise Him. And until you praise Him, you’ll never understand what it’s all about.

God made a fish to swim in the sea. God made a bird to sail through the air. But if you take that bird out of the air, and put him in the sea, he’s an unhappy bird. You take that fish out of the sea, and put him in the tree, to say the least, he’s not doing what he was meant to be. He’s an unhappy fish. Dear friend, it is in Him that we were created to live and move and have our being. And until you learn to praise God, you’ll never learn the meaning of life. You were created to praise Him. *“Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD.”* (Psalms 150:6)

C. He Made It for His People

God made these things for His pleasure. God made these things for His praise. And I want to say that God made them for His people—for His people. You know, after God created these things, He would step back and say, “That’s good.” Then He’d make something else, and He’d say, “That’s good.” Then something else: “That’s very good.” And then He saw that man didn’t have a wife, and He said, “It’s not good that man should be alone; I’ll make a helpmeet for him.” And these verses tell us that it is God’s plan that man’s good be effected. You see, God, when He created everything, was creating a home for man to live in, because He had in His mind His supreme creation, which is man. And so He made it not only for His pleasure, and not only for His praise, but He made it for His people. And you see, God made all of this for us. In a very real sense of the word, He gave it to us. And He told us to have dominion, and He told us to enjoy it.

Now I want to tell you what the devil wants to do. The devil wants to get you thinking negatively about God. The devil wants you to get to thinking that God is not a good

God. And I want to say with all of the unction, function, and emotion of my soul—and I pray God that He will etch this into your consciousness this morning—God is a good God—God is a good God. God made it for His glory and for your good—for His praise, but for His people.

I want to give you three verses I want you to jot down, and I want you to keep these in your mind. And I want you to live by them, because it will help you. You see, sin begins with thinking negatively about God, and sin causes us to think negatively about God. Psalm 37, verse 4—the Bible says, “*Delight thyself also in the LORD: and he shall give thee*”—what?—“*the desires of thine heart.*” (Psalms 37:4) Isn’t that great? “*The desires of thine heart.*” (Psalms 37:4) Let me give you another verse—Psalm 84, verse 11: “*The LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.*” (Psalms 84:11) Did you hear that? “*No good thing.*” (Psalms 84:11) If it will make you healthy, happy, holy, wholesome, God says, “Help yourself. I love you. I made it for you.” God loves you. Friend, God wants for you what you’d want for yourself if you had enough sense to want it. God is such a good God. God says, “Help yourself to happiness.” “*The LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.*” (Psalms 84:11) The third verse is 1 Timothy chapter 6, verse 17. It speaks of God “*who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.*” (1 Timothy 6:17) God wants you to enjoy these flowers. God wants you to enjoy the birds, the fish, the fowl. God made it for your good. Sometimes we think, because we’re Christians, we can’t enjoy these things. Don’t ever think that God’s physical, material universe is evil. When God made it, God said, “It is good.” And the same God that made the salt pork made the strawberries, amen? He did.

And God is such a good God. He’s a wonderful God. He is a glorious God. And He is not only a God who is presented, and not only a God who is powerful, but a God who is purposeful. God had a purpose in all of His creation for His pleasure, for His praise, for His people. God flung out the stars, and scooped out the seas, and heaped up the mountains. And God spoke it, and it stood fast.

IV. The God Who Is Personal

Now the fourth and final thing I see about the nature of God—not the only thing, but the only thing we’ll deal with today—is that not only is He the God who is presented, and the God who is powerful, who spoke it and it all came to be, and the God who is purposeful—the God who had a purpose in the grand, glorious design when He made it all—but He is the God who is personal—the God who is personal. Now I haven’t seen *Stars Wars*, but some of you guys and gals have seen *Star Wars*. And I believe that there are a lot of people in *Star Wars* who are talking about “the Force.” Is that it? “The

Force.” Some of you look intelligent. “The Force be with you.” Well, I’m not talking about “the Force” this morning. I want you to understand there’s a difference between “the Force” and the God of the Bible. The God of the Bible is personal.

Now, what do we mean by the fact that He’s personal, that He is a person? Now I don’t mean that He has eyes, ears, and hands, and feet. When the Bible uses those images of God, it is using language that we understand. It is what the theologians call anthropomorphic language—that is, speaking of God as if He had those physical abilities and characteristics, so we can understand it when the Bible speaks of the eyes of the Lord, and the hands of the Lord, and so forth. For God is a spirit—God is a spirit—but He is a person.

What do we mean by a person? That means that God has the characteristics of personhood, which are intelligence, emotion, and will. God is a person. He’s not some impersonal being. You see, this verse tells us, in Genesis 1:1, *“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”* (Genesis 1:1) It literally says, *“In the beginning [Elohim]—“Elohim”—“created the heaven and the earth.”* That’s the Hebrew word for God here—*Elohim*—and it’s a compound word. It comes from two root words—*El*, which speaks of the fact that He is God of might. It’s a word that means “strength and unlimited power”—and the last part of this compound name of this personal God, *alah*, means “to swear or to keep a promise; to keep a covenant.” And put them together, and you know what it means? It is the God in whom nothing is impossible, and who always keeps His word. Isn’t that great? The God in whom nothing is impossible, and who always keeps His word. Isn’t that a great God? Aren’t you glad that we have a God like that, that is introduced to us in the very first verse of the Bible? *“In the beginning [Elohim] created the heaven and the earth.”* (Genesis 1:1) And actually, it’s a plural noun. “In the beginning Gods...” it seems like it says—although it doesn’t, for there’s only one God—but it’s a plural noun.

And you look in chapter 1 and verse 26, and it says, *“And God”—singular—“said, Let us make man in our image.”* (Genesis 1:26) Now, is that poor grammar? I mean, you would think it would say, “And God said, Let me make man,” or, “The Gods said, Let us make man.” Why is that? Why does it say it that way? Because here is a plural noun: God, *Elohim*. What’s it talking about? I believe that right here on the threshold of the Bible we see an indication of the nature of God as shown in the Holy Trinity—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—because as you study the Bible, you find out that all three were present in creation. All three were active there. Was it Jehovah God who created the world, Elohim God who created the world, or the Lord Jesus who created the world? For the Bible says in the New Testament that Jesus did it all. *“Without him was not any thing made that was made.”* (John 1:3) There’s no contradiction there. You find it all in this little triune noun, this little plural noun here:

Elohim.

Aren't you glad that we find the Savior in chapter 1, verse 1? (Genesis 1:1) Aren't you glad that we find the Holy Spirit in chapter 1, verse 1? Aren't you glad that we find the Father in chapter 1, verse 1 (Genesis 1:1) of the Word of God? "In the beginning Elohim, the God with whom nothing is impossible, and the God who always keeps His word, the triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—created for His pleasure, for His praise, and for His people the heaven and the earth." He is a God who is real. And when you think of this, you think of all of the errors that are refuted. Atheism is refuted, for it speaks of God. Polytheism is refuted, for it speaks of one God. Pantheism is refuted, that says that God and nature are the same, because God is shown not as a part of nature but creating nature. Materialism is refuted, because the materialist believes in the eternality of matter and material. But all of these errors are set aside as we see this one great, personal God. "*In the beginning God*"—Elohim—"*created the heaven and the earth.*" (Genesis 1:1)

He is a real God, and He is a revealed God. Now I said you could never prove God. But that doesn't mean that you can never know God. You do not know God by proving God; you know God by revelation. I want to show you something. Turn, if you will, please, to the book of Romans chapter 1. The Bible speaks of some people who have not a leg to stand on; they are without excuse. Now they claim to be atheists, but God doesn't buy it. And here's why. God says that they are without excuse, because everybody has an innate, inner awareness of God. Listen to it—Romans chapter 1 and verses 19 and 20: "*Because...*"—why are they without excuse? Here it is—"*Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them,*"—that is, there is an inner awareness—"*for God [has shown] it unto them.*" There is the outer object of evidence. "*For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made,*"—that is, you can clearly see from a creation there's a Creator—"*even his eternal power*"—that is, He is a God of power—"*and Godhead;*"—that is, He's a God of purpose—"*so that they are without excuse.*" (Romans 1:19–20)

You'll never come to the judgment and say, "God, I want to be excused. You know, I had intellectual difficulties." God will say you were a sinner. "*The fool [has] said in his heart...no God.*" (Psalms 14:1) You're without excuse. There is no excuse for not believing in God. You see, dear friend, the Bible says that some people do not like to retain the knowledge of God in their mind. (Romans 1:28) No one is a natural-born atheist. You have to be taught to be an atheist. Someone has to come along with a convoluted argument to make an atheist out of you. I heard about a child who was raised in an atheistic family. And one day the little child said at the dinner table to his mother and daddy, "Do you think God knows we don't believe in Him?"

All men are, by nature, believers in God, “for God has shown it to them.” (Romans 1:19) It is in them. You see, we know not by reason but by revelation. I’m not saying it’s unreasonable. I’m not saying that you have to crucify your intellect. But I’m saying, dear friend, when you get right down to it, “God has hidden these things from the wise and the prudent, and God has revealed them unto babes.” (Matthew 11:25) He is a personal God, and because He is a personal God and not just some blind force, God has chosen to reveal Himself to you and make Himself known—the inner awareness, the outer objectivity that we see in nature, the revelation of the Bible, and primarily, Jesus Christ revealed the Father to us. He is a real person. He is a revealed person.

Conclusion

Now there are two things I want to say by means of conclusion. If these things are true about God—and they are—and if you believe Genesis 1:1—and I trust you do, that “*in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth*”—I believe there are at least two conclusions that are forced upon us—many others, but these two I want to bring to your mind and to your heart today as God the Holy Spirit helps me.

A. You Have an Obligation to God

First of all is you have a moral responsibility to God. You have an obligation to God if God created you. Do you know what Ecclesiastes 12:1 says? “*Remember now thy Creator*”—“*Remember now thy Creator.*” (Ecclesiastes 12:1) And the Bible says, in Isaiah 45, verse 9, “*Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker!*” (Isaiah 45:9) If God made you, you have an obligation to Him. Now not only did God create you; God redeemed you. God bought you with His blood.

I guess every preacher has told at one time or another the story of the little fellow who lost his little red sailboat that he had made. It sailed away from him across the pond. Later on, he saw it in the second-hand store, and the proprietor made him buy it back. And he bought it back, and he carried that little sailboat out of that second-hand store and hugged it to his bosom. And he said, “Little sailboat, you’re mine. You’re twice mine. You’re mine because I made you, and you’re mine because I bought you back.” And I think that God would say that to us: “Christian, you’re mine. You are twice mine. You’re mine because I created you, and you’re mine because I redeemed you. You are not your own.

“*[You] are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.*” (1 Corinthians 6:20) If you believe Genesis 1:1, you have to believe that we have a responsibility—a moral responsibility to God—and if we don’t meet it, we’ll answer for it at the judgment. “*Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker!*” (Isaiah 45:9) “*Remember now thy Creator.*” (Ecclesiastes 12:1)

B. God Has an Obligation to Us

The second thing that I would say by means of conclusion: Not only do we have an obligation to God, but do you know God has an obligation to us? Now I mean to speak reverently when I talk about God having an obligation to anybody. But, friend, when God made us, He obligated Himself to us. You know, when we bring children into the world, aren't we obligated to those children? Indeed we are. There is a responsibility when you bring children into the world, and there was a responsibility that was incumbent upon God. When God created us, then God made Himself responsible to us. And the Bible speaks of God, in 1 Peter 4, verse 19, as "*a faithful Creator.*" (1 Peter 4:19) He's not just going to make this world, and wind it up, and fling it out into space, and turn His back on it. No! He made it. He must look after it.

Isaiah 43, verses 1 through 3: "*But now thus saith the LORD who created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not; for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passeth through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: and when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel.*" (Isaiah 43:1–3) What is God saying? God is saying, "I made you. I saved you. I'm going to take care of you." And friend, He will. I want to tell you that today. This God, who is a God of power, this God, who is a personal God and a purposeful God, made you for a purpose. And He's going to watch over you, and He's going to take care of you.

You see, when God created this first world, He stepped back, and He said, "It is finished," and then He rested. But then sin came in and marred His first creation, so God set about to make a new creation. Do you know what the new creation is? The Church. And when Jesus Christ died on the cross, and when that last drop of blood hit the ground below, Jesus said, "It is finished." What did He mean "a new creation"? "*If any man be in Christ [Jesus], he is a new [creation].*" (2 Corinthians 5:17) And even when sin marred God's original creation, God didn't say, "I'm finished with it." No, God made it, and God stays with it. See, we have an obligation to God. Indeed we do. And correspondingly, God has an obligation to us. Isn't that a wonderful arrangement? I like it. I'm just glad that I know that my God is over all.

*It took a miracle to put the stars in place;
It took a miracle to hang the world in space.
But when He saved my soul,
Cleansed and made me whole,
It took a miracle of love and grace!*

—JOHN W. PETERSON

That's what I'm talking to you about today. This great God who made it all has also

made a new creation, and the new creation is His Church, purchased with His blood. And, “If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a brand-new creation.” (2 Corinthians 5:17) You want to be a part of it? Would you like to know that your sins are forgiven? Would you like to know on this first Sunday of a brand-new year that you’re going to heaven? You can by receiving Christ into your heart.

What a Mighty God We Serve

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: June 25, 2000

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 1:1

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”

GENESIS 1:1

Outline

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Introduction

Would you take God’s wonderful Word and turn to the first book of the Bible, and open your Bibles and look up here, and let me ask you a question. What do you think is the most read verse in all of the Bible, the verse that is read more than any other verse in the Bible? Well, I’m going to preach from it this morning. Somebody will say it’s John 3:16, somebody else some other verse, but that’s not the most read verse in the Bible. The most read verse in the Bible is Genesis 1:1. So many people have thought that they would read the Bible, and they always open the Bible, and they read that familiar verse, Genesis 1:1: *“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”* (Genesis 1:1) We’re going to take that one verse this morning, and we’re going to bring our little teacup mind to an ocean of truth. And we’re not going to be able to bail out that ocean, but we’re going to look at Genesis 1:1 under this heading: “What a Mighty God We Serve.” And as you go away this morning, I hope that that will be resonating in your heart: “What a Mighty God We Serve.”

Now little children can appreciate this verse, but scholars can be perplexed by it.

That’s what I love about the Word of God. It’s shallow enough that a little child can get

a drink without fear of drowning and deep enough that the scholars can swim and never touch bottom, amen? *“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”* (Genesis 1:1)

And we’re just going to camp there for a while. And out of the many things that can be drawn from that one verse, I want to draw four significant factors for you today and lay on your heart the mightiness, the almightiness, the infinite greatness, the awesome majesty, the unfathomable power of our mighty God.

I. God Is Simply Presented: Recognize Him

Now here’s the first thing I want you to see. Our God is a God who is simply presented—simply presented: Recognize Him. Have you ever thought about the fact that the Bible just presents God? There He is—*“In the beginning God”* (Genesis 1:1)—simply presented. The fact of God is never explained in the Bible. The existence of God is never argued in the Bible. The Bible does not try to teach against atheism. The Bible gives only one-half of one verse to atheism: *“The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.”* (Psalms 14:1; Psalms 53:1) God is simply presented. Now God, therefore, must be accepted by faith.

Sometimes a skeptic will come to you, and he will say to you, “Prove there is a God.” Don’t try, because you cannot. The finite can never prove the infinite. Don’t try to prove there is a God. You cannot prove that God exists. But not to worry. After he says, “Prove that God exists,” you say simply with a smile on your face and much confidence in your heart, “I can’t. Now, sir, will you prove that God does not exist?” And he cannot either.

You see, God shall neither be proved nor disproved. You can’t put God in your laboratory. You cannot put God in your test tube. Science, for example, can never prove how the world came into existence. Now they race their scientific and intellectual motors to try to prove how it all came into existence, but science is limited, because science must deal with things that science can examine: things as they are, things that are now in existence.

Here is a question that God asked Job and I want to ask every scientist. It’s found in Job chapter 38, verse 4: *“Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?”* Isn’t that a great question? God said, “Hey, Mr. Scientist, where were you?” *“Declare, if thou hast understanding.”* (Job 38:4)

Now people say, “Well, you Christians, you’re just believers.” I take great pride in being a believer, but it is not just Christians who are believers; atheists are also believers. I believe there is a God. They believe there is no God. All are believers. The atheist says, “Yes, but you have faith that there’s a God.” That’s right. I have faith that there’s a God. He has faith there is no God. He can’t prove that God does not exist any

more than I can prove that God does exist. Therefore, I believe in God because I choose to. He does not believe in God because he chooses not to. He cannot demonstrate there is no God. To go into the laboratory to find God would be like taking that piano apart and trying to find a song. He can't do it. It's impossible. God is just simply presented. If a man does not believe in God, his problem is not intellectual; it is moral.

The Bible says in Psalm 14, verse 1, *“The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.”* (Psalms 14:1) Now, listen to this. The word *fool* there does not mean a man who is intellectually deficient, lacking in gray matter. It's the word *nabal*. It speaks of moral perversity. The fool hath said, not in his head; he says it in his heart—*“The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.”* Actually, the words *“there is”* are not in the original. Actually, what it says is: *“The fool says in his heart, ‘No God.’ ”* *“I don't want God.”* Just as you go through the cafeteria line and you say, *“No dessert,”* or *“No salad,”* or *“No this,”* or *“No that.”* *“No God for me.”* He doesn't want God.

It is not that he cannot believe; it is that he will not believe. He chooses not to believe. All people are believers. Some believe there is a God; some believe there is no God. Some believe there's a God by faith; others believe there is no God by the same kind of faith. Some choose to believe in God; some choose not to believe in God. But I want to tell you, in the Bible, God is never argued; God is presented. *“In the beginning God”* (Genesis 1:1)—just simply that.

Now the Bible has something to say about these who choose not to believe. God's Word calls them *“fools.”* Romans 1, verse 22: *“Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.”* (Romans 1:22) And then Romans 1, verse 28, tells why they don't believe in God: *“And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind.”* (Romans 1:28) They didn't like to retain God. Jesus said, *“Men hate the light, and they don't come to the light, because their deeds are evil.”* (John 3:19) *An unsaved man, a wicked man, can't find God for the same reason a thief can't find a policeman.* They don't want God.

Now God is the supreme fact. A person who denies the supreme fact is bound to be the supreme fool. We accept God by faith. That's not contrary to reason; that is beyond reason. It goes to revelation. Hebrews 11 and verse 3 says, *“Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God.”* (Hebrews 11:3) By faith we understand it. So when we're thinking about Almighty God, the very first thing I'll lay on your heart is this, that our mighty God is simply presented. There He is; recognize Him.

II. God Is Sovereignly Powerful: Respect Him

Here's the second thought. Not only is God simply presented, but our God is sovereignly powerful: Respect Him. *“In the beginning God...”* (Genesis 1:1) He's

presented. Now, watch this. In the beginning God did what? He created. He created. What mighty power is seen in His creation! Only God has creative power. The word *create* is the Hebrew word *bara*, and it means “making something out of nothing.”

Now men can take things that are in existence and rearrange them, but only God can make something out of nothing. God has cornered the market in two things, and these are creation and resurrection. Romans 4, verse 17: “*Even God, who quickeneth the dead,*”—“*who quickeneth the dead*” means “who brings the dead to life”—“*and calleth those things which be not as though they were.*” (Romans 4:17) Plain English: God raises the dead and creates. God has cornered the market in those things. And what an incredible power is demonstrated! What a mighty God who created it all!

Now people talk about the laws of nature. There are no laws of nature. They are the laws of God that nature must obey. The scientists have no more ability to create these laws than Columbus had to create North America. All the scientists can do is just simply discover these laws, and they have to stand in awe. There are 100 trillion cells in your body, give or take a few—100 trillion. And every one of them is a little city, in and of itself. Paul Doty of Harvard University said one cell is more complicated than New York City.

And then think of—much smaller than the cell—the atom. Take the leaf of your Bible, and hold it up there like that, and look at the side of it. If you were to take hydrogen atoms, you could put one billion hydrogen atoms across the width of that page, and the page would be wider than one billion hydrogen atoms. Who made all of that? God made it all. And the atom itself is mostly just empty space. Tiny as it is, it’s mostly empty space. I was reading recently a scientific article that said if you were to take all of the nothingness out of human bodies, you could put all six billion people on earth in a two-gallon pail. These atoms themselves are just mostly empty space.

Hey, now you think of the complicatedness of life. I was just listening to the news last night where the scientists are decoding the human genome. They have just looked into the intricate, delicate DNA of the human body, and they’re not quite sure they’ve got the billions and billions of pieces there all mapped out. That’s the complicatedness of it.

Then you think of the vastness of it. Light travels 186,282 miles per second, just like *that*, past the sun. But traveling at that incredible speed took four and a half years to get to the nearest star, ten billion years to the edge of our known universe. Who did all of that? It was God, our mighty God, who spoke and it was so. He spoke and stars sprang into existence. He spoke and universes fell from His fingertips. What a mighty God we serve!

Do you think all of that just happened? Do you think that this universe fashioned itself? Do you think this universe fashioned itself and then keeps it all going in perfect order? You’re a thinking person. My watch—if you see a watch, don’t you assume

there's a watchmaker? What about the precise atomic clocks in our universe? You see a water system; now don't you assume a hydraulic engineer? What about the hydrologic cycle of our atmosphere, as the water rises to the skies and comes back to the earth again? When you see this building, don't you assume an architect?

Do you know what an evolutionist believes, an atheist believes? He believes that out of nothing something came, and then millions of years have turned frogs into princes. That's what he believes. Now in the nursery, we call that a fairy tale. The scientist calls it science. No, man can't create one single, solitary thing.

I always laugh when I hear about these scientists who go into the laboratory, and they create lifelike substances, and they say, "Look! Life is created in the laboratory." Don't you believe it! They didn't create anything. Only God can create. Only God can make something of nothing. They didn't create anything.

Now, suppose I have a father who is a master craftsman, an architect, and a builder, and he builds a beautiful, incredibly magnificent mansion. But I don't like the idea of my father, so here's what I do: I get my father's tools, I take my father's plans, I take my father's building materials, I go out into the shed, and I build a crude little doghouse—with my father's tools, my father's plans, my father's materials. And after I build my little doghouse, I say, "See? That proves my father doesn't exist." That's what they do. They take God's materials, God's methods, God's mind—things that are already there—they rearrange them a little bit, come out with some synthetic lifelike substance, and say, "That proves that God doesn't exist."

III. God Is Strategically Purposeful: Reverence Him

What I'm trying to tell you is God is simply presented and that God is sovereignly powerful. He made it all. He is sovereignly powerful. You'd better respect Him. Thirdly, this God is strategically purposeful. He has a plan. You need to reverence Him. When you look at all that God has made, what you see is intelligent design and purpose.

In a philosophy class there was only one question on the test—a one-word question: "Why?" The students wrote furiously, but one man answered with one word: "Because."

But why? Why did God do it? Why did God create the heavens and the earth? I want to give you three reasons:

A. He Created It for His Pleasure

Number one: God did it for His pleasure. Revelation 4, verse 11: "*Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.*" (Revelation 4:11) God did it for His pleasure. That's one reason He did it. God rejoiced in His creation. He did it for His pleasure. We don't have to guess about it.

B. He Created It for His Praise

I'll tell you another reason that God did it: He created it all for His praise. When you look at the handiwork of God, then you want to praise God like you would praise anyone for his or her handiwork. Romans 11 and verse 36 says, *"For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever."* (Romans 11:36) All things have come from Him. All things operate through Him. All things are returning back to Him. Then give Him glory, amen? *"To whom be glory."* (Romans 11:36) God did it for His praise. And that's the reason Psalm 150, verse 6, says, *"Let everything that hath breath praise the LORD."* (Psalms 150:6) The trees lift their leafy branches and praise Him. The flowers unfold their petals and praise Him. The birds fly through the skies and praise Him. And the stars nestle in the bosom of the heavens and praise Him. And Niagara rolls and rolls and rolls, and says, "Praise God! Praise God!"

C. He Created It for His People

God did it for His pleasure. God did it for His praise. And God did it for His people. God made these things for us. You see, man needed a home. God is next going to create man, and God wants man to have a place to dwell, and so God made a good creation. And after God created it all, God said, "That is good." If you don't learn anything else about our mighty God, learn that God is good. And you ought to be glad that He is. God is a good God, and He's good all the time. And don't you ever let the devil get you to thinking negatively about God, questioning God, and thinking perhaps that God is not a loving, kind, beneficent God.

Let me give you some verses. Psalm 37, verse 4: *"Delight thyself also in the LORD: and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart."* (Psalms 37:4) For example, Psalm 84, verse 11: *"For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory:"*—I love this next part—*"no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."* (Psalms 84:11) And then 1 Timothy chapter 6, verse 17: *"Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy."* (1 Timothy 6:17) Do you think God is a cosmic killjoy? No! Why did God make it all? God made it for His pleasure. God made it for His praise. God made it for His people: *"who gives us richly all things to enjoy."* (1 Timothy 6:17) Our God is strategically purposeful: Reverence Him.

IV. God Is Savingly Personal: Receive Him

Now I want to come to the final thing that we find in this verse. Our mighty God is a God who is savingly personal: Receive Him.

A. God Is a Real Person

God is a real person. I didn't say God has a body. God is spirit, but He is a person.

Now, what do we mean by a *person*? A person is someone with emotion and intelligence and will. You see, so many people have the idea that God is some sort of an impersonal force in the world, like in *Star Wars*—you’re going to think I’m out of it; I’ve never seen it—but like in *Star Wars*, “the Force.” God is not “the Force.” He has force.

But when the Bible says, “*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth,*” (Genesis 1:1) the word *God* is the Hebrew *Elohim*. And the word *El* in the Hebrew, it’s a compound name. *El* means “power, incredible power.” *El*, and the last part of that is *alah*, and put them together and you have *Elohim*. *Alah* means “to keep a covenant; to keep a promise; to keep one’s word.” And so you find that God, the God who is revealed there in the first verse, the first page of the Bible, is a God who can do anything and who always keeps His word. That’s the God that we have: the mighty God. But He is the covenant-keeping God, the God with whom nothing is impossible, and the God who always keeps His word.

And by the way, this word *Elohim* is a plural noun, and it may read “Gods.” Well, do we worship three Gods? No. Skip on down, if you will, to Genesis 1, verse 26: “*And God said,*”—that’s *Elohim*. Now, watch this. That’s the subject; now what’s the next pronoun? “*Let us*”—“*Let us make man in our image...*”—wait a minute—“*God said, Let us make man in our image and after our likeness.*” (Genesis 1:26) Now that’s the word *Elohim*—*Elohim* said—a plural noun—“*Let us make man in our image.*” (Genesis 1:26)

Why is this? Right here on the first page, the first verse, you see the Holy Trinity. I mean, when you open the book and step in, what do you see? God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. “*Let us make man in our image.*” (Genesis 1:26) Who was it that made the creation and made man? Go to John 1, verse 1: “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,*” (John 1:1) and John 1, verse 3: “*All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.*” (John 1:3) He is the *Elohim*. Jesus is our mighty God. Isn’t it wonderful to step into the Bible and meet Jesus? Right there in the very first verse, we’re going to find of our mighty God that He is a personal God.

Now we have a generation today that believes in God, but they don’t believe in the God of the Bible. Believing in God is not enough. This verse corrects a lot of errors. For example, it corrects the idea of atheism: there is no God. It corrects the idea of polytheism: many gods. We don’t worship three gods; we worship one God who has revealed Himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It deals also with fatalism, that everything is just happening, and there’s no rhyme nor reason for anything. It deals with pantheism. What is pantheism? *Pan* means “everything,” “many gods,” or “all is God.” Pantheism is in America today, a New Age religion. They believe everything is God. They believe that God is everything: that you’re God, I’m God, the sky is God, the stars

are God, the wind is God, fire is God, the earth is God.

So no longer will they worship Father God; “We’ll worship Mother Earth,” and they say, “Well, I’m equal with the animals; the animals are equal with me; we’re all part of the same.” That’s pantheism. Now if I am God, and dirt is God, then I’m equal with dirt—I’m equal with dirt. No, God is a transcendent God. Today we can’t celebrate Easter in our schools, but we can celebrate Earth Day and go out and worship dirt.

No, this verse shows God as what He is, and it deals with materialism. God is spirit. There is a great and mighty God, but there are many who believe in the eternality of matter. Carl Sagan said the universe, the cosmos, is all there is and all there ever will be. No, no, no! There was nothing before God said, “Let it be,” and there it was when God created it all.

B. God Is a Revealed Person

Now because of this, that God is a real person—now, watch—God is also a revealed person. You could not know God unless He revealed Himself to you. Put in your margin Romans 1, verse 19: *“Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.”* (Romans 1:19–20)

Do you know what this verse saying? Unbelief is inexcusable—inexcusable. I mean, what do you see in Genesis 1:1? God’s *“eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.”* (Romans 1:20) God has revealed Himself. There are no natural-born atheists. None! If a person is an atheist, he has to learn to be an atheist; he has to be taught to be an atheist.

One of my favorite stories is of a little boy raised in an atheistic home, whose father was a studied atheist, who gave him all of the convoluted arguments as to why God doesn’t exist, teaching the little boy day by day there is no God. One day the little guy said to his daddy, “Daddy, do you think God knows we don’t believe in Him?”

They are without excuse. It is inexcusable. And for us, God is even more fully revealed in the Bible and in the Lord Jesus Christ.

C. God Is a Redeeming Person

God is a saving God. He is savingly personal. He is a real person. He is a revealed person. And He is a redeeming person. He came to redeem in the form of Jesus Christ. You see, Genesis 1:1 tells of God’s wonderful creation, but in Genesis 3 something happened. Sin came, and this first creation was ruined, and now it has been marred.

God, after He made His first creation, rested, but now He’s gone back to work. And Jesus said, “My heavenly Father works, and I work, and I must work the works of Him that sent me.” (John 3:4) What did Jesus Christ come to do? Jesus Christ came to

reclaim, to renew, to restore, that creation that we read about in Genesis 1:1. Therefore, the Bible says, in 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 17, *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new [creation].”* (2 Corinthians 5:17) Now when God brought it all into existence the first time, that was mighty power. Oh, but when God redeemed us, the mighty cross, there is where the real power is!

Question: How much difficulty was it for God to create the heavens and the earth in the first place?

A college student asked his pastor, “Pastor, do you believe there’s life out on other planets?” He said, “No.” He said, “Do you mean in all those billions and billions of things out in space you don’t believe there’s any life?” He said, “No.” He said, “Then why did God go to all that trouble to make all of that?” The pastor said, “What trouble?”

Think about it. What trouble? God spoke, and it was so. The only time that I can consider God having any trouble was dark Gethsemane, bloody Calvary. You see, that, friend, shows that our God is savingly personal. Jesus, hanging on that cross, when that last drop of blood fell to the ground, Jesus said, *“It is finished”*—*“it is finished.”* (John 19:30) “I am a God—savingly personal. I’m a God, when a creation is ruined and marred, I will go down myself, for a new creation.”

We sing,

*It took a miracle to put the stars in place;
It took a miracle to hang the world in space.
But when He saved my soul,
Cleansed and made me whole,
It took a miracle of love and grace!*

—JOHN W. PETERSON

This is the God who is revealed to us right here in Genesis 1:1.

Conclusion

Now in conclusion, what does that mean for us? Two things. Number one: We have an obligation to our mighty God—we have an obligation to our mighty God. The Bible says, in Isaiah 45, verse 9, *“Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker!”* (Isaiah 45:9) Amen? *“Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker!”* (Isaiah 45:9) Ecclesiastes 12, verse 1: *“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.”* (Ecclesiastes 12:1) We have an obligation to our mighty God.

But now, listen. I want to tell you something sweet. Our mighty God has an obligation to us. God will not abandon His new creation. First Peter 4, verse 19: *“Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing,”*—now, watch this phrase—*“as unto a faithful Creator.”* (1 Peter 4:19) God is never going to be arrested for child abuse or child neglect. He is our

Creator. We have an obligation to Him, and dear friend, because He brought us into this world, He is obligated to us. David said, "Once I was young, and now I am old, and yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." (Psalms 37:25)

Just a few days ago I was in Orlando, and Joyce and I were in a cab. A handsome young Haitian was driving the cab. I said to him, "Where are you from?" He said, "Haiti." And I said, "That's a wonderful, beautiful country." I said, "What do you speak in Haiti?" I already knew. He said, "We speak French and Creole." And I said, "Could you say something for me in Creole?" He said, "Yes." I said, "All right, repeat after me: '*For God so loved the world.*'" And he said in Creole, "*For God so loved the world.*" "*That he gave his only begotten Son.*" "*That he gave his only begotten Son,*" and so forth. (John 3:16) And I gave him John 3:16, and he gave it back to me.

He said, "That's from the book of John, isn't it?" He knew the Bible. I said, "Yes sir, it is." I said, "Have you done that? Have you believed on Jesus Christ?" He said, "No, I've not." I said, "Why not?" And he said, "Well, in order to be a Christian, you've got to be a disciple, and I don't have the strength to do that." And I said, "God put me in the cab today to give you some wonderful news, that salvation is a gift, that you don't earn it. You receive it by faith, and you can never have the strength to live the Christian life until you have the God of all creation living in you. And if you will receive Him, He will give you the strength."

He said, "Well then, I have a question to ask you." He said, "If I do receive Him, how can I know He's done it?" And I said, "Well, you won't know it by emotional feeling, but you can know it by the Word of God. First John 5:13: '*These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life.*' (1 John 5:13) God has given us the written Word: '*These things have I written unto you.*'" (1 John 5:13) And he said, "I see." Then he said, "I have another question. If I do give my heart to Him and stand on the Word of God, what happens if I stumble and fall?"

It sounds like a textbook case thing, doesn't it? But this is actually the way it happened. He said, "What if I stumble and fall?" I said, "Well, here's some wonderful news. When you get saved, you become a baby Christian, and then you have to learn to walk and talk. And then if you stumble and fall, He will pick you up and forgive you. First John 1:9 says, '*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*'" (1 John 1:9) And I said, "You've got to grow." And I said, "I'm still a growing Christian." I said, "Does all that make sense to you?" He said, "Yes sir, it does." I said, "Can we now just pull up here and park and pray?" "Yes sir, we will." We prayed, and he received Jesus Christ as his personal Lord and Savior. I believe he got a good dose of salvation.

Now here's the thing. This is our mighty God. He loves you. He doesn't tell you that

if you can be good enough, He'll save you. *"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,"* (1 Timothy 1:15) so we're all qualified. And He tells us that we can know we're saved, not by our emotions and not by our feelings, but by His rock-solid Word. He cannot lie. He will not lie. Trust Him. Believe His Word. And if you stumble and fall, He'll pick you up. He'll give you a new start, and you will begin to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 3:18)

The World in a Week

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: December 21, 1980

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 1:1–5

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”

GENESIS 1:1

Outline

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Introduction

And I want you to pay attention today to the message from God’s Word. And incidentally, again, our scripture is very easy to find—Genesis 1:1. Turn to it—would you, please—the first book and the first chapter and the first verse. Today we’re speaking on this subject: “The World in a Week”—“The World in a Week.” We find here the story of the creation and the formation of the world in a week.

I begin here in Genesis 1, verse 1: *“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.”* (Genesis 1:1–5) Now,

let's just stop right there. *"The evening and the morning were the first day."* (Genesis 1:5)

In 1859, Darwin wrote his famous book, *The Origin of Species*, and in that book he proposed to tell us from whence we came. And he talked about the origin of the species. I've been thinking about that. And I believe that the destiny of the species is far more important than the origin. Now I'm not demeaning the origin. And we need to know and learn from whence we came. And I trust this morning we will, and I just want you to draw close and listen, and tell you, dear friend, from whence you've come has already been decided, wherever it was. But where you're headed—the destiny of the species—may not yet be decided in your own heart and in your mind. And so you'd better pay attention. And it is the Bible, not Charles Darwin, that's going to tell you both about the origin and the destiny of the species. And I'm so glad today that we could talk about these things.

And you say, "Oh, the destiny—that's so far away." Not necessarily. Eternity is just a heartbeat away. Eternity is just around the corner. You know, sometimes we get in a habit of talking about some horrendous experience we went through—maybe an automobile accident or something like that—and we say, "I've never been so close to death in my life." But, friend, you weren't close to death at all, because you're still living. You are closer to death now than you've ever been in your life this moment; you're closer to death now than you've ever been. And one second from this, you'll be even yet closer to death.

What I'm trying to tell you is this, that your destiny is right around the corner, only a heartbeat away for many who are listening to me right now. And so we need to pay attention as to what God says, not only about the origin of the species, but the destiny of the species. And I believe that both are told to us very clearly here in the first chapter of the book of Genesis.

And in the message that we're going to title today "The World in a Week," there are three basic little simple thoughts I want us to gather the rest of our thoughts around this morning. First of all, I want us to think of the meaning of the days, as we think about these days in the week listed here in Genesis 1. And then, secondly, I want us to think about the miracle of those days. And thirdly, I want us to think about the message of those days. A very simple little outline.

I. The Meaning of the Days

But notice, if you will, please, in Genesis chapter 1, verse 5: *"And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day."* (Genesis 1:5) And then look, if you will, please, in verse 8: *"And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day."* (Genesis

1:8) And then look, if you will, please, in verse 13: *“And the evening and the morning were the third day.”* (Genesis 1:13) And six times we find this specific statement: “The evening and the morning were the first day, the second day, the third day, the fourth day, the fifth day, the sixth day.”

Now, what is the meaning of these days? Because the word *day* is used in the Bible in many different ways; over 1,400 times it’s listed in the Bible, this word *day*. And it’s translated about forty-four different ways in the King James Version of the Bible. This one Hebrew word *yom* is translated many ways. And so as we look at these days—*“the evening and the morning were the first day”*—we want to ask ourselves, what did God mean? Did He mean literal twenty-four-hour days as we mean them? Because some people have tried to make the Bible coincide with geology. You know, the geologists and the uniformitarian school of thought tell us that the world is actually billions and billions of years old. And so they try to say that these days were not literal days, but these days were great ages that God just simply called days.

Now, let me say that the word *day* is used in the Bible in several senses. The word *day* does mean a twenty-four-hour day. That’s the one use. Actually, it’s not twenty-four hours; it’s twenty-three hours, fifty-six minutes, and four seconds, if you want to be a nitpicker. But anyway, that talks about the time that the earth revolves on its axis one time. And the Bible calls that a day: “The evening and the morning were the first day.”

But then, that portion of a day we call the daytime—or daylight—the Bible also calls that a day. For example, you can see in chapter 1, verse 5, *“And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night.”* (Genesis 1:5) So right away, there’s a different use of the word *day* other than the twenty-four-hour day, the evening and the morning being a day. But then God also uses the word *day* in a generalized sense just to mean an indefinite period of time.

Here’s an interesting verse, so you can just jot it down in your margin—Isaiah 4, verse 1: *“And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name.”* (Isaiah 4:1) Fellows, there’s coming a day when there will be seven women after you, and they’ll say, “I’ll make my own way; just let me use your name.” I’m not sure what that means. I’m not going to preach on that today. But anyway, I’m just going to tell you that I’m using that phrase there to show you that God speaks of the word *day*. He says, *“In that day,”* (Isaiah 4:1) in that general period of time. So the word *day* there is used to talk about a general period of time.

And then the word *day* is also used to talk about an inclusive period of time. For example, look, if you will, in chapter 2 and verse 4—Genesis chapter 2 and verse 4: *“These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens”* (Genesis 2:4)—the day.

And yet we find out that God did it in six days and rested on the seventh. And yet God called all those six days “one day.” See? So I’m trying to say that it’s not just a simple thing when we’re talking about the days.

Are these days that we’re talking about—are they indefinite periods of time, sort of like geological ages? Or do these days refer to twenty-four-hour periods of time? Or do they refer just to daylight? Or do they refer to an inclusive period of time, and so forth? I want to tell you that I believe that God made this world in six twenty-four-hour days. That’s what I believe. And thank you for those *amens*. I was afraid some of you were going to arch your eyebrows when I said that. But I believe that. I believe that God made it all in six twenty-four-hour periods of time.

Now having said that, let me just tell you why I believe that. First of all, I don’t have any difficulty believing that, because I believe in God. You know, it’s no difficulty for me to believe that God made it all in six days. God could have made it all in six seconds, amen? That’s no difficulty. You believe in God; you don’t have any difficulty with those kinds of questions. That doesn’t bother me one little bit, because I believe in God. Remember the Bible says, “*In the beginning [Elohim] created the heaven and earth.*” (Genesis 1:1) And remember, *Elohim* is that word for God, which speaks of His mighty strength. Elohim made it all.

A. The Normal Usage of the Word

But let me tell you why I believe that it was six twenty-four-hour periods. First of all, just the normal usage of the word—the evening and the morning. If you were to read that, just look at the normal usage of the normal language, letting language say what it seems to say, you would say that’s a twenty-four-hour period. “*The evening and the morning were the first day.*” (Genesis 1:5) “*The evening and the morning were the second day.*” (Genesis 1:8) “*The evening and the morning were the third day,*” (Genesis 1:13) and so forth—just the plain use of the language.

B. The Difficulty of “Geological Ages”

The other thing is this, that if you make these geological ages, you get into all kinds of difficulty. For example, if you have on the third day plant life created, and it was created, and then on the fourth day you have the sun that’s made to appear; well, you’ve got some real difficulty there, because if you make these geological ages, you’ve got hundreds of thousands and millions of years with plant life and no sunlight.

You see the problem there? The sun gives energy and life to the plants. And all plants operate by a process that we call photosynthesis, which means literally, “put together with light.” And so you have an impossibility. And then again, you find out that on the fifth day—the sun’s not made, you see, until the fourth day—and then on the fifth day, you have animal life that is created.

Now these are geological ages—and great ages—you have hundreds of thousands of years of plant life and no sunlight. And then finally, you have animal life, and everybody knows that animal life and plant life are interdependent. And so the animals eat the plants, and the animals breathe and give out carbon dioxide, take in oxygen. The plants take in carbon dioxide and give out oxygen, and it's necessary. Many plants cannot exist without the pollination of little insects, and so forth, that would not have been created until hundreds and thousands and millions of years later if we make these geological ages.

So I just believe it like God said it. God just created the whole shebang in six days. I mean, God just spoke, and it was so, and God just moved through. *“And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.”* (Genesis 1:3) And God said, “Let the earth appear,” and the earth appeared. “Let the sun, moon, stars shine,” and gave animal life, created man—all of it. I believe that God did it in six days.

C. The Language of the Rest of the Bible

And I believe that as you look through the Bible and read the language of the Bible, it is what the writers of the Bible believe. For example, in Exodus chapter 20 where Moses is talking about the Sabbath, he says, in verse 11—listen to this; put it in your margin—Exodus 20, verse 11: *“[And] in six days the LORD made heaven and the earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the [seventh] day, and hallowed it.”* (Exodus 20:11) Now just reading that, it seems obvious that Moses believed that God did it in six literal days, because he's referring to the Sabbath, which is a literal day—a literal twenty-four-hour period, you see.

Now some people say, “Oh, he's talking about a Sabbath age. They say that one, two, three, four, five, six work days, and then we're living in the last geological age, the Sabbath day. And they think that the Sabbath time started from creation, and we're all living in the final Sabbath. Well, you have some real difficulty, because the Bible says, *“[God] rested on the [Sabbath] day.”* (Genesis 2:2) If you make it an age, what are you going to do with that statement where the Bible says—Jesus speaking, said—*“My father worketh hitherto, and I work”?* (John 5:17) See, God's not resting. According to Jesus, He was working. So what I'm trying to say is that these are, in my estimation, literal twenty-four-hour days. I don't have difficulty believing that at all. I just accept it. I say, “Praise God for it!” I have a God of might, a God of miracle, a God who did it like He said He did it in the Bible. I believe the simplest way is to read it and believe it. Somebody said, “If God didn't mean what He said, why didn't He say what He meant?” And so God made these things, I believe, in six twenty-four-hour days.

II. The Miracle of the Days

Now, let's talk—let's move on and talk not only about the meaning of the days, but let's

talk a little bit about the miracle of the days. I believe that God did it miraculously. Now you say, “Well, Brother Rogers, doesn’t that bring you into conflict with science?” No. True science and true Bible never conflict, because God wrote two books. God wrote this book—His inspired, inerrant, infallible Word—and then also God made the book of nature. I mean, God created nature, and nature is, in a sense, His book. The Bible says, “*Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.*” (Psalms 19:2) There are books and brooks, and sermons and stones, and God in everything. You see, all of this shows the glory of God. God made it all. And God, who wrote this book, and God, who created this world, He’s not going to have any difficulty putting these things together. I mean, scientific proof didn’t sneak up on God. God knows it all. Nobody needed to inform God. God knew about all of this. And if all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, there is no conflict between true science and true Bible.

Now often there’s a conflict between the Bible and what is called science—as the Bible says, “*science falsely so called.*” (1 Timothy 6:20) And I’m glad—I am definitely glad—that the Bible doesn’t always agree with what some men call science, because what some men call science changes, and what we believed yesterday is not necessarily believed today. And had the Bible agreed with what we believed yesterday, then the Bible would have been proven false today. So I just say, “Let God be true, and let every man be a liar.” And we don’t check out our Bible by the science; we check out the science by our Bible. And I just believe that, but I don’t believe there’s a conflict between true science and true Scripture. And I don’t believe there needs to be any kind of a fuss.

But now, what about this matter of evolution, therefore? What about the theory of evolution? And notice I call it theory—the theory of evolution. Evolution is a theory. Now anybody who tells you that evolution is a fact is lying to you. I mean, he may want to believe it is a fact, but it has never been proven as a fact. It is a theory—it is a theory.

I heard of a woman who called her husband “Theory” rather than “Deary” because he didn’t work.

And you need to understand that this thing called evolution does not work. It is a theory and I reject it. I’m going to tell you why I reject it in a moment. I reject it for three reasons. I reject it, first of all, for a logical reason. I reject it, secondly, for a theological reason. I reject it, thirdly, for a moral reason. And I’m going to discuss those three reasons with you in a little bit.

You know, some people will look at you like you’ve got rooms to rent upstairs unfurnished if you don’t believe in evolution. But I want to tell you I reject that monkey mythology. And I want to tell you why I reject it and give you the reasons I reject it. And then, of course, you’re going to have to make up your mind for yourself. But before we do that, let me tell you what the theory of evolution is. Now, of course, there are many

different varieties of evolutionists, just as there are many different varieties of people in all schools of thought. And so let's just go back to what Darwin had to say about evolution.

Of course, not all evolutionists today agree with Darwin in every detail. But here's what Darwin said in *The Origin of Species*, on page 523: "Analogy would lead me to the belief that all animals and plants—all of them now—"are descended from some one prototype. All organisms start from a common origin, and from such low and intermediate forms both animals and plants may have been developed. All the organic things which have ever lived on the earth may be descended from some one primordial form." That is, here at the beginning was a little blob of life—a little amoeba-like substance, a little bit of scum—and out of that, it all came. They believe that somehow, by spontaneous generation or something, that a one-celled life substance began. And that one-cell life substance that began somewhere in some primitive soup finally became a worm—an unsegmented worm. That unsegmented worm finally became a fish, and that fish finally, after it wiggled around for eons, became an amphibian. And that amphibian finally crawled out and became a bird. And after a while, that bird became a mammal. And after a while, that mammal became a man.

Now that's what they ask you to believe. And I've told you, friend. Listen. To me, it takes more faith to believe the monkey story than it does the Word of God. I'm serious.

*Once I was a tadpole, beginning to begin.
Then I was a frog with my tail tucked in.
Then I was a monkey in a banyan tree.
And now I am a professor with a PhD.*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Now that's what they want you to believe—that we just came on up, and it all happened, and it all happened by chance. They believe that time plus chance can turn frogs into professors. It just takes time plus chance. I don't believe that.

A. I Don't Believe in Evolution for Logical Reasons

Now I want to tell you three reasons why I don't believe it. I don't believe it—first of all, I do not believe it logically. Now don't think that only Baptist preachers don't believe in evolution. There are many scientists today—eminent scientists, qualified scientists—who do not believe in evolution—I mean, men with impeccable pedigrees and brilliant, scintillating minds. Many of these are not even Christians. They just don't believe in evolution because it doesn't make sense; it will not wash. And if you're in school, young person, and your teacher is teaching you evolution as a fact, or even teaching you evolution as a theory and only giving you one side, he's not dealing with you fairly and squarely, or she's not dealing with you fairly and squarely. There are two sides. Your

teacher may not even be up-to-date and know that there are several sides to this thing.

Listen to some intelligent men. Dr. Newton Tahmisian, who is a physiologist for the Atomic Energy Commission, has wisely stated, “Scientists who go about teaching that evolution is a fact of life are great con men, and the story they are telling may be the greatest hoax ever. In explaining evolution, we do not have one iota of fact.” That’s what this great physiologist had to say.

And let me tell you what a curator of a museum, Dr. Etheridge of the British Museum, stated. He said, “Nine-tenths of the talk of evolution is sheer nonsense; it is founded on observation and wholly unsupported by fact. This museum is full of proofs of the utter falsity of their view”—the evolutionists. I’m talking now about the great British Museum. Sir Ambrose Fleming, who was the president of the Philosophical Society of Great Britain, explained and said in a sentence, “The evolution theory is purely the product of the imagination.” And we will not bore you by many, many quotes. But suffice it to say that learned men, educated men, qualified men, many of them do not accept the theory of evolution; not because they are religious men—some of them may be religious men—but they do not accept it.

Why? Well, let me tell you. There are three bridges over which the evolutionist cannot cross. There are three logical things that would cause us not to believe in evolution.

1. No Explanation for the Origin of Life

Number one: The evolutionist has no explanation for the origin of life—the origin of life, how life just happened. Now they have a lot of theories, a lot of guesses, a lot of surmises. And you won’t believe some of these, but some people believe that life came to Planet Earth as a germ was hitchhiking on a meteor—that is, that here is some meteor coming from outer space, and there was life out there in outer space somewhere. And how did it get on earth? Well, this germ of life on this meteor came, and when the meteor struck the earth, somehow the life is deposited upon earth. And out of this germ of life that was piggybacking a meteor—that original germ of life, that sperm of life—all other life has come. We laugh at that.

But let me tell you what a professor from MIT, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology—I’m talking, we’re getting high up now—let me tell you what he suggested with a straight face. I mean, he wasn’t being funny. It’s funny all right, though. But what he suggested is that life may have come to this earth by a prehistoric space traveler from some other galaxy, or some other dimension, or some other part of the solar system, who landed here on earth, lived here for a while, went away, and left his garbage can behind. Now what he means by that is out of the garbage, or the refuse, that was left by this man, the germs of life were there, and eventually the process of evolution took place. You see, you’ve got to start with life.

But what most of them believe is just in spontaneous generation. That is, here you've got certain gases, and certain chemicals, and certain situations. They never tell you where the gases come from. They never tell you where the meteor comes from. They never tell you where the spaceman came from. They never can tell you where the garbage came from. But, you know, they always have to start with something, you see. And they believe that here are these propensities and these abilities here. Here's the gas, here's the primordial soup, here's all of it, and suddenly a flash of lightning or an electrical impulse comes—*boop*—there's life. This highly organized complex thing called life just accidentally, spontaneously happened.

I like what a professor from Princeton University had to say. Dr. Conklin said, "To suggest that life happened by accident has about the same probability as suggesting that a *Webster's Unabridged Dictionary* would result from an explosion in a printing factory"—the probability that this could have happened that way. The evolutionist has no answer for the origin of life if he rejects the idea of God. He's cast upon wild guesses and, in my estimation, silly guesses.

2. The Fixity of the Species

But now, let me give you another reason, logically, that I do not believe that evolution is logically right. Turn to Genesis chapter 1 and look in verse 11: "*And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit*"—now, underscore this phrase—"*after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so.*" And then look, if you will, in verse 12: "*And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind.*" (Genesis 1:11–12) Now, just underscore that and keep underscoring it. Ten times that little phrase occurs—"after his kind" or "after its kind." That means that things that God made reproduce after their kind. Dogs reproduce dogs. Cats reproduce cats. Apples reproduce apples. Pears reproduce pears. Men reproduce men. There's just a law written into nature that things reproduce after their kind. There's not one demonstrable area that we can ever see has ever been proven, ever been shown, where one species crossed over into another. We don't have any record of it. It's just a law of nature that those things don't happen.

Of course, that would have to happen if evolution were true. One thing of one kind would have to become another kind, which would have to become another. A worm would have to become a fish, and a fish would have to become an amphibian. And an amphibian would have to become a reptile, and a reptile would have to become a bird. And a bird would have to become a mammal, and a mammal would have to become a man. They would have to move from kind to kind to kind. But you don't find that. You cannot demonstrate that. "Oh," you say, "but I know things. Why, you can...I've seen the evolution of the rose." No, dear friend, there are all kinds of roses. For example, you may have pink roses and white roses and yellow roses, but they're all roses. That is

mutation, not transmutation. Learn the difference. You never turn a rose into a pineapple. If you do, come see me. All right, it's always a rose.

You know, they take the little fruit fly—the little fruit fly reproduces so much that they use the fruit fly to experiment. And they bombard this poor little critter with all sorts of radiation and try to mess up his genes and chromosomes to see if they can make a mutant. And they do. Man, they get some weird-looking fruit flies! But the point is, if he's got green eyes, red hair, and wears spotted pajamas, he's still a fruit fly. I mean, he doesn't become a June bug. The point is, after they're finished with him, and after they've done all of this to this poor critter, and they say, "Look what we did," when you get to the last analysis, he's still a fruit fly, and a whole lot worse off than he was before they started messing with him.

All right, you guys from the farm, you ever looked a mule in the face? You know what I'm talking about. A mule is what? A cross between a horse and donkey, right? But that mule won't reproduce. He's a hybrid; he is a mutant. But he will not reproduce, because God has built a law into nature. One is that nature reproduces after its kind. You say, "But what about all of the things that we see in the museum? And what about all of those things that are printed by *Life* magazine? And what about in the *National Geographic*? You see all of these ape-men, you know, and so forth." Friend, don't be fooled by imagination and plaster of Paris. Don't be fooled by that. There is no record anywhere of an intermediate form between man and a gorilla, as if they both have some other forebear. It's just not there.

You say, "Well, Brother Rogers, you're not a scientist. How do you know?" Well, let me read what a well-known biologist at the Smithsonian Institution has said—and I quote: "There is no evidence which would show man developing step by step from lower forms of life. There is nothing to show that man was in any way connected with monkeys. He appeared suddenly and in substantially the same form as he is today. There are no such things as missing links. As far as concerns the major groups of animals, the creationists appear to have the best argument. There is not the slightest evidence that any one of the major groups arose from the other." Notice that—"not the slightest evidence."

There are people always talking about the missing link—the missing link. Have they found the missing link? Friend, the whole chain is missing. I'm serious. There are billions and billions and billions of fossil remains, but not one time do you find the link between one kind and another kind. God says, "Let everything bring forth after its kind." Now the evolutionist, he says, "Well, I just believe it happened somehow; we just, you know..." They believe it in spite of that.

3. No Answer for the Nonphysical Qualities in Man's Life

Now I'll tell you a third reason, logically, I don't believe it—not only because the

evolutionist has no answer for the generation of life except what I call a silly guess, and because of the fixity of the species, but the third reason is the evolutionist has no answer for the nonphysical, nonmaterial qualities in life that man has. For example, if evolution is the survival of the fittest, where do we get music from—and the love of music, and the love of art and beauty, and God and worship? How do you explain these things? Why would those things evolve? How could they possibly evolve? *Remember that the evolutionist believes that it all started with nothing. Nothing times nobody equals everything.*

B. I Don't Believe in Evolution for Theological Reasons

Now I want to say, not only do I reject it for logical reasons; I reject it for theological reasons. Now there are some people who try to ride one horse in two directions. They say, "I believe the Bible, and I believe in evolution, too." Friend, in my estimation, you can't have it both ways—you can't have it both ways. You don't need to be embarrassed for believing the Bible. Just simply take what God said, because you run into all kinds of difficulties when you come up with a homogeneous synthesis of both. Neither one really works out. You make a very poor theologian, and you make an extremely poor scientist. But theologically, you just can't have it both ways. Either the Bible is the Word of God or it isn't.

H. G. Wells, the famous, noted author of *The Outline of History*—a brilliant man, though I feel certainly did not know the Lord Jesus Christ; I hope that he did, but I have no reason to believe that he did—but here's what H. G. Wells had to say and rightly so. Listen to it now, and I'm quoting: "If all animals and man evolved, then there were no first parents"—that is, there were no Adam and Eve—"no paradise,"—that means there was no Garden of Eden—"no Fall." That is, Adam and Eve did not disobey God and eat the forbidden fruit. "And if there had been no Fall, then the entire historic fabric of Christianity, the story of the first sin, and the reason for the atonement"—that is, Jesus coming to die on the cross—"collapses like a house of cards." He's saying, dear friend, either man is on his way up, or else he was made perfect and fell in the Garden of Eden and needs to be redeemed.

Now you've got the humanist who believes in evolution, who believes that man is on his way up. And what we call sin, he would call a stumble upward, a hiccup on the path of progress, a glandular malfunction or something, but he wouldn't call it sin. And he would say that man is evolving and getting better all the time. And what he really needs is a boost from beneath. But the Bible teaches that what man needs is not a boost from beneath; he needs a birth from above. He needs to be born again. You've got the conflict there, you see. Either man is a sinner—he was made perfect and fell into sin—or else man started from some primordial soup and he is going upward, onward, every day and every way. "I'm getting better and better and liking it more and more."

Now you're just going to have to take your choice between the two. The Bible says that man was created perfect and fell. The theory of evolution says he started as a little primordial cell and has been coming up and up. The ideas are diametrically opposite. Man did not spring from the beast; he's headed toward the beast—the Antichrist.

Now theologically, I don't accept it. Let me tell you what real evolution is. Did you know that real evolution is a philosophy more than a science? It is a bias against God. You know what the thoroughgoing evolutionist will say? He'll say, "Well, the only other alternative is creation, and of course, we can't have that." See, that's the only other alternative. He just won't accept that. He has a bias against God.

Now when I went to school, I was taught the scientific method. The scientific method is that the scientist goes into the laboratory and makes his experiments; and under controlled environments he draws his conclusions thereby. But the evolutionist doesn't do this. The evolutionist already has his preconceived idea of how it might have happened, how he thinks it happened. And then he moves into the laboratory and moves heaven and earth to try to show it. You see, it is more of a philosophy than it is a science. It is the one place where the scientist becomes a philosopher and he says, "It may have happened, we think, we surmise, we conjecture." Friend, science is not supposed to deal with thinking, surmising, and conjecture—only as it would lead to experiments that would then lead to truth.

Now, let me tell you what evolution is. It is a bias against God. Evolution is the anesthetic that kills the pain while the atheist removes the belief in God. That's what happens. I reject it for theological reasons; I reject it because it doesn't square with the Bible. I believe the Bible and have shown the Bible to be true in so many other areas. I'm going to believe what the Bible has to say about creation, also.

C. I Don't Believe in Evolution for Moral Reasons

Now the third reason I reject it: not only logically and theologically but morally. When Darwin came out with this business about the origin of the species, and when evolution became a philosophical idea, there was a man in Germany whose name was Nietzsche. Nietzsche latched on to that idea. He loved it. Nietzsche became the father of what is known as Nazism. There was another man in Russia who heard of this idea of evolution. He latched on to it. He loved it. His name was Karl Marx. He's the father of communism, with its unspeakable atrocities. It's only a step from evolution to the gas ovens.

You see, when you believe that men sprang from animals, it's much easier to treat them like animals rather than people made in the image of God. Do you want me to tell you why we have so much difficulty with young people today and they are living, hopping from bed to bed, and practicing what they call free love? They don't know anything about love. Friend, if it's love, it's not free. It costs; it demands commitment. Do

you want me to tell you why we've gotten this hippie philosophy, "If it feels good, do it"? Because we've finally gotten across the idea that man is an animal. I've said before, an animal lives for three things: self-preservation, self-propagation, and self-gratification. That's what animals live by, and that's what we've taught our generation. They have been taught that they are not made in the image of God—that they just happened, that they're an accident—out of spontaneous generation. God forbid. I reject it on moral grounds.

And, dear friend, if we don't get this thing straightened up, we're going to have to rue the day. We have a generation of people who think nothing about murdering little unborn babies. After all, to them it's a blob of protoplasm. That's what they believe. Oh, they get incensed. There are people out there right now, mad as a wet hen, because I call that murdering little unborn babies. If that makes you mad, you come to me and apologize, and I'll forgive you. I'll tell you something, friend. We have begun to treat human life on a low plane, and I predict, if Jesus tarries, the time will come when they'll start doing away with some of you older people, because you, like an unwanted pregnancy, may become an inconvenience. You see? I reject evolution on moral grounds.

III. The Message of the Days

But now, let me go on and talk with you just a moment, not only about the meaning of the days, and not only the miracle of the days but let me talk to you just a little bit about the message of the days, because I believe here in the first chapter of the book of Genesis—not only does God clearly delineate the origin of the species, but I believe that God gives us a wonderful clue and help to understand the destiny of the species. I believe that God here, in His infinite grace, has put the plan of salvation right on the front door of the first page of the first book of the Bible. I believe it's there. You see, the Bible calls a Christian "a new creation." (2 Corinthians 5:17) That is, there's something very much like what happened at the first creation that happens to us when we are saved, or born again. Second Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 17 says, "*Therefore if any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new [creation].*" (2 Corinthians 5:17) And there is a parallelism between the first creation and the new creation—what God did to that physical world and what He's done now in the spiritual world.

Let me show you the parallelism. For example, read the first two verses, and you'll see that the world was born in deadness and darkness. "*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void.*" (Genesis 1:1–2) Some people believe that it became that way, that God didn't create it that way. Other people believe that God created it that way. It's not the purpose of this message to get into that discussion here. But "*in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.*

And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep.”
(Genesis 1:1–2)

I want you to see that that chaotic condition—without form, void, dead, sterile, and dark—is a picture of every man without the Lord Jesus Christ, for every man, woman, boy, and girl without the Lord Jesus Christ is alienated from the life of God. Ephesians chapter 4, verse 18, says, *“Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.”* (Ephesians 4:18) God says that the man without Christ is dead. He’s darkened. He’s ignorant. He’s blind. And this world, when darkness was upon the face of the deep, this first creation, is a picture of man’s condition needing to be saved.

A. The Moving of the Spirit

But then I want you to notice what happened. Look, if you will, in verse 2: *“And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep.”* And here it is, hallelujah: *“And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.”* (Genesis 1:2) That’s how you get saved. There you are in death. There you are in darkness. There you are in chaos and disorder. And then God, in His infinite grace, sends His Spirit to move. What could that creation do apart from the Spirit of God? What can a poor lost sinner do apart from the Spirit of God? Hallelujah! Glory to God! The Spirit of God moved upon my heart, and the Spirit of God will move upon your heart. And Jesus said, in John chapter 16, verses 8, *“When he”—the Spirit of truth—“is come, he will [convince] the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.”* (John 16:8) Thank God for the moving of the Spirit. Thank God that He moved upon our darkened hearts. Thank God that He moved upon our dead souls.

B. The Activity of the Word of God

There’s the moving of the Spirit. And then there’s the activity of the Word of God. Look, if you will, please, in verse 3: *“And God said…”* (Genesis 1:3) The Word of God now comes into play because, friend, that’s what happens when you get saved. It takes the Word of God for you to be saved. *“[I’m] not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation.”* (Romans 1:16) The Bible says clearly that we’re *“born again, not [by] corruptible seed, but [by] incorruptible, by the word of God.”* (1 Peter 1:23) And you see, the Spirit of God takes the Word of God and applies it to our heart.

Conclusion

I want to give you the Word of God. I want to tell you from this Word of God this morning, and I pray the Spirit of God will move upon your heart. Jesus died for you. God loves you, and as this choir sang, Jesus is seeking for you. He loves you so much that He put the plan of salvation and the way of salvation and the hymn of salvation on the

first page of the Bible. There's that deadness. There's that darkness. There is that moving of the Spirit of God. And then there is the speaking of the Word of God. And what was the result? And God said, *"Let there be light: and there was light."* (Genesis 1:3) Why? Because *"the entrance of thy words giveth light."* (Psalms 119:130) And God, dear friend, will shine into your heart, and God will give you light.

Now lest you think that I'm pushing the analogy, I want you to see what the Bible itself says, in 2 Corinthians chapter 4, verse 6. Listen to it. Paul, in 2 Corinthians chapter 4, verse 6, is talking about the creation story, and he says this: *"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness..."*—when he said that, he was talking about way back in creation—*"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."* (2 Corinthians 4:6) Isn't that beautiful? Isn't that beautiful? The God who spoke this first creation and sent life is the God who wants to send you life. He's the God who wants to turn the light on in your sin-darkened soul. He's the God who wants to open the door of your night and bathe it with the sunlight of His love—Jesus Christ is called *"the Sun of righteousness...with healing in his wings."* (Malachi 4:2) Oh, thank God. Then, after that light, came what? Life. And after that life, came what? Fruitfulness. You see it? That's it! That's it! Here we are in darkness. Here is God—the sovereign God—in mercy sends His Spirit to move upon our heart, takes the Word of God, speaks a word—the light comes, life comes, fruitfulness comes!

It can happen to you. I remember as a teenage boy I prayed and said, "Lord Jesus, come into my heart." And God came in, forgave my sin, and saved me—He really did.

Image or Imagination?

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: January 18, 1981

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 1:24–27

“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.”

GENESIS 1:26

Outline

Introduction

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- II. The Comparison of Man and the Animals
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- III. The Contrast Between Man and the Animals
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Conclusion

Introduction

Now today, I want us to begin reading here in Genesis chapter 1 and verse 24—
Genesis 1:24: *“And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so. And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good. And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man*

in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.” (Genesis 1:24–27)

Now man and the beasts were created on the same day: the sixth day. We’re going to be thinking about man and the animals today. There is one question that is the supreme question, one question above all other questions. One question, if you answer it wrong, everything else is wrong. If you answer it right, everything may be right if you follow it up with some other thinking. But, dear friend, it is the question of all questions. And here is the question: Is man created in the image of God, or is God created in the imagination of man? Is man created in the image of God, or is God created in the imagination of man? Or more simply put: Did God make man, or did man make God? That is the question of questions. And if you answer that wrong, nothing else can be right.

Now, of course, there are those who tell us that man just happened and that he just came about by spontaneous generation. They call that evolution, and we already paid our respects to that last Sunday. But there are those who believe that. And actually, as you think about the relationship of man and the animals, there are only three possible answers that I can see.

First of all, there is the answer of evolution, that man just sprang from the beast. First of all, there was some little speck of protoplasm, some little blob of something in a sea of nothing, and it all just sort of happened—that, first of all, there was this one-celled animal that came to be some sort of primitive protozoa, that became an unsegmented worm, that became a fish, that became a reptile, that became a bird, that became a mammal, that became a man. And it just sort of happened. And just by blind chance plus time, as we’ve said before, nothing times nobody equals everything. That’s what the evolutionist would have us to believe.

And, of course, we said we reject that. I reject it totally. I reject it on theological grounds. I reject it on philosophical grounds. I reject it on moral grounds. I reject it on logical grounds. I don’t believe that the evolutionist has a leg to stand on—I really don’t. I believe it is the next best guess of the man who refuses to accept God. But I do not believe it is science. I believe it is philosophy. And I believe it is a philosophical approach to the mind and the man who will not accept God.

Well then there is, of course, the answer of creation, just as the Bible says, in verse 27, that *“God created man in his own image...male and female created he them.”* (Genesis 1:27) Now there are so many other people today who will try to make a synchronism of the two. They’re trying to homogenize both ideas, and they think of themselves as being very savant, very wise. So with one hand they take evolution; with the other hand they take creation. And they just say, “We’ll mix them all together.” And they say, “We believe that God did it, but He did it by evolution.” We call that theistic

evolution or deistic evolution, that God chose evolution as the way to do it. And you know, they kind of stick out their chest, and they smile and say, “It doesn’t make any difference how God did it. The important thing is that God did it.”

Well, I agree that the important thing is that God did it, but it does make a difference how God did it, because if God said He did it one way, and He did it another way, then this book is not reliable, see? And if there was just an evolutionary process, then there was no Garden of Eden. If there was no Garden of Eden, there was no Fall. If there was no Fall, dear friend, there’s no need to be born again. And if Genesis 3 is a myth, then John 3 is a farce; (John 3:7) man doesn’t have to be born again. *And you cannot take evolution and creation and mix the two. It’s like trying to ride two horses in opposite directions.* It’s impossible to do doctrinally, theologically, philosophically. You cannot do it.

Now I want to speak today on this subject: “Image or Imagination?”—“Image or Imagination?” Is man in the image of God, or is God in the imagination of man? And I want us to see that there is a relationship between man and the animals, that God created man and the animals on the same day. On the sixth day, God created the man and the beasts of the field. And so, evidently, there is a relationship between the two. What is the relationship between men and animals? Well, three things we’ll see today. First of all, I want you to see the creation of man and the animals. Secondly, I want you to see the comparison of man and the animals. And thirdly, I want you to see the contrast of man and the animals. A very simple outline to help us to follow along what we’re thinking about today.

I. The Creation of Man and the Animals

But first of all, let’s talk about the creation of man and the animals. The Bible says, beginning in verse 24, that God made these things; God created man and the animals. Now, someone says, “But, Brother Rogers, in all honesty, I have some questions. If you say that God just created these things, what about cavemen? Were there cavemen?” Yes. Still are, for that matter. You can find people living in caves today, amen? As a matter of fact, a lot of them are going into the caves at the end of the age to hide themselves from the wrath of the Lamb. There have always been cavemen.

You say, “Well, what about these prehistoric men? What about these men—half men, half apes, you know? The museums are full of them. The textbooks are full of them. *Life* magazine is full of them. What about these halfway creatures?” Well, I want to tell you, friend, that there are none of those. You say, “But I’ve seen pictures of them.” What you’ve seen are pictures of an artist’s imagination. What you’ve seen is a rendering made by an artist out of plaster of Paris and his paintbrushes and his imagination, something very similar to what’s done in a wax museum, as this man has

brought all these things together. But you say, “Now, wait a minute. What about all the fossil remains? What about the missing links?” There are none. I want to say it again. There are none, friend. I’ll say it again. There are none. And don’t you let anybody tell you that there are.

Now, of course, there have been attempts, and people have found fossil remains, and they’ve tried with their imagination to put these things together. And incidentally, Dr. Criswell has a wonderful little book called *Did Man Just Happen?* And in that book, he has a chapter called “The Hoaxes of Anthropology.” It’s well worth your reading. But he mentions some things, for example, like the Nebraska Man. Do you remember the Scopes Trial in Dayton, Tennessee? Some of you youngsters don’t remember it. How many of you were living when the Scopes Trial went on? Let me see your hand. Yeah, the Monkey Trial. Here was a man who was teaching evolution in the school in Dayton, Tennessee, and it was challenged, because it was illegal to teach evolution in public schools at that particular time. And it was challenged. This man was fired and so forth, and they had a big trial. They called it the Monkey Trial. It was covered. All of the people came down there. And oh, there was a lot of fanfare. And they’re still making movies about it, still laughing about it, calling it the Monkey Trial, and so forth.

William Jennings Bryan, who was a great Christian, a very fine intellect, was presenting the Bible side, the Christian side, and there was a skeptical lawyer and a very conniving man named Clarence Darrow—he was a very brilliant lawyer. As a matter of fact, I was reading somewhere—not connected with the Scopes Trial, but one time—Clarence Darrow knew that he had a weak case, and he smoked his cigar, and he took a wire, and put that wire all the way through his cigar, and sat there and smoked the cigar during the trial while the other man was arguing his case. And Clarence Darrow had smoked his cigar all down to just the butt of the cigar, and the ash was stuck on that cigar all the way out to the end. And the jury couldn’t take their eyes off of it, wondering when that ash was going to fall. And he just sat there and smoked that cigar, and nobody paid attention to what the other man said. That’s the kind of man he was: a very shrewd man—a very shrewd man. And Clarence Darrow was the lawyer who was arguing against the Bible.

And right in the middle of the proceedings, Clarence Darrow came in with some experts. And you know what an *ex* is? An *ex* is a “has been”; a *spurt* is “a drip under pressure.” And so he brought these experts in, and these experts were going to testify as to the evolution of man. And they brought in some evidence concerning the Nebraska Man. And what was the Nebraska Man? Well, he was one of these prehistoric men, and they found the remains of the Nebraska Man out in Nebraska. A fellow named Harold Cook had found the Nebraska Man. And so they trotted in the evidence, and they said to William Jennings Bryan, “Now you say that man is of recent origin, and here

is the Nebraska Man. And we know that the Nebraska Man lived on earth about one million years ago. And here are pictures of the Nebraska Man, and here are pictures of the Nebraska Woman, and here's all of this." They presented all of this evidence, and William Jennings Bryan was somewhat bewildered, and he pled for more time, and he said, "We need more facts." He said, "I just don't think there's enough to substantiate this." And the experts laughed him to scorn.

But let me tell you, where did they get the Nebraska Man, and what was the Nebraska Man? The Nebraska Man was—and you are not going to believe this, but it is the truth—built out of a tooth. That's right. I didn't say teeth—tooth, one tooth. They found one tooth, and out of one tooth they made a man. And they made him just like they thought he ought to look. But they weren't satisfied. Then they made a woman. And then they made a race, and they said, "Here is Nebraska Man."

Now, get ready for this. Later, they discovered the origin of the tooth. It was a pig's tooth—a pig's tooth, a species of extinct pig, a peccary—just a pig. And here's a whole case, and they are laughing at God's man in the courtroom, because he doesn't believe in it. Oh, let me go on: the Java Ape-Man. In 1891, Dr. Eugène Dubois found in Java the top of a skull, he found the fragment of a left thighbone, and he found three molar teeth. And he said, "Aha! I have the missing link. Here is a man 750,000 years old." Now, let me say also, parenthetically, that he found these three fragments over the space of a year. And he didn't find them all in the same place. But he took them, and he put them together, and he said, "Here is the missing link."

Well, twenty-four eminent scientists from Europe looked at these fossilized remains—this little piece of skull, this little piece of thigh, these teeth—and ten of them said, "Why, we have no problem with that. Those are bones of an ape." Seven of them said, "We have no problem with that; those are the bones of a man, just like man today." And seven of them said, "It's the missing link." Now most of them said that the Java Ape-Man was either a man or an ape. And only seven of them said it was the missing link. These are eminent scientists. But here's the kicker. Later on, Dr. Dubois himself came back and said, "These are but the bones of an ape." But if you look in your textbook, so many times you'll find the Java Ape-Man. There he is. Here's this race of prehistoric creatures that we are supposed to believe in—that they existed somewhere, somehow, in antiquity.

Or take the famous Piltdown Man. Mr. Charles Dawson in Piltdown, England, in 1912, found in a gravel pit some fragments. He found a piece of a jaw, he found two teeth this time, and he found a piece of a skull. And he took these and made the famous Piltdown Man. And the artists went to work, and they rendered this guy with a low brow, hanging hands, and so forth, and sort of a dumb look. He's this guy between men and the apes, and everybody learned about the Piltdown Man.

But I think it was *Science Illustrated* or one of these science books that published an article, and it was later reprinted in the *Reader's Digest* of 1956 that exploded the entire thing. "The Great Piltdown Hoax" was the title of the article. And this Piltdown Man was a colossal hoax. What had happened? They later found out that someone had taken the jawbone of an ape that was not fifty years old—I mean, it had not been dead for fifty years—had colored it artificially, and they had taken the teeth and filed them down a special way, and evidently left them for the old professor to find. Some of his students had played a joke on the old professor. And it was the jawbone of an ape. And yet all of these scientists had declared, "Here is the great Piltdown Man."

Have you noticed how eager a man is to make a monkey of himself? Isn't it strange? Now these are men of science. How could they be so easily fooled? I'll tell you why. They wanted to be fooled. Remember what I said last week that in the normal course of events in scientific inquiry, you go into the laboratory, you make your experiments, controlled experiments, and then you draw your results? The evolutionist has already gotten his conclusion, and he moves into the laboratory and moves heaven and earth to prove it. I am content in my own heart and in my own mind that all of these so-called fossilized remains have been, or can be, or will be, explained the same kind of way.

Now, of course, there are cavemen. You say, "What about pictures I've seen of men with low brows and so forth?" Actually, there are tribes of pygmies and cave dwellers and people who run naked through the woods and all that, who do the same thing today. But these are not men who are on their way up; they are men on their way down—on their way down. It is not evolution; it is de-evolution. God created man in His own image and put him there in the Garden of Eden.

You say, "Well, what about the dinosaurs?" Well, what about them? You say, "Weren't there dinosaurs?" Of course there were! You don't have to have any guesswork when you go into the museum to see the dinosaur remains. Man, they've got the whole critter there! And they've got dinosaur eggs and all of that. There's no problem with dinosaurs. Of course, dinosaurs existed! Where did they come from? God created them. When did He create them? The sixth day—just like He says that He created them. But, dear friend, that doesn't prove evolution. All it proves is that some species can become extinct. They did. They don't exist on the face of the earth now, just like the saber-toothed tiger and the mastodon. And we were afraid the alligator, and the bald eagle, and other things might become extinct. Of course, they may move into extinction.

I believe the Bible tells us about dinosaurs. You might turn to Job chapter 40 for a moment. Let's look at it. And begin reading with me in verse 15: "*Behold now behemoth...*"—well, what does *behemoth* mean? Well, we don't know. That's just what they call them—"*behemoth, which I made with thee;*"—that is, "I made him at the same

time I made you”—*“he eateth grass as an ox. Lo now, his strength is in his loins, and his force in the navel of his belly.”* Here was a great animal that’s exceedingly strong. *“He moveth his tail like a cedar...”*—now there are some people who try to tell us that behemoth was an elephant. Have you ever looked at an elephant’s tail?—*“He moveth his tail like a cedar: the sinews of his stones are wrapped together. His bones are as strong pieces of brass; his bones are like bars of iron. He is the chief of the ways of God:”—*that is, “he is a big one”—*“he that made him can make his sword to approach unto him. Surely the mountains bring him forth food, where all the beasts of the field play. He lieth under the shady trees, in the covert of the reed, and fens. The shady trees cover him with their shadow; the willows of the brook compass him about. Behold, he drinketh up a river, and hasteth not: he trusteth that he can draw up Jordan into his mouth. He taketh it with his eyes: his nose pierceth through snares.”* (Job 40: 15–24)

What a great monster the book of Job tells us about, and God reveals to man! And that tells me, dear friend, that there have been dinosaurs on the earth. They are now extinct. The idea of dinosaurs doesn’t bother me. The idea of cavemen doesn’t bother me. The idea of naked savages doesn’t bother me. That does nothing to my faith. God, in the beginning, created man. And He created the beasts of the field, and we see the creation—the creation of man and the animals.

II. The Comparison of Man and the Animals

Now, secondly, I want you to see not only the creation of man and the animals, but I want you to see the comparison of man and the animals, because men and the animals are compared in many ways. And it is the comparison of man and the animals that has caused some people to believe in evolution, because they see certain similarities.

A. A Similarity in Design

For example, there is a similarity in design. If you look at some men and some animals—for example, if you look at some monkeys and some men—you see a similarity of design. There is the bone structure that’s very similar. But you see, similarity of design doesn’t prove evolution.

You go into the city and you look at the buildings in a city, and you are going to find similarity of design. All of the buildings in a city—or most all of the buildings—are going to have roofs, walls, and floors, right? That’s similar.

Well, suppose you go into a city, and you start looking at all of the buildings in that city. And you say, “They all have similarities.” And so you start arranging them. Over here you get a little doghouse, and you put it down here. Then next you get a little humble shanty, and you put that down here. Next, you get a little cottage, and you put that here. Next, you get a nice home, and you put that here. Next, a magnificent building here, and over here you put a palatial mansion. And you have them all in an ascending

scale, and you say, “You see the similarities? They all have roofs. They all have walls. They all have floors. So that proves that the palatial mansion evolved from the doghouse.” That’s exactly what they do. They say, “You see the similarity of structures?”

Why does man have a similarity of design to the animals? Because both man and the animals were designed to live in the same environment. And the same designer designed them both. There’s nothing wrong with that.

B. A Similarity in Diet

Not only is there similarity of design; there’s a similarity of diet. Look, if you will, in verses 29 and 30. Go back to Genesis 1, beginning in verse 29: “*And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in which is the fruit of the tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth.*” (Genesis 1:29–30) That is, men and animals have to eat the same thing. There is not only the similarity of structure, the similarity of supply, not only the similarity of design, the similarity of diet. And so because the organs and the digestive tract and so forth are the same or similar, that doesn’t prove evolution at all.

I mean, a motorcycle has a carburetor, and an automobile has a carburetor. So do you think an automobile evolved from a motorcycle just because they both burn gasoline?

C. A Similarity in Death

You see, men and animals have a similarity of design. Men and animals have a similarity of diet. Let me give you another similarity: not only a similarity in design and diet but a similarity in death. Both men and animals die. Look, if you will, please, over here in Genesis chapter 2, where God gave to Adam a warning. And God said to Adam, in Genesis chapter 2, verse 17—read it with me—chapter 2, verse 17: “*But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*” (Genesis 2:17) Now God made man with the capacity to live forever. But He also made him with the capacity to disobey Him—Almighty God. And if he did disobey God, he would die. And Adam did die. But not only did Adam die; when Adam sinned, there was a curse that was put upon all creation. And the animals also began to die. And so you see men die, and you see animals die. And there is a similarity in death.

And the writer of Ecclesiastes noted that similarity. Just jot in your margin Ecclesiastes 3, verses 19 and 20. Here’s what the preacher of Ecclesiastes said: “*For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath;*”—that is, they all breathe oxygen—“*so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast.*” (Ecclesiastes

3:19) That is, dear friend, animals die and you die. And when an animal runs out of breath and his heart stops pumping, he dies. When a man runs out of breath, his heart stops pumping; he dies. There, as we compare men and the animals, we can see the comparison: a similarity in design, a similarity in diet, a similarity in death.

III. The Contrast Between Man and the Animals

Oh, but not only do I want you to see the similarities; I want you to see the singularities. I want you to see the difference now between men and animals. We've talked about the creation of men and the animals. We've talked about the comparison of men and the animals. But now, is man an animal? No! Man is not an animal. I want you to see the contrast of men and the animals. And I want to give you four ways that men and animals are contrasted. These are not the only four, but they are the only four that we have time for this morning. And I want you to see four ways that men and animals are contrasted. And don't think a man is just simply a clever animal or an ape that's finally learned to stand upright. What is the contrast between men and the animals?

A. Man Has a Craving for Deity

Number one: Man has a craving for Deity. That is, he has a desire to know God. Why does man have this craving for Deity? Because chapter 1, verse 26, says that he is made in the image of God. (Genesis 1:26) And verse 27: *"So God created [him] in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female [made] he them."* (Genesis 1: 27) Now God made man in His image.

Now, what does that mean? Does that mean that God has eyes and ears and hands and a nose and feet? Does it mean that God is as ugly as we are? No. That's not what the image of God means. It has nothing to do with physical appearance—not anything whatever. God is a spirit. And a spirit therefore is invisible. A spirit cannot be seen. And when the Bible says that man is in the image of God, it does not mean that we physically are in the image of God.

1. A Mental Likeness

It means, first of all, there is a mental likeness to God. Colossians 3 and verse 10—the Bible speaks of a Christian when he gets born again, and it says he is to *"put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him."* (Colossians 3:10) Now, think of that: *"renewed in knowledge after the image of [God]."* (Colossians 3:10) Our knowledge is after the image of God. That is, mentally, we're after the image of God. That doesn't mean we're as intelligent as God—of course not! That doesn't mean that we're as all wise as God is—of course not! But it does mean that God has given to man certain thought processes, and the ability to reason, and so forth, that he's not given to the animals at all. And so there is this mental ability.

2. A Moral Likeness

And then not only is there this mental ability; there is this moral quality that man has. Jot this scripture down—Ephesians 4, verse 24. Again, it speaks of a person being saved, and it says, *“And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness.”* (Ephesians 4:24) *“After God”* means “like God; created in righteousness.” And there it speaks of the righteousness of man. And so it speaks of the moral character that makes us in the image of God. Man is not in the image of God physically. He is in the image and likeness of God mentally and morally. That doesn’t mean that he is as righteous as God. It does not mean that he is as intelligent as God—not at all. But it means that there is a likeness, there is a similarity, there is an affinity between God and man, mentally and morally.

And so, number one, and we’re just talking about the four differences, and the first difference we said: Man has a craving for Deity. *“Deep calleth unto deep.”* (Psalms 42:7) And man knows that he’s in the image of God. And man has this feeling, this longing, this desire to be like God. You see, an animal never has this feeling. An animal never prays. An animal never seeks after God. Animals don’t worship, because animals are not in the image of God. They have no craving for Deity. There’s nothing in the animal to answer to. The animal doesn’t have the spirit that man has, and so animals just don’t worship.

I said several weeks ago, you want to make a dog happy? Here’s what you do to make a dog happy: You give him something to eat every day; you give him a warm place to sleep; you pat him on the head and give him some affection and give him a sense of conquest—a chicken to kill, or a cat to catch—he’s happy. That’s all it takes to make a dog happy. You see, that’s just a good dog’s life. Now you give a man all of those things—I don’t mean a cat to catch, but a sense of conquest. You give him affection. I don’t mean a pat on the head. But you give him those things, and he thinks those things will make him happy. But they won’t make him happy, because, you see, there’s a different dimension. He has a craving for God. He may not even know what it is, but there’s a God-shaped vacuum in every man’s heart. St. Augustine said, “Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in thee.” That’s one distinction between men and the animals: Man, being made in the image of God, has a craving for Deity.

B. Man Has a Capability for Dominion

But, secondly, man also has, I want you to see, a capability for dominion. Look, if you will, please, also, in this passage in verse 26: *“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth.”* (Genesis 1: 26) Now man has a capacity for dominion. Animals don’t have this capacity. You’ll never see animals

put men in the zoo unless you watch *The Planet of the Apes*. You'll never see the animals having dominion over men. Man is to have dominion. Of course, man corrupted his dominion, and he forfeited his dominion. But that wasn't God's plan. If you want to see what God's plan was, see the Lord Jesus Christ when Jesus was here on the earth and see how Jesus had dominion.

1. Dominion over the Beasts of the Field

Jesus had dominion over the beasts of the field. Do you remember when Jesus was going on His triumphant entry into Jerusalem? What did He tell His disciples to do? He said, "You go get a donkey whereon never a man sat and bring him to me. You'll find him tied in thus and such a place. If a man asks you what you are doing, just say, 'The Lord has need of him.'" (Mark 11:2–3; Luke 19: 30–31) And so they brought this donkey that no one had ever been on before. And do you know what Jesus did? Got on the back of that donkey, never been broken, and rode him into the city of Jerusalem. If you ever go to the Middle East, I want you to find one that's never been ridden. I want you to get on him and see what happens. Come back and tell me. Just jump on him and see what happens. Jesus had dominion over the beasts of the fields.

2. Dominion over the Fowls of the Air

And Jesus had dominion over the fowls of the air. Remember, He said, "Peter, you're going to deny me three times before the rooster crows" (Matthew 26:34; Mark 14:30, Luke 22:34)—the ol' rooster, warming up his voice, gargling, getting ready. But Jesus said, "Not yet." Peter denied Him once. Rooster wants to crow—not yet. Peter denied Him twice—not yet. Three times—Jesus gives him permission: "Cock-a-doodle-do!" Here it comes—just like that, just at the right time.

3. Dominion over the Fish of the Sea

Jesus had dominion over the fowls of the air, the fish of the sea. It's time for Jesus to pay His taxes. He didn't have any tax money. He told His disciples to go cast a hook in the sea, catch a fish: "In the fish's mouth, you'll find a coin." By the way, that's the way to handle the financial problems of the church. You know, every fish we catch has a coin in his mouth. Did you know that? You put a tither in your tank, you see.¹ That's the way you do it. Jesus said, "You go catch this fish, and in his mouth you'll find a coin." (Matthew 17:27)

Now, can you imagine that? Here's this one fish; here's some poor fisherman reaching in his pocket or whatever, and he drops this coin overboard. He watches it as it

¹ "Put a tither in your tank" is an Adrian Rogers pun on the Esso gasoline advertising slogan from the 1960s: Put a tiger in your tank.

sinks to the bottom of blue Galilee. His heart is broken. But here's this fish. Of all the fish in the sea, like a guided missile, he comes along. He sees that shiny thing on the bottom; he opens his mouth and picks it up. And then the Lord just guides him, as by radar, to the one hook sitting right there. And he bites that hook, and when he comes up, he's got a coin in his mouth. Who engineered all of that? The Lord of glory. He had dominion. Jesus had dominion.

4. Dominion over the Earth

And not only are we to have dominion over the animals; we're also to have dominion over the earth, the Bible says. I believe that God put all the oil in the ground, and God put the electricity in the air, and all of this power. He put it there for us to discover, so we could use it. He wanted us to be fruitful and multiply and subdue the earth. I wonder how long the angels sat up there in heaven just watching men, wondering how long it would take them to discover electricity. Every time God would flash His lightning across the bosom of the sky, men would cower, and those angels would say, "Those knuckleheads. When will they figure it out?" Finally, they discover electricity, and one of them says, "Well, they finally got it. There it is." God put all this here, and God says to man, "I want you to have dominion. I want you to rule. I put these things here so that you could have the joy of discovering them and the joy of using them."

"Oh," you say, "but the animals, they can do things too, you know. The animals—like the bee—look at a beehive. He can make that little six-sided cell. Look at a beaver—he can build a dam." But, friend, that's not creativity. That is not inventiveness. That is not ingenuity. That's heredity. That is just simply instinct. Ten thousand years from now, if the Lord tarries, bees will still be building those little six-sided things, and beavers will still be building dams. Bees won't be building dams, and beavers won't be making wax cells, you see? Men can do those things, but not animals, you see? What I'm trying to say is that there's a contrast between man and the animals.

C. Man Has a Capacity for Depravity and Devotion

Man has a craving for Deity. Man has a capability for dominion. I want to say also that man has a capacity for depravity that animals don't have. Animals cannot sin, but on the other hand, animals can't love God. In order for men to love God, they have to have the capacity or the capability to sin. God gave man that ability. You say, "How could men sin if God made everything perfect?" Well, when God made man, God made him with the capacity to choose. And God had to make him with the capacity to choose. If he didn't have the capacity to choose, he wouldn't be a man.

You know, sometimes someone says, "Why do we have to have a devil? Why do we have to have sin if God is good and God is love? Why didn't God just create everybody where they couldn't sin?" Well, He could have, if He'd have wanted to. But then you

would have been an animal. That's exactly what you would have been: an animal. You wouldn't have been a man. You would have had no choice. You'd have been a machine.

Suppose one of my children didn't love me. You say, "What do you mean 'suppose'?" No, they all love their daddy. But suppose one of them—let's pick on Janice this morning. She's the only one I've got left in the nest right now. Let's pick on Janice—suppose Janice didn't love her daddy. And so I get my Janice, and I study a book on hypnotism, and I get down in front of Janice, and I put her down, and I say, "Look into my eyes. You love Daddy. You love Daddy. You love Daddy," and I hypnotize her. And then I say, "Do you love me, Janice?" "I love you, Daddy." What good is that going to do me? I mean, if she loves me because I have hypnotized her into loving me, it's not love that she chooses to love, and so forth. Of course, it wouldn't be love anyway. She'd just be saying that. It wouldn't be real love—couldn't be. You see, she could not love me unless she can choose to love me. She cannot be loyal to me unless she has an opportunity to be disloyal to me.

And God, if we could speak of God taking a risk, God took a risk when He made men. We take a risk when we have children, don't we? Nod your head. Look intelligent. We really do. I mean, we take a risk. But it's worth it—it's worth it. And it was worth it to God to say, "I am going to make a creature that has a capacity for depravity, that he might have a capacity for devotion." You see, he has to have both of those capacities in order for him to have a free choice. Animals do not have that. The animals do what God tells them to do. They don't have any choice. But man has a capacity for depravity. And because of that, man is worse than an animal. You know, they say he acts like an animal. No, dear friend, that's an insult to the animals. That's right. Man without God is worse than an animal, you see, because he's more intelligent than an animal. *And his mental horsepower is greater than his moral brakes. And that's the reason he causes so many accidents on the road of life.*

Now two monkeys were talking about evolution. One of them said, "Man descended, the ornery cuss, but, brother, he didn't descend from us." A monkey wouldn't take responsibility for it.

I heard about a monkey coming out of the maternity ward with a little baby. She said, "Oh, he's normal! I'm so glad he's normal. I was afraid of evolution."

A man made a little lower than the angels has the capacity to be a little lower than the animals. Oh, the wickedness, the depth of depravity, that men can go to! The Bible calls this sin.

D. Man Has a Consciousness of Destiny

And that's another thing that distinguishes men from the animals: the capacity for depravity and the capacity for devotion. But not only is there this craving for God, not

only is there this capability of dominion, not only is there this capacity for depravity, but there's another contrast between man and the animals that I want to mention today, and it is a consciousness of destiny—a consciousness of destiny. You see, men know they're going to die. Animals don't know they're going to die. You say, "What about the elephant when he goes to the elephant burial ground?" He doesn't know he's going to die. He just goes. It's an instinct. He doesn't understand. He just does it. But man is the only creature that knows he's going to die, and he's trying desperately to forget it.

As a matter of fact, you talk to men about death, and they'll change the subject like they switch the television channel. They don't want to talk about death. They don't want to be reminded about death. But they all know that they are going to die.

Have you ever wondered why men, when something bad happens to them, they say, "Oh hell"? Have you ever thought about that? Why? Because they know there is one. And you see, that thought is always in their mind. Have you ever wondered why men don't say, "Oh heaven"? They say, "Oh hell!" Why? Because not only is there that knowledge of eternity, but down deep there's that dread of eternity, because he knows there's a Creator and he knows he's not right with that Creator. And lurking there in the subconsciousness of his mind is that thought of eternity. Man is the only creature, dear friend, that has a concern for his destiny—a consciousness of his destiny.

The Bible says, in the book of Ecclesiastes chapter 3, verse 11, that God "*hath set the world in [man's] heart.*" (Ecclesiastes 3:11) But in the King James Version the word is *world*, but it should be translated "God hath put *eternity* in their heart"—"God hath put *eternity* in their heart." Man does not believe in immortality because he has proved it. He desperately tries to prove it because he believes in it. And the reason he believes in it is not intellectual. There's no intellectual way you can prove life after death or disprove it. The reason that he believes in it is the Bible says that "God hath put eternity in their heart."

Man has a conception of his destiny. He has a comprehension of the fact that he is going to die. But he knows that doesn't end it all. You cannot crawl up in the grave and pull the dirt over your face and hide from God. When God made you, God made you in His image. And God breathed into your nostrils the breath of life. And you could no more cease to exist than God Himself could cease to exist. And you're going to exist somewhere—dateless, timeless, endless, measureless. Your soul is worth more than all of the stocks, the bonds, the gold, the silver, the schools, the railroads put together. That's the reason Jesus said, "*What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*" (Mark 8:36–37)

Animals are not going to live forever. When an animal dies, he's dead. Friend, there was a time when you were not, but there never again will be a time when you shall not

be. You were created in the image of God. God says something about man that He doesn't say about the animals. The Bible says that He *made* the animals, but He *created* you. He took animals and made them out of preexisting stuff, but God did a unique creation when He made you. And you are made in His image, and man has, dear friend, a concern for his destiny. I hope you have a concern for yours. A 1976 Gallup Poll showed that sixty-nine percent of the American public believes in life after death.

Conclusion

Let me conclude this message. *The history of the world is summed up in three words: creation, desecration, and re-creation*—generation, degeneration, and regeneration. God made it perfect. Sin ruined it. Jesus came—the last Adam, the second Adam—that we might be made back as we were.

A Conquering Church

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: February 6, 2005

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 1:26

“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.”

GENESIS 1:26

Outline

Introduction

- I. Man’s Dominion Was Legally Lost by Adam
- II. Man’s Dominion Was Rightfully and Righteously Recovered by Jesus
- III. Man’s Dominion Is Gloriously Given to the Church

Conclusion

Introduction

All right. Praise the Lord. Be seated. Take God’s Word and turn to Ephesians chapter 1 and also to Genesis chapter 1.

We’ve been talking about the kind of a church that my heart beats for, that I dream for, that I wish and look to God for, the kind of a church that I have tried to lead you to be in these past 32 years. We’ve talked about such things as a unified church. We’ve talked about a militant church. We’ve talked about a steadfast church. We have talked about a praying church. Today, I want to speak to you about a conquering church.

Now, when God made you, God designed you for dominion. God made you, listen, God made you for mastering. You were not designed to fail. You were designed to have dominion. When you were born again, you were born to win.

Look, if you will, here in, the Book of Genesis, chapter 1 and verse 26. Here’s why God made you, at least one of His purposes. “And God said, Let us make man in our image—that’s God the Son, God the Spirit, God the Father speaking—And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness:—now, look at this—and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.”

Now, if black print on white paper means anything, it means that man, as God designed him and created him, was given rule to control and master the earth and its resources. Man was to be king of the earth. An ancillary verse that you might want to jot

in your margin is Psalm chapter 8 and verse 6. The psalmist is speaking about man, and it says, “Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put—now, listen to this—all things under his feet.”

Well, look at today’s newspaper, or any newspaper. Ha, ha. Friend, it is obvious that man does not have dominion. It is obvious that all things are not under his feet. Look around. There’s death, disease, hate, war, crime, lust, sorrow, disappointment, despair—they’re everywhere, and yet man is supposed to have dominion. Something has gone wrong, and thank God, God has done something about it.

Now, there are three things I want to lay on your heart as we think about a conquering church.

I. Man’s Dominion Was Legally Lost by Adam

The first thing is this: that this dominion that man was supposed to have, and was given, man’s dominion was legally lost by Adam. Key words—legally and Adam. Man’s dominion was legally lost by Adam. Now, who was Adam? You say, “Well, I didn’t vote for Adam.” Ha, ha. It doesn’t make any difference. You were in Adam. You say, “Adam didn’t have anything to do with me.” Friend, had there been no Adam, there’d have been no you. You’re connected to Adam. You say, “Well, I don’t believe that, people ought to be lost because of one man.” Well, friend, you ought to be glad that a person can be lost by one man because also somebody can be saved by one man. Ha, ha. So don’t rebel against this.

What happened? Well, let me go back and give you some Scripture now. We’re, we’re in Ephesians chapter, well, let’s look in Ephesians chapter 2. Now, here’s how God describes us today. “And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.”

Who is the prince of the power of the air? Who is the spirit that walks within the children and rules over the children of disobedience? He is the devil himself. Now, God created a perfect being. God did not create a devil. God created a perfect being, but He gave that perfect being the power of choice, and Satan chose to rebel against God. And his name, original name was Lucifer, which means light bearer. Satan means adversary. Lucifer, the light bearer, became Satan. The morning of, the bearer of light became the master of darkness.

Now, what happened is this: that Satan had in his heart and in his heart pride. He thought to himself, I’m too great, I’m too wise, I’m too wonderful to be anything less than God. Isaiah chapter 14 tells us he said, “I will be like the Most High.” But no sooner had he unsheathed his sword of rebellion than the thunders of God rolled down through the

corridors of heaven, and Satan was banished from heaven down to the earth. And the rebellion that would not work in heaven was turned to earth, and Satan now turns his attention to man; man that was given dominion here on the earth. Now, Satan was dethroned in heaven, but Satan came to this earth to enthrone himself in the heart and mind of man. You see, Satan lost the throne in heaven, but he gained a throne—listen carefully—in the heart of man. The victory that he lost in heaven was a victory that he gained on earth. Now, how did this happen?

Notice I said in this heading that dominion was legally lost. I thought about that word. I want you to think about it because the entire universe is run by law, God's law. God created these laws and God keeps these laws. And when God gave Adam dominion, it was a legal gift. God gave it to him.

Now, if I give something to Mark Dougherty over here, it's his if I give it to him. He now becomes the legal possessor of it. And once I give it to him, he's free to do with it as he wills.

God gave Adam dominion. It was legally given to him. And Adam forfeited it. Adam gave it away. Adam turned it over to Satan.

I have a dear friend whose father bought me a brand new automobile when he was in college. You know, these kids think they have to have something new, a new automobile when he get in college. One kid said to his, dad, he said, "Dad, all the kids have new cars, all of them!" Dad said, "Well, all right." He bought his son a new car and then went to visit him in college. And he saw some old cars sitting out there in the parking lot. He said, "Son, what about these old cars?" "Oh," he said, "they belong to the professors." I had a friend whose father gave him a brand new car. Do you know what he did? He gave it away. He gave it to another student. Now, if you were that boy's father, what would you say, what would you think, what would you do if you gave your son a brand new car and he gave it to another student? Well, I'll tell you one thing. That father could not go and take it away from that student. The dad gave it to his son, and his son gave it to another. It was legally given. It was legally lost.

You see, Adam willfully turned his dominion over to the devil. He chose to obey Satan. And when he chose to obey Satan and ate of the forbidden fruit, then he turned his dominion over to Adam. Let me give you a couple of Scriptures that bear that out.

Romans chapter 6 and verse 16: "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to obey..." Adam yielded himself to Satan. Adam obeyed Satan. And when Adam obeyed Satan, he became the servant of Satan. Listen to it again. "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death or of obedience unto righteousness?" Now, Adam chose to obey Satan. And when he did, he turned it all over to Satan.

There's an interesting thing in the Bible in Luke chapter 4, that the devil is tempting Jesus. And he takes Jesus up to a high mountain and he says, "You see all of this? Look at the kingdoms of the world." He showed them the kingdoms of the world, the Bible says, in a moment. He saw it all: all of the empires that had been and ever will be. And Satan said to the Son of God. I want you to see how much audacity that devil had. He said to the Son of God, "Look. You see all of this? I will give it to you, for it has been delivered unto me. And I will give it to you, for it's mine to give to whomsoever I will. It was given to me. I'll give it to you if you'll bow down and worship me." Now, you see, Satan has always wanted to be worshipped, but that's not the point in this particular passage. The point I'm trying to make right now is that Satan said, "The kingdoms of this world were delivered to me."

Who delivered them to Satan? Adam himself. And, so what I'm trying to say is this: that when Adam, who was given legal dominion, made for dominion, turned it over to Satan, he lost all of his legal rights and Satan has become the legal possessor of Adam's dominion. And now, Adam, meant to have dominion, is spiritually dead and legally dethroned and Satan is now called, listen, the god of this world.

Who is the god of this world? You say Almighty God. Well, let me give you a Scripture. Second Corinthians chapter 4, verse 4. The Apostle Paul is talking about the mayhem and the disillusionment and the deadness and the darkness that's in the hearts and minds of men, and he says, "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not..." The god of this world. Who is the god of this world? Satan. God gave Adam dominion. Adam turned it over to Satan. And now Satan is the god of this world. No wonder the Bible says we're not wrestling against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places. First thing—get it down in your heart. Dominion was legally given to Adam; it was legally lost by Adam.

II. Man's Dominion Was Rightfully and Righteously Recovered by Jesus

Now, here's the second thing. We're talking a church that has conquest, a conquering church. This dominion that was legally lost by Adam was rightfully recovered by Jesus, rightfully and righteously recovered by Jesus. Now, the word rightfully is, is very important. Jesus did not just walk in and kick Satan out. He didn't say, "I don't care what Adam did. I'm taking it back." He didn't do that. It was legally lost. It must be legally regained.

You're in Ephesians chapter 1. Look, if you will, now in verses, 17, through 21. Paul is praying, "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you,—now, he's talking about you right now, as well as the Ephesians—may give unto

you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him.” I’m telling you, that’s my prayer for you today is that you will have the spirit of wisdom and revelation. You will open your heart. Church, listen. Open your heart to this truth. “The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding,—lo, this language, listen—what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand in heavenly places,—now, watch this—far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in the world to come.” Now, what does all of that mean? Paul says, “O God, open their eyes. O God, help them to understand that when Jesus died, rose again, ascended to the high hills of glory, He has now decimated Satan’s kingdom, and He is above all powers and principalities.” Remember Paul said in Ephesians chapter 6 that we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers? Now, what, what the Bible is saying now is that Jesus is high, high above all of these things. What was legally lost in Adam was rightfully and righteously regained in Christ through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. I’ll show you why in just a moment.

But, suppose God had just stepped in, and said, “I’m God. Out of here, Satan! I banish you! Be gone! I’m going to go back to the beginning and start all over again.” Well, as God, He could do whatever He wanted, I suppose. Well, I don’t suppose; I know He could. But He would have broken His own law. Law would have become a farce if God had failed to keep His own law.

Now, God owes the devil nothing, nothing at all, but God owes something to His own righteousness. God owes something to His own principle of justice. If God had overlooked the legality in this matter, then God Himself would have participated in a legality. God Himself would have to admit that sin has ultimately won. Even though God had stepped in by divine power and set Satan aside, the law still would have been there.

So, what, what is God going to do? Dominion was lost by a man. Now, you must understand this. It must rightfully be won back by a man. No angel could do it. A man must do it. It was legally lost by a man; it must be legally recovered by a man. Now, there’s no member of Adam’s race that can be found who could undo what Adam done, did,—good English—what Adam had done—none, because all were the sons of Adam. And the Bible says, ‘In Adam all die.’ Now, you see, Satan...Adam did not enthrone himself when he obeyed Satan; he enthroned Satan. And Adam, therefore, became a slave of Satan. And the sons of slaves are slaves themselves because the slave master owns the slave and all of his children and his children’s children. There’s none among

the sons of men that can redeem because they themselves are slaves. And yet, it was lost by a man; it must be redeemed by a man. God's answer is found in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who stepped out of heaven and Himself became a man. It's very important that you understand this, that God defeated Satan with a man, with a man, the second Adam.

Put these verses down. First Corinthians chapter 15, beginning in verse 21: "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Now, notice the emphasis here. By man came death and by man comes the resurrection.

Then Hebrews chapter 2, verse 14. Put that down. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood—there he's talking about the children of God—that's us—, we also, he also himself took part of the same—the he refers to Jesus. We're flesh and blood. Jesus took upon Him flesh and blood. Now, watch this—that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." The devil had the power of death. Jesus became a man so He could die and destroy him that had the power of death at Calvary. The full penalty of sin was paid. Satan's contract was annulled, and Satan's back was broken at Calvary.

Put this Scripture down: Galatians 4, verses 3 through 5: "Even so we, when we were children, when we were children in bondage..." Let me read that again. "Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of this world." In bondage! And yet God said, "I give them dominion." And yet they were in bondage. But notice verse 4: "But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son — now, underscore this— made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." God did it all legally. He sent forth His Son, made of a woman, the virgin-born Son of God, to redeem us that we might receive the adoption of sons. This is the reason for Christmas. This is the reason that the Son of God, who has, who had existed always in the bosom of the Father, stepped out of the glory of heaven and came down to this wicked, sinful earth, and born through the portals of a virgin's womb, God became a man. Why? By a man it was lost; by a man it must be recovered. He was made of a woman. He was a true member of the human race.

Now, Jesus, the Son of God, was different from every other man that Satan had ever dealt with, except for Adam. This difference was that Jesus was sinless. So was Adam. So Satan has another sinless being that he must deal with because, you see, Jesus, born of a virgin, had inherited none of Adam's sin. Jesus is not the son of Adam; He's the Son of God. He's not a slave. He's not born a slave. He has no sinful nature like you and I do. O yes, He was God of very God. I'm not taking away from His deity, but I am reminding you of His humanity. He had always been deity, but He became human that

He might legally take back the lost estate that we lost. Jesus had inherited none of Adam's sin and Adam's slavery. He was truly human, truly human.

Now, Jesus could have defeated Satan as very God of very God, ha, ha, but He is defeating Satan as very man of very man. It would have been a very hollow victory if Jesus, as God, were to decimate Satan, if Jesus, as God, were to say, "Satan, be gone to the pit! I'm taking it all back." Suppose He had done that. What kind of an example could He be to me? I'm not God. No. I want you to see, friend, that Jesus defeated Satan as man, not as God. He did not fight against Satan as God, but fought against Satan as sinless man. Satan, when he sees Jesus now on the scene, knows he must have another battle. He must defeat the last Adam as he defeated the first Adam, so a battle begins between Satan and the second Adam whose name is Jesus. And Satan knows if his kingdom is to survive, he must get the second Adam to sin as he got the first one to sin. "Just one sin! If I can get this Son of God to sin, I'm still the master. But if I cannot, He will undo my kingdom." So we see the battle as it ensues in Luke chapter 4 I've already referred to.

Jesus, filled with the Holy Spirit, begins His public ministry. He goes out into the wilderness to fast for forty days and forty nights. The Bible says, "And after, afterwards He was hungry." I think that's probably the greatest understatement in the Bible. He was hungry. That time Satan comes to Him and says, "Now, He's weakened. He's not as strong as He ought to be. I think I can overcome Him." He says, "Look, if You're the Son of God,—notice the if—what a sneer— if You're the Son of God, command these stones they be made bread." I've seen the stones in Israel. They look like brown loaves of bread. "Turn them into bread." And Jesus said, "It's written man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes out of the mouth of God." What is Jesus saying? He's using the sword. He's using the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, and He runs Satan through. There's one thrust. Satan, staggering, comes back again and he takes Jesus up to this high mountain and shows Him all the kingdoms of the world, and says, "All this I'll give you if you'll bow down and worship me." Jesus unsheathes the sword and runs him through again. "It is written thou shalt worship the Lord God, and him only." Satan recoils. He comes back one more time and says, "Look, go to the pinnacle of the temple and cast yourself down. And the angels will bear you up, and you'll just come floating down, and everybody will know you're the Messiah." Jesus said, "It is written thou shalt not put the Lord your God to the test." Three times Jesus came against Satan.

Now, the thing I want you to understand, precious friend, is that Jesus used the same weapons that Adam had—the Word of God and the Spirit of God—the same weapons. He did not pull rank on Adam. And what Adam lost in the Garden, Jesus overcame in a wilderness. Jesus, the Son of God, was tempted to sin, but Jesus had no

itch the devil could scratch.

The battle moves on. Satan withdraws for a while, the Bible says, for a more opportune time. That more opportune time came at dark Gethsemane. Jesus, knowing that He's facing the cross, goes to pray, and the Bible calls it an agony. The agony was the place of warfare or the place of a contest, the place of a battle. It was agony, agony. Jesus is there praying. His face is on the ground. The, the black dirt and the red blood mingled together because His sweat becomes as blood. And He says, "Father, Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." What was in that cup? Your sin, my sin, our sin, their sin, the sin of all the world, the sin that ever will be. Every rape, every murder, every brutality, every blasphemy, every sexual perversion was in that cup. And Him, who knew no sin, God was making to be sin for us. He never sinned, but He had to take our sin upon Himself. And He took that bitter cup and said, "O God, let this cup pass; nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done." Well, you say, "He was God." Yes, but He was man also. As a man, He's saying, "O God, I don't want to do this." Does that bother you that Jesus shrank from the cross?" I'm glad He did because it shows His humanity. He didn't just go swaggering up to the cross and say, "I'm God. This can't hurt me." O, the agony. "God, O God, let it pass; nevertheless..."—friend, your destiny hangs on that word—"...nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done." Satan is defeated again. He's still looking for a more opportune time.

The hounds of hell are baying after the Lord driving Him to Calvary. Satan has the idea that perhaps, when faced with the cross, that Jesus will turn away from the battle. The demonic pressure is indescribable. Jesus could have stepped out, stepped out of the whole thing and said, "That's, that's enough. That's enough." You know, they said of Him when He was on the cross, "He saved others; Himself He could not save." That's wrong! Himself He would not save! He wasn't held to the cross by those searing nails, but by the golden bonds of love. He, the Lord Jesus Christ, went to bloody Calvary. Jesus bowed His head and He said, "It is finished!" That means it's paid in full. All of Satan's legal claims are now nullified. What was lost by man is regained by a man. Legally lost and legally regained.

But it's not over now, yet. After the death there's the glorious resurrection. After the resurrection there is the magnificent ascension. And after the ascension—now, here's where you come in—there is the enthronement of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

III. Man's Dominion Is Gloriously Given to the Church

Now, let me give you the third and final thing very quickly because our time is gone. Dominion was legally lost by Adam. Dominion was righteously regained by Jesus. Now, listen, church. Dominion is gloriously given to the church. Now, whether you want to say amen or not, I want you to say it. Dominion is now gloriously given to the Church. Now,

if you don't understand this, you don't understand what Paul was praying. He said, "O God, open their eyes. Lord, give them the spirit of understanding. Help them to know what they have in Jesus."

One demon said to another demon, "If those liberal theologians ever really admit that Jesus has been raised from the dead and ascended and is over all, hell help me; all heaven will break loose" . And it will break loose when we understand this.

Look in Ephesians chapter 1, verses 22 and 23. It speaks about—well, let's go to verse 21. "Jesus is now far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in the world to come: now, and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all." He's talking now about us. The church is His body. The church is not an organization with Jesus as the president; it is an organism with Jesus as the head. And we are one with the Lord Jesus Christ. He took our sins that we might take His innocence. Friend, He took our guilt that we might be acquitted. He took our despair that we might have His joy. He took our shame that we might know His glory. He took the pains of hell for us that we might know the glories of heaven. We are now in Him and we are His body. He is seated far above all of these things, and He says to us as He sends us out, "All authority is given unto me. Go ye, therefore..."

Does Jesus,—listen carefully, and I'm finished—does Jesus have authority over Satan? Then so do you, so do you. Let me ask you another question. Does Jesus have constant victory? So do you. Satan hopes that you never learn this lesson, that He has given you authority over all the power of the enemy. The dominion that Adam lost was won back by the Lord Jesus Christ and given to Bellevue Baptist Church! Would to God that we can understand this. The Lamb has prevailed. His conquest is complete. He conquered on the throne. Excuse me. He conquered on the tree, and He conquered in the tomb, and now He sits upon the throne.

Now, here's the thing. Ephesians says that we sit together with Him in heavenly places, that God raised Him up and God puts us with Him in the heavenly places. I got a letter from a friend. He signed it, "Keep Looking Down." Most people say, "Keep Looking Up." No, we look down. All things are under His feet; therefore, they're under our feet.

Conclusion

You say, "Pastor, why don't I practice it? Why is my life so miserable, so defeated?" I'll tell you why. Because you fail to understand and put into practice what I've just preached. God's plan for you, for this church is constant, continual, conspicuous victory. Jesus said, "I give you authority over all the power of the devil." Satan has no power over you—none, none, none, none, none, nada, none—none! You need to understand

that. Don't say, "The devil made me do it." He can't. The only power he has over you is what you yield to him by unbelief. Living He loved me, dying He saved me, buried He carried my sins far away. Rising He justified freely forever, and one day He's coming, Oh glorious day. Science can't explain it, history cannot repeat it, and time will never blot it out. Thank God for our victory.

Bow your heads in prayer.

If you're a Christian and haven't been living in victory, would you confess your sin? I meant that word—your sin; the sin of unbelief, the sin of not yielding, perhaps the willful sin of ignorance. Say, "God, have mercy upon me. I want to live according to my throne rights in Jesus."

Now, those of you who are not saved, aren't you tired of being Satan's slave? You see, you're going to be a slave to someone—either to God or, or Satan. Nature abhors a vacuum. When you try and enthrone yourself, you only enthrone Satan. If you're tired of being Satan's dirty plaything, if you're tired of being Satan's slave, and if you want to live a life of liberty and dominion and share heaven with our Lord forever, would you pray a prayer like this: "O God, I'm a sinner, and I'm lost, and I deserve hell, but I want to be saved. Jesus, You died to save me. You promised to save me if I would trust You. I do trust You. I receive now the gift of Calvary, which is eternal life. Come into my life. And begin now to make me the person You want me to be, and help me never to be ashamed of You. In Your name I pray. Amen.

Now, look up here. Look up here. I'm going to give you an opportunity; God is giving the opportunity, not me, for you to make public what's in your heart. You know, the Bible says, "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so." Jesus said, "If you're ashamed of me, I'll be ashamed of you. If you confess me, I'll confess you." Today, if you would like to acknowledge Christ as your personal Savior and Lord, I wish I could do it for you. What a joy! But I can't. I've preached as best I know how. But if you'd like to acknowledge Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior, when we stand and sing this invitation song, I want you just to leave your seat and make your way down any of these aisles. Standing down here at the front waiting to welcome you will be a minister, a man of God. And just say to him, "I'm trusting Jesus," and we'll give you some Scripture to stand on, answer any questions we can, and seal it in prayer. What a great, great, great thing that would be! The devil, he doesn't want you to do it. I can tell you. He'll whisper in your ear and say, "Don't do it. You'll make a fool of yourself," or, "Wait till later," or, "You can't live it." He's a liar! Don't listen to him. He didn't sweat blood in Gethsemane for you. Jesus did! And you come and acknowledge Christ. You come if no one else does. You come if all the others do if you need to.

Others of you need a church home. I want you to obey the Savior who died for you, whose will it is that you be a member of a local New Testament church. If not this one,

one somewhere where the Word of God is preached. And if you're saved and need a church home, you need to come and say, "I want to place my membership here," if that's what God is speaking to your heart about. We'll tell you how you may become a member of this church.

Now, if you're in the balcony, somebody will be waiting to receive you under that banner that says Messiah in that corner, or under this banner that says Redeemer, waiting to receive those of you in the balcony. You just move that way. Those of you on the ground floor move this way.

Let's stand for prayer. Father God, bless, dear Lord God, this invitation and draw the lost to Jesus. Help people not to be ashamed of Him. In Your holy name. Amen. As we sing, you step out and come.

A Conquering Church

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: February 6, 2005

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 1:26

“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.”

GENESIS 1:26

Outline

Introduction

- I. Dominion Was Legally Lost by Adam
- II. Dominion Was Rightfully Recovered by Jesus
- III. Dominion Is Gloriously Given to the Church

Conclusion

Introduction

Be finding the book of Genesis chapter 1, and put a bookmark there, if you would, and then turn to the book of Ephesians chapter 2. As the choir is finding their place, you find your place there in the Word of God. We've been in a series of messages, "Milestones and New Horizons." I've been thinking about the kind of a church that I have endeavored to teach this church to be and the kind of a church that I want it to be, the church that, as we look back on the past, we see our endeavors; as we look forward, we see our hopes. I've talked to you about a unified church. I've talked to you about a steadfast church. I've talked to you about a praying church, and other things like that. Today, I want to talk to you about a church of conquest—a conquering church. God's plan for Bellevue is that we move forward, not backward. God's plan for you is that you be victorious day by day.

Now, why did God make man in the first place? God made man to have dominion. God made man to have victory. God made man to have mastery. Look in Genesis chapter 1 and verse 26: *“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.”* (Genesis 1:26)

When God made Adam and Eve, He made them king and queen of His domain, and God gave them rule. David, in the Psalms, said the same thing. Put in your margin

Psalm 8 and verse 6: *“Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put...”*—now, listen, church—*“thou hast put all things under his feet.”* (Psalms 8:6) That was God’s plan. That’s why God made man. Man was designed for dominion. He was made for mastery. Do you think that is true today? Read any newspaper. See the rape, the murder, the war, the riots, the famine, the disaster, the heartache, the tears, the fears, the failures of mankind. Man, given dominion, has lost that dominion. Our message this morning is this: We’re going to look at how it was lost, and how our dear Lord has bought it back for us and given it to this wonderful church—to Bellevue, and to every Bible-believing church—and to every Spirit-filled Christian, that we might live and walk in victory. Three things I want to lay upon your heart.

Now, go to Ephesians with me, and I want you to see what happened to this dominion.

I. Dominion Was Legally Lost by Adam

First of all, I want you to see that this dominion was legally lost by Adam. Now, underscore the word *legally*—legally lost by Adam. Now, look, if you will, in Ephesians chapter 2, verses 1 and 2: *“And you hath he quickened,”*—that literally means “were made alive”—*“who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.”* (Ephesians 2:1–2) Did you see that? “The prince of the power of the air, the spirit that works in the children of disobedience.” There’s a dark, malevolent force at work in the world today. And you can look around and see it is the power of Satan.

Now, how did this come to pass? Well, Satan is a created being. He’s not coequal or coeternal with God the Father. God created him, a perfect angel, the highest of the high. He was the vice-regent in heaven. He received worship and passed it on to the Father. He was like a high priest. But the Bible says that he fell “by the multitude of his merchandise.” (Ezekiel 28:16) That is, what passed through his hands began to stick to his fingers. He took this praise and looked at it and said, “You know, I ought to have some of that. I’m too great, too strong, too wise, too beautiful not to be worshipped. I will be like the Most High.” And Lucifer, the son of the morning, became Satan, the father of the night. And no sooner had he unsheathed his sword of rebellion against Almighty God than the thunders of Jehovah’s wrath came down the corridors of heaven, and Satan was banished from heaven. He fell from heaven, and a third of the angels fell with him and became demon spirits. Now Satan, having lost the battle in heaven, comes to this earth hoping to win the battle on earth. Failing to enshrine himself in heaven, he wants to enshrine himself here upon this earth and receive worship from humankind, because it has always been his dark, devilish motive to be worshipped. And so Adam

was conned, seduced by Satan to turn it all over to Satan.

Now, you see, God gave to Adam dominion. And when God gave it, He gave it. Just as Lucifer had a will, Adam had a will. And so God gave to Adam and Eve this dominion. And since it was given, it legally belonged to Adam. And Adam legally turned it over to Satan. Now it was a stupid thing that Adam did. Sure, Satan beguiled him. Surely, Satan tempted him, but nonetheless, Adam was guilty by turning the dominion, the rule, the authority that God had given to him over to Satan.

I have a friend whose father gave him, when he was in college, a brand-new automobile. You know, it's an amazing thing. These college kids think they need new cars. One boy said to his dad, he said, "Dad, all the kids have a new car except me." The dad said, "Well, all right," bought him a new car, and then went to see him. He said, "Son, what about all these older cars on the parking lot?" "Well," the son said, "those belong to the teachers." My friend's dad gave him a brand-new automobile. And since the father gave it to him, it was legally his. Do you know what that boy did? He gave it to another college student—gave it to him! Now if you were his dad, I don't know how you'd feel. I think I'd know how I would feel if I gave my son a car and he gave it to somebody else.

God gave Adam dominion, and Adam turned it over to Satan. It was legally given, and it was legally lost.

Now, how did Adam turn it over to Satan? What happened? Well, Adam, rather than obeying God, disobeyed God, and began to obey Satan. And when he did, he became Satan's slave. Here's a key verse—Romans chapter 6 and verse 16: "*Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are...*"—it literally means "his slaves you are"—"*to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?*" (Romans 6:16) You obey the devil; you collect your wages, but he becomes your master. You are his slave. Now all of it, therefore, was delivered to Satan by Adam.

Now some people say, "No, God still is the god of this world." No, He's not! Satan is the god of this world. Put it down—2 Corinthians chapter 4 and verse 4: "*In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.*" (2 Corinthians 4:4) It's very interesting. You know, I'm preaching every Sunday to some people who are blind, and they've been blinded by Satan, who is the god of this world, and that's the reason that we need to pray that God will open eyes that they might see, that they might understand.

Satan now is called "*the god of this world.*" (2 Corinthians 4:4) Adam had dominion. He gave it to Satan. Satan tempted Jesus to worship him. The Bible tells us, in Luke chapter 4, that Satan took Jesus up to a high mountain and, in a moment, showed Him

all of the kingdoms of the world. And he said to the Son of God, “Look, all of this I will give you if you will bow down and worship me.” Now Jesus said, “It is written, ‘Thou shalt worship the Lord God, and Him only.’” (Luke 4:5–8; Matthew 4:8–10) But that’s not the point right now. We’ll get to that in a moment. The point right now is Jesus did not say, “It is not yours to give.” Jesus recognized that it was now dominion that was legally held by Satan. The apostle Paul calls him “*the god of this world.*” (2 Corinthians 4:4) And he had that dominion that Adam gave to him, and he offered to give it to the Lord Jesus Christ.

II. Dominion Was Rightfully Recovered by Jesus

So the first thing I want you to notice: This dominion was legally lost by a man whose name was Adam. Second thing: This dominion was rightfully—and may I say righteously—regained by another man, the Lord Jesus Christ. Now God’s mighty plan was to righteously and legally take back Adam’s lost estate and give it to the sons and the daughters of men. But now, listen very carefully, church. It was legally lost. It must be legally restored.

Now God is God. We all know that. God can do anything He wishes to do. God could have just stepped in and said, “Satan, be gone! I obliterate you, and I take back everything that Adam delivered unto you. And now I’m going to give it to a new race of people. You’re gone! I’m starting all over again. I wash my hands of you.” He could do that. But why didn’t He do that? Because God is true to His own justice. God owes Satan nothing, but God owes to Himself very much. And God owes to Himself that sense of righteousness and justice. And if God had simply dismissed Satan, sin would have ultimately won, even though God just simply dismissed him.

Now God has a plan to get back what Adam lost, and God’s plan is centered in a man. Now dominion was given to a man, dominion was lost by a man, and dominion must be regained by a man. And so God says, “Who can regain what Adam lost?” Well, none of the sons of men can do that, because all of the sons of Adam have the sinful nature of Adam. And a sinner can redeem no one; he’s a sinner himself. He can offer no innocent sacrifice. And besides that, the men of this world and the women of this world since Adam were born slaves—slaves of Satan. And, you see, the sons and daughters of a slave are slaves themselves. And no son of Adam, sinner and slave, could redeem mankind. Yet the redeemer must be a man. This is the reason for Christmas, that God became a man. Jesus Christ, who had dwelt from all eternity in the bosom of the Father—the eternal Son with the eternal Father—stepped out of the ivory palaces, came into this world of woe, became a man, that He might redeem us.

Now, listen. Don’t miss it. It’s so important that you understand this—that Jesus did not redeem us as God, but He redeemed us as man. Let me give you some scriptures

that will make that very clear. First Corinthians chapter 15, verses 21 and 22: *“For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”* (1 Corinthians 15:21–22) You say, “Who’s Adam? I didn’t vote for him. Why should what he did affect me?” Well, friend, if there had been no Adam, there wouldn’t be any you. We’re tied up in Adam. The Bible really only recognizes two men—Adam and his progeny, and Jesus and His progeny—those who are in Adam, and those who are in Christ. Now in Adam, all die; in Christ, all will be made alive. Notice: *“Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.”* (1 Corinthians 15:21) Do you get the emphasis: *“by man”*?

Now, put down Hebrews chapter 2 and verse 14: *“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same;”—“the children”*: that’s us. *“He”* refers to Jesus. We are *“flesh and blood.”* He took part of *“flesh and blood”*—*“that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.”* (Hebrews 2:14) Now God in spirit form could never die. In order for God to die, God must become a man. In order for Jesus to pay the full penalty of sin, nullify Satan’s claim, there had to be a death of a sinless sacrifice. And Jesus, through death, destroyed him that had the power of death. In order to die, Jesus had to become a man, that He might destroy him that has the power of death—that is, the devil.

Another scripture. All of these now are dealing with the humanity of Jesus Christ. This is Galatians 4, verses 3 through 5: *“Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage”—now we weren’t made to be in bondage. We were made to be masters. But we were in bondage—“under the elements of the world.”* (Galatians 4:3) We were created to be over, not under, but here we are in bondage and under. But look in verse 4: *“But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman,”*—He had a human birth—*“made of a woman,”*—but now, listen to this—*“made under the law...”*—God, my friend, is going to legally regain what Satan legally turned over. And the Bible says He was—*“made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.”* (Galatians 4:4–5) Jesus, in plain English, was born of a virgin that we might be born again.

Now Satan, when he saw the second Adam come, realized that his kingdom is threatened, that the second Adam has come to undo and to buy back what the first Adam did and lost. And so Satan gathers all of the artillery of hell to aim it on this second man, this Lord from heaven, to get Him to sin, because if Satan can get Him to sin, he has won the victory. And so Satan now marshals all of the artillery of hell against the Lord Jesus Christ to tempt Him, to get Him to sin. Now I remind you one more time that when Satan came against Jesus, Jesus could have said, “Look, Satan, you don’t have any authority over me. I don’t have to worry about your temptation. I’m not only a man, but I’m also God—as much God as if I were not man at all—and as God, I banish

you.” But He didn’t do that. Why didn’t He do that? Because He could not defeat Satan as God and be true to His own law. He had to defeat Satan as man and be true to His justice. It was lost by a man. It was given to a man, lost by a man, and must be regained by a man.

And so the Lord Jesus Christ comes to this earth, and there is a battle. And that battle is a battle to get the Lord Jesus Christ into sin. And I want you to notice this battle as it goes.

First of all, there was the wilderness temptation. Jesus is baptized. He begins His public ministry at the age of thirty. Luke chapter 4 tells us that He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted, to be tested, by Satan. (Luke 4:1–2) It’s all a part of God’s plan. Jesus is not running from the battle. There He is. He’s fasting forty days and forty nights, as you saw in the film *The Passion*. And then the Bible says, I think, a great understatement: “Afterward He hungered.” (Luke 4:2) Forty days and forty nights—yes, I suppose so! And Satan comes to Him. In this weakened condition, Satan comes to Jesus with a temptation. He said, “Look, if you’re the Son of God, command these stones that they be made bread.” (Matthew 4:3; Luke 4:3)

Now I’ve been to Israel many times, and I’ve seen those stones that look exactly like a loaf of baked bread, round and brown. “Command these stones that they be made bread.” (Matthew 4:3; Luke 4:3) And Jesus answered, *“It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”* (Matthew 4:4; Luke 4:4) And what did Jesus do? He unsheathed the sword of the Word of God, and He ran Satan through. Satan, wounded, comes back again with another temptation. Satan says, “Come up here. Let me show you the kingdoms of this world. I’ll give them all to you if you’ll bow down and worship me. You came to be a king? Take the easy way. You can have it all. Just worship me.” (Matthew 4:8–9; Luke 5–7) And Jesus unsheathed the sword again from the book of Deuteronomy. I have an idea He must have been doing His devotions in the book of Deuteronomy. He said, *“It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.”* (Matthew 4:10, Luke 4:8) Satan recoils again. He comes back the third time and says, “Why don’t you go up there to the pinnacle of the temple and jump off? And the angels will come and bear you down, and you’ll come floating into the court of the temple and everybody will think you’re the Messiah. You don’t have to go to the cross. Just jump off, and God will protect you, lest you strike a stone with your foot.” And Jesus said, “It is written, ‘You shall not tempt the Lord your God.’” (Matthew 4:5–7; Luke 4:9–12) Three times Jesus ran him through with the sword of the Word of God.

Now the important thing for you to understand is this, that Luke 4, verse 1, says He was led of the Spirit, filled with the Spirit, anointed by the Spirit in the wilderness. (Luke 4:1) Number two: He used the Word of God over and over and over again. Why is that

so important? Because Jesus did not defeat Satan as God would defeat Satan; He defeated Satan as man should defeat Satan. The same weapons that Jesus used in the wilderness were the weapons that were available to Adam in the garden. What were they? The Spirit of God and the Word of God. Jesus, filled with the Spirit, taking the Word of God, won that victory over Satan.

Now the Bible says that Satan withdrew for a more opportune time. (Luke 4:13) The battle was not over, and Satan did not give up easily. He waited. The most opportune time that he saw next was dark, bloody Gethsemane. I say, “bloody Gethsemane.” There was blood before the cross. Jesus was in such agony in dark Gethsemane that His sweat came as great drops of blood. (Luke 22:44) You’ll not understand Gethsemane unless you understand the humanity of Jesus. Jesus is praying, the Bible says, in agony. In Bible times, the *agon* was a battle. It’s where we get our word *agony*. All of the forces of hell were battering against the Lord Jesus there in Gethsemane. Metaphorically, there was a cup, and that cup was being pressed to the lips of the Lord Jesus for Him to drink. And what was in that cup? Sin was in that cup: rape, murder, perversion, child abuse, pillage, arson, blasphemy, idolatry, rebellion. It was all in that cup. Your sin, my sin, their sin, all the sins that ever have been, all the sins that ever will be, were in that cup. And Jesus was to drink that cup. Why? Because God had made Him to be sin for us—not a sinner, but sin for us—that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. It was part of God’s plan that Jesus would take our sin, carry our sin to the cross, and on the cross, with His rich, red, royal blood, pay the penalty for our sin, for “*without shedding of blood is no remission.*” (Hebrews 9:22)

Adam got us into a mess. The second Adam came to get us out. And see Jesus with black dirt and red blood caked on His face. “*O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.*” (Matthew 26:39) You see, had Jesus taken that cup, Jesus would not only be taking our sin, but Jesus Himself would become the object of the Father’s wrath. Almighty God would pour out upon His dear Son His wrath and His righteous judgment, and the punishment for sin would be on Jesus. And Jesus said, “I don’t want to do it”—“I don’t want to do it!” Does that bother you? Friend, listen. I’m glad it was this way. I’m glad that Jesus said, “Please let this cup pass from me,” because that shows His humanity. Don’t get the idea it was easy—that He’s just God just going to the cross and saying, “You can’t hurt me.” No. “Oh, God, no. God, no. Is there some other way?” And silence from heaven said, “There’s no other way.” And Jesus said, “Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.” (Luke 22:42) Friend, your destiny hangs on that word *nevertheless*. “Nevertheless, not my will but yours be done.” (Luke 22:42) And Satan is defeated again, and he shrinks back.

The third round comes in this battle. It’s Calvary. The hounds of hell now are baying after Jesus, driving Him to the cross. Surely, He will turn His back now. Surely, He will

not allow Himself to be put on the cross. Surely, He can call twelve legions of angels, and they will come and save Him. They laughed at Him when He was on the cross. They said, “He saved others. Himself, He cannot save.” But they were wrong. Friend, it was Himself He would not save. He said, “No man taketh my life from me. I lay it down of myself.” (John 10:18) *The only man that Jesus ever refused to save was Himself.* And Jesus, in agony and blood, bowed His head, paid the price, and said, “*Tetalestai!* It is finished! It is paid in full!” (John 19:30) And Satan’s back was broken.

But he doesn’t give up yet. They took the Lord Jesus Christ and put Him in the grave, and Pilate said, “Make it as sure as you can.” (Matthew 27:65) And they put the seal of the Roman government on it. They rolled a stone in front of it, and nature made it as sure as she could. (Matthew 27:66) And then death wrapped the Son of God in the chains of death and made it as sure as death could. And the proud Pharisees said, “He’s dead.” And sneering Sadducees said, “He is dead.” And delighted demons said, “He’s dead.” But three days later, the Son of God woke up, stretched, took off the grave clothes, put His heel on the neck of death, pulled the sting out of death, took the crown of death and put it on His head, and walked out of that grave.

But it’s not over yet. Jesus then went down into the netherworld to declare that the battle had been won. And Satan said, “Oh, don’t let Him ascend and present the blood in the glory!” But the grave could not hold Him. The netherworld could not keep Him. And Jesus ascended the high hills of glory, and there in the tabernacle not pitched by men but by God, took the precious blood and offered it there, and then sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. How did He do this? As a sinless man. He was God. I’m not diminishing His deity. Be careful you don’t diminish His humanity or you’ll miss the whole thing—that He, as man, brought back what a man had lost, and now He is seated in the heavens. Let me tell you something. When He comes again, you’ll see the nail prints in His hand. You know what that tells me? Once He became a man, He is forever man. He didn’t become a man and then lay it aside. When He took human flesh, forever and ever and ever He is a man. What love, that He became one like us that He might redeem us!

III. Dominion Is Gloriously Given to the Church

Now the third and final thing I want you to see—and very quickly I want you to see—what I’m going to call the dominion that is now gloriously given to the Church. Look, if you will, here in Ephesians again, chapter 1, verses 22 and 23. The Bible says, “*And [God] hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.*” (Ephesians 1:22–23) I have a feeling that I need to back up and go to verse 17. Paul is praying. He says, “[*Oh,*] *that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the*

spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him...—Paul says—oh, church, don't miss this! Bellevue, don't miss this!—“*[have] the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,*”—look at it—“*which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.*” (Ephesians 1:17–23) Skip over to chapter 2, verse 6: “*And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.*” (Ephesians 2:6)

Question: How many of you are in Christ Jesus? Let me see your hand. Okay. Where are you seated? In heavenly places. You are in Christ. When God raised up Christ, He raised up you. You see, Jesus by death destroyed him that had the power of death. And now He is seated in the heavenlies, far above all principalities and powers that ever were. He is there living, risen, victorious! And guess who's there with Him? You are! You say, “Well, you make me sound like an egomaniac if I say I am.” Well, friend, I'll tell you, you are spiritually dull if you say you're not. I started to use another word than *dull*, but my wife says don't use it. Understand, friend, that His death, burial, and resurrection had your name on it.

I want to ask you a question. Has Jesus ascended? Have you ascended? Let me ask you another question. Does Jesus have all power? Do you have all power? Now the word *power* means “authority.” It doesn't mean that you fly through the air or walk on water. Authority. Were demons subject to Jesus? Are they subject to you? Well, friend, you've got to learn this—you've got to learn this. The devil doesn't want you to learn this.

One demon said to another demon, “If those liberal theologians really ever let Jesus Christ out of that grave, hell help us, all heaven will break loose.”

You see, Paul is saying, “Oh, God, open their eyes! Oh, God, help them to see it! Oh, God, give them understanding that they have been co-crucified, co-buried, co-raised, co-ascended, and co-seated with Jesus in the heavenlies, and dominion has been given back to them!”

Conclusion

Now, friend, let me tell you this—and I want you to understand it. Listen from my heart. If you don't have dominion, if you're not living in dominion, it is not because the

devil is so powerful. Bellevue, listen. Satan has no power over you. Are you listening? I said no, none, none, none—none does he have over you—none! Jesus said, “I give you authority over all the power of the enemy—all, all, all, all!” Now you say, “Then why don’t I have it?” Paul said, “Oh, God, open their eyes! Oh, God, give them the wisdom of understanding that they might know what they have in the Lord Jesus Christ!” Bellevue, God wants you to be a victorious church, not stampeded by the devil. The devil is like old Saddam Hussein down in that hole, and the worst is yet to come for Satan. *And the next time Satan reminds you of your past; you remind him of his future.*

Adam lost it. Jesus, as a man, bought it back. And now He has given it back to you through His cross.

Bow your heads. If you’re saved and you’ve not been living in victory, confess it. That doesn’t mean you’ll not have pain and sickness and sorrow and disappointment. You’re not to be victorious *from* these things, but *in* these things. We’re still awaiting the redemption of the body. But Satan has no power over you. And if you’ve been living in failure, it’s either because there’s willful sin or terrible ignorance—and ask God to help you to be victorious.

Now if you’re not yet saved, aren’t you tired of being Satan’s plaything? Aren’t you tired of being a slave to Satan when Jesus has set you free? The fact that Jesus undid what Adam did does you no good at all unless you accept it or receive it. When Abraham Lincoln made the Emancipation Proclamation, there were still some slaves: (a) some who’d never heard of it, and (b) some who heard of it but couldn’t believe it, and (c) others who just decided they were going to stay with their master anyway. Friend, it does you no good until you believe it, receive it, and take a new master, the Lord Jesus Christ. Either you are in Adam, a slave of Satan, or you are in Christ. Would you like to be in Christ? Pray and ask Him to come into your heart. Say, “Lord, I’m a sinner. I cannot save or redeem myself. Lord Jesus, you died to save me. You promised to save me if I would trust you. I do trust you, Lord Jesus. I receive you now as my Lord and Savior.”

The Bible and Animal Rights

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: August 18, 1990

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 1:26

“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.”

GENESIS 1:26

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Creation of Man and the Animals
- II. The Comparison of Man and the Animals
 - A. A Similarity of Design
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 - C. A Similarity in Death
- III. The Contrasts of Man and the Animals
 - A. Man Has a Craving for Deity
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Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take God’s Word and open, please, to the very first book of the Bible, and the very first chapter, Genesis chapter 1 and verse 26. We’re going to read in just a moment, but as soon as you’ve found it—and it ought to be very easy for you to find—as soon as you’ve found it, would you just pause for a moment and look up here and let me tell you something. Ladies and gentlemen, the deceptions of the New Age are upon us. We’re living in a time that many are calling the New Age. Some are calling it the Age of Aquarius. Others are calling it globalism, or new globalism. Some are calling it cosmic humanism. And there are all kinds of names for this esoteric movement. It’s a syncretism of so many things. It’s like a sponge that soaks in many kinds of weird, occult, offbeat, and sometimes seemingly nonsensical ideas. And yet it is incredible how many are buying into it.

Now may I say to you that the New Age is not new. It goes all the way back to

ancient Babylon. It's one of the mustiest things around. And it is rooted primarily, however, in Eastern religions, and what we would call today Hinduism. And God, in the New Age, is impersonal. They believe in God, but not the God that you believe in, not the God that I believe in, not Jehovah God, Elohim, the Lord and God and Father of our Savior Jesus Christ. That's not the God that they believe in. Their God is an impersonal God, known as "the Force," or they think of God as energy, or the all-pervading reality. It's a form of pantheism. Everything is God and God is everything. As a matter of fact, you are God.

But not only do they believe that you are God; they also believe that the animals are God. Everything is God. It doesn't elevate man above the animals, but it brings man down to the level of the animals. I've said all that to say this: I want to speak to you today on a subject I never in my wildest dreams as a young preacher believed that I would be preaching on. And it is this: "The Bible and Animal Rights." I never thought I'd ever be preaching on that—never in my life. And when I first heard about animal rights and saw a few people with placards, and so forth, I dismissed it lightly, as some people from somewhere, some fringe—something silly, and something absurd. But I changed my mind, and I see now that what we are up against is a part of a total conspiracy against our Lord and His Christ and His Word.

Now I say that a lot of this is rooted in Eastern religion, Hinduism, which has as its backbone pantheism and reincarnation. Reincarnation is that man and the animals are interrelated, and at one time you may have been an animal, and now you're a human being. But if your karma is bad, you may again be an animal. You may wake up in the next world as a toad or a spider. They literally believe this. I was amazed how many that we met overseas in our last mission trip believed in and espoused the idea of reincarnation. That is, as you go through life, you may progress or you may regress.

And you say, "What does this have to do with animal rights?" Well, be careful when you go to McDonald's. You may be eating your great grandmother. It sounds silly, but, dear friend, these people are deadly serious about this entire matter. It's incredible—not that people will *not* believe the Bible; what is really incredible is what people *will* believe—what they *will* believe.

Now, remember that if you are pantheist—that is, *pan*, meaning "all," and *theist*, meaning "God"—that means that all is God and God is all. That doesn't elevate you. You say, "Well, if God is everything, then I am God." Yes, but dirt is God also, and you're equal with dirt. It doesn't elevate you. What it does is to bring you down to the level of the animals and things. Now the animal rights movement is a synthesis of a number of things like secular humanism, Hinduism, New Ageism, and evolutionary thought. All of these things are together.

And so, what are the goals of those who are campaigning for animal rights? Well,

number one, they reject—listen to me—they reject the idea that man is essentially, intrinsically, and basically different from the animals. And their goals, therefore, are to set the animals free—not just simply from inhumane treatment. Not a one of us, I hope, would argue against humane treatment for any animal. But they’re not wanting to set the animals free from inhumane treatment; they are wanting to set the animals free from the dominion of mankind. What they’re trying to say is that there is basically no difference between man and animal.

You say, “Well, what is the impact?” Well, the impact, my dear friend, is incredible. Now, let me just read some of what these are saying. For example, we say, “Well, let’s be humane to the animals.” But Michael Fox, a veterinarian who directs the Center for the Respect of Life and Environment at the Humane Society of the United States, says—quote—“Humane treatment is simply sentimental, sympathetic patronage.” That is, “We’re not just looking for humane treatment.”

Gary Francione, a law professor who litigates animal rights cases, said he would not allow an animal to suffer, even if the research would produce a cure for cancer. He said—and I quote—“I don’t believe it is morally permissible to exploit weaker beings, even if we derive benefits.” And in a symposium with these animal rights people, one person asked a question like this: “If a pig could give its life to save the life of a baby, would you be for it?” And this animal rightist said, “Absolutely not.” He warned sternly against that and said, “The baby’s parents should be made to care about the pig.”

Now we hear about racism and sexism. Get ready. There is a new word coming: *speciesism*. That is, if you think that human beings are more important than animals, then you are a *speciesist*. Hard to say, so maybe it won’t go for very long. But it’s hard to say. Now, listen. You say, “This is all silly.” But Peter Singer’s foundational text, *Animal Liberation*, is the textbook that many of these people go by. And let me quote from that. Quote: “It can no longer be maintained by anyone but a religious fanatic that man is the special darling of the universe,”—and by the way, most of you here are what he would consider religious fanatics. And he goes on to write—“or that other animals were created to provide us with food, or that we have divine authority over them, and divine permission to kill them.”

And then again, Michael Fox is quoted in the *Washingtonian*. He put it succinctly, and this is what he said—listen: “There are no clear distinctions between us and animals. Animals communicate. Animals have emotions. Animals can think. Some thinkers believe that the human soul is different because we are immortal. And that just becomes completely absurd.” They’re saying, “There is no difference.”

Now you can understand why there are some who want to treat animals as humans, and why some human beings are living as animals. “There is no difference.” And of course, if man is the product of evolution, they’re right. And any straight-thinking person

would say, “That is right.” I mean, if man is indeed just another animal who has come up through the evolutionary process, the only difference between man and animals is that man is probably a little cleverer.

Now, let’s see what God’s Word has to say about it. And by the way, dear friend, aren’t you glad for the Bible? This is the one book, and the one book alone, that has the truth that we can go to and find what it’s all about. And here the key is to the front door of the Bible—Genesis chapter 1, verse 26: *“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness:”—*why does it say “our”? God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, you have the Trinity here in the first chapter of the Bible—God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. “God”—singular—“said, Let us”—plural—“make man in our image.” And then read—*“and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.”* (Genesis 1:26)

Now, ladies and gentlemen, in all philosophy there is one overriding question. Let me tell you what it is. Here’s the question: Did God make man, or did man make God? That is, is man in the image of God, or is God in the imagination of man? That’s the question. Did God make man, or did man simply conjure up the idea of God? And your whole philosophy will go from one side to the other, according to how you feel about that.

Now there are those who just simply feel that we are the product of blind chance, that the whole universe somehow is just here; it never had a beginning, and if it did have a beginning, out of nothing something came. You have some philosophical problems with that, I hope—that nothing times nobody equals everything. But that’s what they believe. And then somehow out of this primordial ooze, this chaotic mass, somehow the most complicated forms of life, without any guidance, just came into being.

First of all, out of this ooze, out of this primordial soup, there came primitive protozoa, early life. And then millions of years, billions of years, compounded by chance, turned that primitive life into unsegmented worms. And then dump in some more millions of years, and those unsegmented worms became fish. And then mix in some more years and some more chance, and those fish became reptiles, and then some more years and some more chance, and these first amphibians, and then reptiles, and then those reptiles became birds, and then mammals, and then man.

Now in the nursery school, when we tell about a prince that was a frog who is kissed by a princess, and the frog turns into a prince; we call that a fairy tale. But in the classroom, when frogs become princes, we call that science. But they believe that. I mean, they believe that! And if they believe that, I say, “They’re right.” There is basically no difference between man and the animals, except that man is a higher form of the

animals. But that isn't what God's Word says. Look at what God's Word says in verse 26: *"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion."* (Genesis 1:26)

Now, let me talk to you about three things:

I. The Creation of Man and the Animals

First of all, the creation of man and the animals—the creation of man and the animals. Man and the animals were created by Almighty God, and they were created at basically the same time. The Bible does not teach evolution. "Well," you say, "Pastor, what about all these primitive half humans and half men that we've seen in the textbooks? What about all of that? These creatures in the museums, these men on their way up?" Well, dear friend, that is what is in somebody's imagination. These are not pictures of actual beings. These are the creation of somebody's imagination.

For example, the Scopes Trial was held here in Tennessee, the famous Monkey Trial, back in 1925. William Jennings Bryan, who was a great believer in the Word of God, argued with Clarence Darrow about evolution, and so forth. And Darrow, who was a very cunning, a very shrewd, a very brilliant lawyer, argued with the great Christian, William Jennings Bryan. And one of the things that Darrow did was to bring in as evidence for evolution a replica of a prehistoric man, paintings and all. His name was Nebraska Man. And Nebraska Man was thought to be one million years old. And he said, "What are you going to do, Bryan, about Nebraska Man?" "Well," Bryan replied, "I just think we need more evidence. I don't think you have enough evidence to prove that Nebraska Man—this half man, half ape—ever existed."

Well, the scientists themselves did some more work on Nebraska Man, and do you know what they found out? They found out that the man who discovered Nebraska Man, a man named Mr. Cook, had really discovered a tooth. I didn't say, "teeth"; I said, "tooth." And out of one tooth, they created an entire race of people—male and female—drew pictures of them, and there they were—and gave an age and a date. But, friend, you haven't heard the punch line. Later on, they found the entire skeleton, and it was the tooth of a pig. And out of the tooth of a pig, Clarence Darrow—the great, brilliant lawyer—came into the courtroom and held up a whole race of men and said, "This is proof of evolution." "Well," you say, "yes, that doesn't disprove that evolution is true. It just proves they made a mistake in that particular area."

When I was in school, we studied in my biology classes the Piltdown Man. He was supposed to have been discovered by Charles Dawson. And what Charles Dawson really had, in this supposed ape-man, was a jaw that had two molars in it and part of a skull. He found it in a gravel pit in Piltdown, England, and he presented that. They had a whole race of men that they described after that. Later on, it was shown to be a hoax.

And in 1956, the *Reader's Digest* had an article—I have it somewhere in my files—called “The Great Piltdown Hoax.” What had happened is that the jawbone that they found was the jawbone of an ape. He was only fifty years old. Someone had filed his teeth down and discolored them with chemicals and hid them there in Piltdown hoping that it would be discovered. It was a joke, a colossal joke.

But, my dear friend, the point I want to make is that the scientists bought into it lock, stock, and barrel, and developed a whole race out of it. Now these are only two examples. But I just use them as examples to show how eager men are to make monkeys of themselves—how eager.

“Well,” you say, “Pastor, what about all the dinosaurs? Now, forget the cavemen and the half-apes. What about all the dinosaurs? Don't you believe the dinosaurs existed?” Of course I do! The Bible tells about the creation of the dinosaurs right here. The Bible says here, in Genesis 1, verse 24, *“And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so.”* (Genesis 1:24) And when God made these animals, God made the dinosaurs. You say, “Well, why don't we have any more dinosaurs?” Because, my dear friend, the dinosaurs are extinct. But the Bible teaches that the dinosaurs were created the sixth day with man. Men and dinosaurs were on the earth together.

As a matter of fact, if you'll turn to the book of Job, you'll find the dinosaur described. Job chapter 40, verse 15: *“Behold now behemoth, which I made with thee;”—*that is, “I made behemoth the same time I made mankind, Job”—*“he eateth grass as an ox. Lo now, his strength is in his loins, and his force is in the navel of his belly. He moveth his tail like a cedar...”*—some have tried to say “*behemoth*” here is an elephant. Have you ever seen an elephant's tail?—*“he moveth his tail like a cedar: the sinews of his stones are wrapped together. His bones are as strong pieces of brass; his bones are like bars of iron. He is the chief of the ways of God:”—*in other words, he's a big dude—*“he that made him can make his sword to approach unto him. Surely the mountains bring him forth food, where all the beasts of the field play. He lieth under the shady trees, in the covert of the reed, and fens. The shady trees cover him with their shadow; the willows of the brook compass him about. Behold, he drinketh up a river, and hasteth not:”—*that is, he just lumbers along—*“he trusteth that he can draw up Jordan into his mouth. He taketh it with his eyes: his nose pierceth through snares.”* (Job 40:15–24) Again, that can't be an elephant. Have you ever seen an elephant's nose? No, that's the horn on a dinosaur. The book of Job tells us, just as Genesis chapter 1, verse 24, (Genesis 1:24) tells us, that God made man and the animals on the sixth day. God created these creatures.

II. The Comparison of Man and the Animals

And so I want to say this, first of all, about man and the animals: Man and the animals were both created by God. They are not the product of evolution. I hope you will not buy into that monkey mythology. Number two: I want you to see the comparison of man and the animals. If you were to compare a man and the animals, you'd see, in many ways, they are very similar.

A. A Similarity of Design

For example, men and animals are similar in design. When I took human anatomy and physiology in college, one of the things we had to do was to work on one of those pigs that had been soaked in formaldehyde. Have you ever done that? Well, you're looking at somebody who's done surgery—I mean, to look in there and to find the structure of the digestive system and all of the systems that are in that pig. Why? Because we can learn something about how we work by studying how the digestive system and other systems of animals work.

Does that mean, therefore, because man and animals are similar in design that man has evolved from the animals? Of course not!

I mean, if you were to look at a doghouse, then look at a cottage, then look at a fine house, and then look at a mansion; they would all be very similar in some ways. All have floors, all have walls, and all have roofs. Would you say, therefore, that the cottage evolved out of the doghouse, and the mansion evolved out of the cottage? Of course not!

When we built these buildings, we wanted to remember our heritage, so we have a beautiful watercolor. One shows the little stone church. The next shows the Bellevue auditorium, the Lee auditorium. The next one shows that gracious and beautiful auditorium that was dedicated in 1952. And the next shows this one. Now if you give that to some scientist today, they'd say, "See? That proves the evolution of a building." No, it didn't prove any evolution. It just simply proves that whoever designs buildings says buildings have certain basic things in common. That is, they have floors, walls, and ceilings, because they serve a common purpose.

B. A Similarity of Diet

And so men and animals live in the same environment. So, in many ways, they have a similarity in design. They also have a similarity in diet. Look here in Genesis chapter 1 and verses 29 and following: *"And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so."* (Genesis 1:29–30)

Men and animals have not only a similarity in design but also a similarity in diet, because we have the same kind of organs. We have stomachs and an esophagus. We have gastric juices. And so therefore we can eat the same thing. Does that mean that man therefore has evolved from an animal? Well, if your automobile burns gasoline and your motorcycle burns gasoline, does that mean that your automobile evolved from your motorcycle? No. They just both burn the same fuel.

C. **A Similarity in Death**

Men and animals have a similarity in diet. They have another similarity. They have a similarity in death. I mean, men and animals die. Look, if you will, in Genesis chapter 2 and verse 17. God said, *“But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”* (Genesis 2:17) Men die and animals die. Ecclesiastes chapter 3, verses 19 and 20, says, *“For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other.”* (Ecclesiastes 3:19) A similarity in design, a similarity in diet, and a similarity in death. Why do men die and why do animals die? Because all creation is under a curse. And death is an irreversible fact for both man and animals.

III. **The Contrasts of Man and the Animals**

So I've talked to you about the comparison of man and the animals, but now, let me talk to you about the contrasts of man and the animals. What is the difference between man and an animal? Are these evolutionists right when they say that there is basically no intrinsic difference between a man and an animal? Let me show you the difference between men and animals.

A. **Man Has a Craving for Deity**

Number one: Man has a longing in his heart to know God; he has a craving for Deity. Notice verse 26—Genesis 1, verse 26: *“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.”* (Genesis 1:26) Now, my dear friend, when God made you, God made you in His image. Not in His physical image—God doesn't have hands, feet, eyes, and ears. God is a spirit. When God made you in His image, He made you in His moral and spiritual image. It's a spiritual image.

Put this verse down—Colossians 3, verse 10. The Bible says, *“Put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.”* (Colossians 3:10) So your newness has to do with your knowledge. It is a moral, a mental, and a spiritual capacity. That's what it means to be in the image of God. And this verse, Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 24: *“And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”* (Ephesians 4:24) Listen to it again: *“...which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”* (Ephesians 4:24) You

see, because we are in the image of God, we have a moral and a spiritual nature.

Hinduism, New Ageism, has basically no morals. And you can understand it. You see, if God is everything and everything is God, then evil is God, as well as, good is God. Bad is God as well as good. And so there are no real moral distinctions. And that's the reason anything goes in the New Age movement, because there is no moral, spiritual backbone. That's the reason the New Age is a menacing danger to all of us.

B. Man Has a Capability for Dominion

You see, man made in the image of God has a moral, mental, and spiritual proclivity to reflect his Creator. He has a craving for Deity. He also has a capability for dominion. Look in verse 26. God says, *“And let them have dominion.”* (Genesis 1:26) Man, my dear friend, is meant to rule. In Psalm 8, verses 6 through 8, God says, *“Thou madest him”—man—“to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.”* (Psalms 8:6–8)

God made man to have dominion over the animals. And when Jesus Christ was here on earth, He demonstrated that dominion. Jesus rode a wild donkey into Jerusalem upon which never a man sat. (Mark 11:2; Luke 19:30) I want to see one of you try that. Jesus had dominion. Jesus had a rooster to crow at the exact, precise moment He wanted that rooster to crow, after Peter had denied Him. (Matthew 26:34; Mark 14:30, Luke 22:34) Remember that? Man, I want to see you make one crow; much less, I want to see you keep one from crowing. You know, the rooster thinks, because he crows, the sun comes up. But Jesus had dominion over the fowls of the air.

Jesus had dominion over the fish of the sea. When it was time for Jesus to pay His taxes, He said, *“Go thou to the sea, and cast an hook.”* (Matthew 17:27) And there was one particular fish out of all of those fish that our Lord had guided to a coin lying on the bottom of that Galilean Sea and then guided to that hook. Now, friend, listen. How many times have you gone fishing and not caught anything? Because, you see, man, to some degree, has lost his dominion. But God gave man dominion over the animals. There are no *ifs*, *ands*, or *buts* about it.

You see, man has something that animals don't have, because animals have something that men don't have. Do you know what animals have? Animals have instinct. Men don't have instinct. God, in mercy, gave the animals instinct. I sometimes go out in the morning, and I marvel when I see a spider's web with the dew in it. Have you ever done that, looked at that engineering marvel? Now, dear friend, a spider cannot have a very big brain, because I have looked. And yet overnight, that's incredible that he can do that. And the beehive, as they build those little six-sided things, it's incredible what goes on in the beehive. And the beaver, as he builds his beaver dam,

like we had some up here on our lake. My dear friend, you'll never see a beaver build a six-sided cell, or you'll never see a bee build a dam. All they have is instinct that God has given to the creatures.

But God didn't give man instinct. God made man in His own image. And God gave man the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is to man what instinct is to the animals. Now if you were to take the instinct out of the beehive, what would happen? It would be very much like our world today: men without the Holy Spirit—men without the Holy Spirit.

C. Man Has a Capacity for Depravity

What is wrong with the world today is that man is not operating at full function. You see, man has a capability for dominion, and then he has, I want to say, a capacity for depravity. Animals can't sin, because animals don't have any choice. The reason they don't have any choice is they don't have any moral basis. But men do. And the sad thing is this, that man, created a little lower than the angels, has morally become a little lower than the animals. I mean, men can do things that animals can't do. Men have a capacity for sin that animals don't have.

Somebody wrote a poem about monkeys sitting in a tree discussing evolution. I don't have the whole poem, but the kicker line said that one monkey said to another that he was so ashamed of the rape and the pillage and the murder and the arson and the drugs and everything. He said, "Man descended, the ornery cuss, but, brother, he didn't descend from us."

I heard about some monkeys that had a new little baby monkey. And the father monkey and the mother monkey were looking down at that little baby monkey, and one of them said, "Ah, thank God he's normal. I was afraid of evolution."

I mean, dear friend, let me tell you that men will do things that animals wouldn't do. You don't have sexual perversion among the animals like we have among men. It's incredible.

D. Man Has a Concern for His Destiny

Listen. Man has a craving for Deity. Man, my dear friend, has a capability of dominion. But he has a capacity for depravity. I'll tell you something else about man that makes man different from the animals. My dear friend, man has a concern for his destiny. Man is the only creature who knows he's going to die. No elephant knows he's going to die. He may, by instinct, go to the burial grounds. The salmon may swim upstream and spawn, and then die. But they never think about death. They never say, "I'd better prepare for eternity."

But the Bible says concerning man that God "*hath set [eternity] in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end.*"

(Ecclesiastes 3:11) A Gallup poll has shown that sixty-nine percent of Americans

believe in life after death. Dear friend, we don't believe it because we've proved it. We move heaven and earth to prove it because we believe it. Why do we believe it? Because we're made in the image of Almighty God.

There is a difference. Plants have a body, but they don't have a soul. Animals have a body and a soul. Your soul is your mind, your emotion, and your will. But only man has a spirit. And the Holy Spirit in the human spirit is what makes us what we're to be. God gave man a spirit. *With your body you know the world beneath you. With your soul you know the world around you. But with your spirit you know the world above you.* And God made man with a spiritual capacity to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him.

Conclusion

Now, listen to me, dear friend. You're no animal. You're the distinct creation of Almighty God. And what did God make a fish to do? God made a fish to swim in the sea. And what did God make a bird to do? God made a bird to fly in the sky. And what did God make you to do? God created you to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him. The Bible says, *"In him we live, and move, and have our being."* (Acts 17:28)

Now, listen very carefully. If you don't know God and you don't serve God, you have missed the purpose for which you were created. And you will be like a fish in tree. Take a fish out of the sea and put it in a tree, and he's an unhappy fish. Take a bird out of the air and put that bird under the water, and to say the least, he's an unhappy bird. Dear friend, if you are not serving God, if you don't know God, you have missed it all. And how can you know God? By receiving Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord. God loves you so much. Jesus Christ died for you in agony and blood. You're no accident, and you're no animal. You are made in the image of God. You are made for His glory and for His purpose.

What's Wrong with Animal Rights?

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: October 13, 1996

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 1:26

“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.”

GENESIS 1:26

Outline

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Introduction

Take God's Word and turn to the book of Genesis, where we were last Sunday night. And in chapter 1 we'll look at some verses, and then in chapter 3, and then in chapter 9. So be ready to read with us in just a moment. But, folks, just when you think that something more crazy, more wild and weird, than we've ever heard can come, it comes, and that's something today that we're faced with called animal rights. And I want to talk to you, as we talk about a Christian worldview, about "What's Wrong with Animal Rights?"

But first of all, let's just jump into the Word of God, and let me just get your motor running by reading a few verses from the book of Genesis, which, you know, is the book of beginnings—chapter 1 and verse 26: *“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the*

fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." (Genesis 1:26) And then look, if you will, in chapter 3 and verse 21: *"Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skin, and clothed them."* (Genesis 3:21) And, lady, that's the first fur coat, and God made it. And then look, if you will, please, in Genesis chapter 9, verses 1 through 3: *"And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, and upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered."* (Genesis 9:1–2)

Now it may sound silly to you that we would even discuss animal rights and say, "What's wrong with animal rights?" But if you'll listen for a while, you'll find out that it is not silly. You see, there are those who believe that men were not created in the image of God but that we just came out of some primordial ooze or slime. They can never tell us where the ooze and the slime came from, but we somehow just evolved out of all of this. So we are animals, and being animals, all animals are created equal.

I want you to know that I love animals, and I love the creatures of God, every creature of God. I love all of God's creation. In case you think I've got something against animals, indeed I don't. Joyce and I every morning, while we're having our breakfast, will go out and feed the birds and feed the chipmunks and feed the squirrels. And many a morning as we hold hands and pray, we thank God for the beauty of His creation and for these creatures, these glorious, wonderful creatures.

But what we're talking about is something, friend, that is more than foolish. It's literally getting to be very sinister. As a matter of fact, there's an organization called PETA. That stands for People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals. Do you know what these people recently did? They recently went to a Chinese restaurant in Maryland and bought six lobsters to prevent them from being murdered, dismembered, and eaten, and then they put these six liberated lobsters on a plane, flew them to Maine, and released them. Now they have a five million dollar budget, and this is one of their budgetary expenses: liberating lobsters. And Ingrid Newkirk, who is the director of PETA, has said this—and I quote: "A rat is a pig is a dog is a boy"—"A rat is a pig is a dog is a boy." And they make no difference. PETA's chairman declared—quote—"We feel that animals have the same rights as a retarded human child."

Now some of these people have gotten quite violent. If all they did was put silly things in books, that would be one thing, but one man was arrested while trying to murder the president of a medical research company with a remote control bomb. Radical activists have set fires to research labs. Fried chicken restaurants have been torched. Fur stores have been burned down. Women wearing fur coats have been subjected to spray-paint attacks. Turkey farms have been burglarized. Medical records

have been stolen. Zoo employees have been assaulted. Butcher shops have been vandalized. Arson, property destruction, attempted murder, burglary, and theft—all of these are considered acceptable crimes by these animal rights activists, because “a rat is a pig is a dog is a boy”—no difference.

The Humane Society now says that a breakfast of bacon and eggs is a breakfast of cruelty. They call McDonald’s “McDeath.” That could be, in another way, with some of you guys loading up on those cheeseburgers. That’s a heart attack on a plate. But they say that beef cannot be eaten, or cows killed for their leather, or even exploited for milk and cheese. The eating of fish, chicken, or even snails is to be banned. They would not want you to buy a goose-down pillow, wear a wool suit, or a silk blouse. Geese are not to be plucked. Sheep are not to be sheared. Silkworms are not to be harvested, and cockroaches too have a right to live, they say, because they are efficient little garbage collectors. Well, I’d like to ship some, if I can, to them, and let them work for them, collecting their garbage.

They believe that wearing animal fur is no different from the Nazis who made lampshades of human skin. I tell you, it’s amazing! But these people are dedicated. And you wonder, how could this happen in America? How could we come to this place? Well, that brings the question: Is man just a clever animal who can stand erect, or has a thumb juxtaposed to his four fingers, a little bigger cranium, a little more gray matter? Is that all? Is there no intrinsic difference? You see, they reject the idea that I read to you from the book of Genesis, that God made man and told man to have dominion over the works of His hands. Their goal is to set all animals free from all human control and domination.

Gary Francione, a law professor whose business is litigating animal rights, would not even allow an animal to suffer if the research led to a cancer cure. Let me quote him. Here’s a lawyer: “I don’t believe it is morally permissible to exploit weaker beings, even if we derive benefits.”

Now we’ve heard of racism. There’s a new term: *speciesism*. The animal liberation people say that we are bigoted if we say that human beings are more important than the—quote—“other animals.” Let me quote: “It can no longer be maintained by anyone but a religious fanatic that man is the special darling of the universe, or that other animals were created to provide us with food, or that we have divine authority over them and divine permission to kill them.”

Now what that is, folks, is a statement that flies directly in the face of the Word of God. That’s not just some other roundabout philosophy. That is a challenge to the Word of God. Michael Fox, quoted in the *Washingtonian*, put it this way succinctly—and I quote: “There are no clear distinctions between us and animals. Animals communicate. Animals have emotions. Animals can think. Some thinkers believe that the human soul

is different because we are immortal, and that just becomes completely absurd.” That’s what he’s saying. It’s absurd to think that men have immortality and therefore they’re different from animals. That’s what they believe. Humane Society literature has claimed for decades—and I quote—“There is no rational basis for maintaining a moral distinction between the treatment of human and other animals.”

Now what they’re trying to do is to raise animals to the level of humans, but what they are succeeding in doing is lowering humans to the level of animals. And that has all kinds of ramifications.

Here is a very interesting thing. The scientists today—I’m talking about the secular scientists—most all of them believe in research with animals. They believe that you can take animals and be as humane as possible, but use animals, for example, in research to find a cure for cancer, or whatever. And most scientists believe this. The animal rights people say, “You have no right to do that, because an animal is the same as a human being.” The secular scientist says, “That is foolish. There’s a difference between human beings and animals.” And then they ask this evolutionary scientist, “What is the difference?” And he can’t say. He knows there’s a difference, but he doesn’t know the Word of God. And so he’s in a quandary. There’s an irony about it. He knows the difference, but if he believes in evolution, I want to tell you, the animal rightist has got him. He can’t argue with him, because the scientist cannot say, “I believe that man is the special creation of God.” Now some scientists do, but I’m talking about your secular scientist. And so they’re really in a quandary. Now that’s one reason that we have this problem, these people, fanatically, who say there’s no difference between animals and human beings.

Now that is compounded by the deception of the New Age. You know, we used to think that all of the New Age business was just mere foolishness, a passing fad that would go away. But we now, thanks to the Beatles and others, have come into what is called the Age of Aquarius, a new consciousness, or cosmic humanism, a new globalism. Sometimes it’s called a new world order. Now, where did this come from? It came from Eastern religions, Hinduism, and so many of these New Agers are really into Hinduism. And in the Hindu religion, the Eastern religion that is now pervading the West, God is impersonal. They don’t believe in the Yahweh, the Jehovah, the El Shaddai, that we believe in. They speak of God as energy, as the all-pervading reality. Hinduism and pantheism work together. And pantheism, they don’t believe there is no God; they believe everything is God. The air we breathe is God. The flowers are God. The plants are God. The trees are God. The dirt is God. The sky is God. I am God. You are God. Dirt is God. You are dirt, because you are God, and dirt is God. It’s all mixed up.

So when they believe that everything is God, then what does that do to morality? If

everything is God and God is everything, there is no good or no evil, because all is the same. And the idea of good and evil is only a figment that you see played out on the stage between one actor who seems to be good and another actor who seems to be bad, but behind the stage they're best friends. That's what these folks believe. That's New Ageism. It's pantheism. And what you have now in this animal rights thing, you have to understand from whence it comes. It is a synthesis, an amalgamation and homogenization of evolution, secular humanism, and Eastern religions. It did not just happen with a group of college students who were looking for something to do.

Now this is compounded by those who are not into the animal rights movement, nor are they into the New Age movement. They are materialists; they are secularists—period. Just last week in the *Commercial Appeal* I picked up an article. It was Wednesday, October 2, and it was on the op-ed page, and I read it. Here's the title of the article: "'Life Is Sacred' Gets Us Nowhere." It was written by a person named Katharine Whitehorn. And here are some of the things this article said in our paper here in our city last week: "Is there life on Mars? Maybe a minute bacterium. Should a woman have aborted a twin fetus well on its way to life? And what about frozen embryos, in the public mind as big as kittens, but actually a few cells of pinhead size. Nobody knows when life begins. And what do we mean by 'life'? A cell has life—any cell—of a cabbage or a horse's ear or a worm. But they aren't human cells, and it makes sense to differentiate between our own species and another. Or does it?" she asks. "Insects aren't to us the same as serious animals, but even the line between plants and animals isn't as clear-cut as you might think. Going on as if all life has a right to survive as long as possible obscures to us the mighty usefulness of death."

Now I want you to listen to this philosophy. This is in our family newspaper: "...the mighty usefulness of death. Mice...and deer are gentle vegetarians"—gentle vegetarians. "How sad then that their wicked enemies eat them! Yet when the weaker hearty beasts are no longer picked off, owing to a lack of tigers, the strain declines. Field mice outgrow their food when the falcons leave them alone, but that doesn't make our decisions any easier. It makes them harder, because"—listen to this now—"there are no absolute rules." Now, listen: "Not even my species, right or wrong. We have to make decisions—agonizing decisions—about which habitats, which animals must be preserved, and which people." Which animals, which habitats, and which people are to be preserved! Listen to this: "From tiny fetuses that should or should not be kept going, to the old, who may or may not be allowed to go on in peace." Do you see where they're coming from? Do you see what she's saying? Well, what is life? Saying that life is sacred, she said, that doesn't answer the question. And then she concludes this article by saying, "But it is time that we realize that saying life is sacred gets us nowhere. It is the beginning of the argument, not the conclusion."

Now that's secularism, pure and simple. So if you take these animal rightists who are trying to bring animals up to the level of humans and humans down to the level of animals, and if you take the Eastern religions and the New Age mysticism, and if you take these sheer secularists who just simply say that you can't describe one kind of life as better than another kind of life; then we've got to make agonizing decisions, not only as to what kind of animal life will survive, but which babies will live and which older people will live. So what I'm trying to say to you, ladies and gentlemen, is this, that we're not talking about something that is merely foolish.

I heard Charles Colson speak yesterday at Promise Keepers. He said in the next ten years there are three trip wires that are laid across our paths. One, he says, we're going to be faced in the next ten years with a matter of infanticide, whether or not we ought to kill little babies out of the womb. We're already doing that in partial-birth abortion. It's unmitigated sophistry to say that if a baby is all born but its head, it's still not yet born. And then he says the second thing that we're going to face in the next ten years is euthanasia. And "Dr. Death"—Dr. Kevorkian—and these others are well on their way. And the man goes from killing to killing to killing, although he doesn't call it killing. And somehow he's able to slip around the law. He said the third thing, the third trip wire that we're going to face sooner or later, is the legalization of homosexual marriages, because they don't accept, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," and "He made man, male and female, in His image." They don't accept that. They do not have the basic core of Christian belief, biblical, Judeo-Christian ethics that we have, believing the Bible is the Word of God. We have lost a generation. And now the courts, the colleges, the institutions, the universities do not come from the same base that we come from.

Now, let me just point out two or three things to fix your minds on and get them straight as we talk about this question: "What's Wrong with Animal Rights?"

I. The Creation of Man and the Animals

The first thing I want you to notice is the creation of man and the animals. Go back to Genesis chapter 1, and look, if you will, in verse 26. Look at it: "*And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.*" (Genesis 1:26) Now, notice verse 27: "*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.*" (Genesis 1:27)

Now, folks, we need to go back to the early pages of God's Word. How did everything get here? There are only three possible answers. One is godless evolution. We started out as primitive protozoa, and then became unsegmented worms, and then

became a fish, and then an amphibian, then a reptile, and then a bird, then a mammal, and then a man. And you believe that? Go ahead. I reject it for logical reasons as well as theological reasons. I reject it for moral reasons. But godless evolution, that's one answer. The other is theistic evolution. People say, "Well, it's not godless evolution. God did it. God made it that way." Well, friend, you can't ride one horse in two directions. That will not fit the Bible. There's no way that you can make it fit the Bible. It is impossible theologically, philosophically, and logically to read this Bible and believe in what some call theistic evolution. The third alternative is that God created man and woman just exactly as God's Word says. *I've been amazed how anxious man is to make a monkey of himself.*

II. The Comparison of Man and the Animals

All right, so you see the creation of man and the animals. Now here's the second thing I want you to see: the comparison of man and the animals. Man is like an animal, but he is not an animal. Now some think because we compare with the animals that therefore we are animals.

A. A Similarity in Design

For example, there's a similarity in design. Men and animals are designed somewhat alike. I took a course in college in human anatomy and physiology. One of the things that we did in that laboratory was to dissect a pig. It had been soaked in formaldehyde. And so you didn't know you had a surgeon for a pastor. But because the pig has a very simple digestive system, we were able to see the various parts. You find the heart, the liver, the lungs, the stomach, these parts of the pig, just to help understand the very elementary things. Men and animals have a similar basic design, but that doesn't mean, therefore, that man evolved from the animals.

All buildings have a basic design. Most all buildings have a floor, walls, and a ceiling. I mean, that comes with the building, doesn't it? Floor, walls, and a ceiling. A doghouse has a floor, walls, and a ceiling. A mansion has floors, walls, and a ceiling. So since a doghouse has floors, walls, and a ceiling, and a mansion has a floor, walls, and a ceiling, isn't that proof positive that the mansion evolved from the doghouse? Because you can see the similarity in design. No. All that means is the same architect designed them both—that's all that means. Because both of them would live in the same vicinity: Planet Earth.

B. A Similarity in Diet

Now not only are men and animals similar in design, but they are similar in diet. We eat the same thing. Look in verses 29 through 30 of this same chapter: "And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the

earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat.” And the word *meat* here simply means “food.” He’s not talking in this place about animal flesh. Later on, He will. *“And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so.”* (Genesis 1:29–30)

So men and animals have similar diets. Some men and some animals eat basically the same thing. Now, does that mean, therefore, that man evolved from the animals, because we have a similar diet? A motorcycle and a limousine both have carburetors, so anybody can see that the limousine evolved from the motorcycle, is that right? No. They just burn the same fuel.

C. A Similarity in Death

There’s another similarity: not only in design, and diet, but in death. Both men and animals die, and God said to Adam, in Genesis chapter 2, verse 17, “If you disobey me, you’ll surely die.” (Genesis 2:17) And the animals die. Men die and animals die. And the writer of Ecclesiastes, the great Solomon, said, in Ecclesiastes 3, verses 19 and 20, *“For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other;”—the man dies; the animal dies—“yea, they all have one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity.”* (Ecclesiastes 3:19–20)

Now you certainly have to take that text in context. He’s not saying that a man is no better than a beast, but he’s saying, when it comes to dying, a man has no preeminence over a beast. We are creatures. They die. We die. A similarity in design. A similarity in diet. A similarity in death.

III. The Contrast of Man and the Animals

So we think of the creation of man and the animals. We think of the comparison of man and the animals. But let us think of the contrast of man and the animals. What is the difference?

A. Man Has a Craving for Deity

Well, number one: Man is born and given a craving for God, a craving for Deity, in verse 26—chapter 1 and verse 26: *“And God said, Let us make man in our image.”* (Genesis 1:26) And God is spirit. Plants have a body, but they don’t have a soul. Animals have a body and a soul. A soul is mind, emotion, and will. And we’re going to talk about that. Animals have a soul, but only man has a spirit—only man has a spirit—man made in the image of God—because the Bible says, *“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”* (John 4:24) And the Bible says that God breathed into man’s nostrils the breath, the spirit, of life. (Genesis 2:7) That makes man different from

the animals. *With our bodies we know the world beneath us. With our souls we know the world around us. But with our spirits we know the world above us.* And man is created in the image of God.

This image is not physical. It's the spiritual image of God. Put this verse down—Colossians 3 and verse 10. Paul is talking about what happens to us when we get saved, and he says, *“And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.”* (Colossians 3:10) When you get saved, God puts that image back in you. You see, that's the image of God that's in us. This makes us a moral creature, makes us different from the animals. Ephesians 4 and verse 24—put that down: *“And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”* (Ephesians 4:24) Animals don't know righteousness. Animals don't know holiness. But he says here that man is created in righteousness, and our new creation brings us holiness.

Man is the only animal that can blush. He's the only one that needs to. Man is the only animal that can laugh. Man is the only animal that can suffer. I didn't say, can feel pain. And when I'm saying *animal*, I'm not talking about man being an animal like the other animals. Man is the only *creature*. You see, animals can feel pain, and human beings can feel pain. And whether you're a human being or an animal, you're going to feel pain before you get out of here. But human beings have a capacity to suffer, to anguish, because they are made differently from all of these other creatures.

B. Man Has a Capability for Dominion

And so, what is the contrast? Man has a craving for Deity. Man has, dear friend, a capability for dominion. Man is meant to rule. Man was, is, and shall be in a greater way in dominion over the creatures. Put this verse down—Psalm 8, verses 6 through 8. The psalmist is musing about man, and he says, *“Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea.”* (Psalms 8:6–8)

God gave man dominion. Adam lost that dominion. But the last Adam, the Lord Jesus, did not lose it. You notice Jesus when He was here on earth, Jesus had dominion over the beasts of the field. He said, “You go get a wild Syrian donkey whereon never a man has set; I'm going to ride him into the city of Jerusalem.” (Mark 11:2; Luke 19:30) I suggest you not try that—try to ride a donkey that's never been ridden before. Jesus did. He had dominion.

Jesus had dominion over the fowls of the air. He told Simon Peter, “Before the rooster crows, you'll deny me three times.” (Matthew 26:34; Mark 14:30, Luke 22:34) I want you to try to make one crow, or keep one from crowing. You can't do it. Jesus did. He had dominion over the fowls of the air.

Jesus had dominion over the fish of the sea. When it was time to pay His taxes, He said, “You go throw a hook in the sea and catch a fish, and in that fish’s mouth will be a coin.” (Matthew 17:27) Jesus guided that fish like a guided missile to some coin fallen out of some fisherman’s pocket somewhere on the bottom of the Sea of Galilee, and then guided that fish with His spiritual radar right to that hook.

He had dominion over all of these things. That’s the dominion that the last Adam regained that the first Adam was supposed to have and the first Adam lost.

C. Man Has A Capacity for Depravity

But, you see, man has a craving for Deity, man has a capability for dominion, and man has a capacity for depravity. You see, animals can’t sin, because animals are creatures of chemistry. But man has more than that. Man has the Spirit of God to guide him. And God gave man a choice that animals don’t have. And therefore, man, with his choice, has the capacity for good or evil. Man, made a little lower than the angels, has by his wickedness become lower than the animals. I mean, men do things that animals wouldn’t do, because they have a capacity for depravity.

You heard the story about the two monkeys who were talking about Darwin’s book *The Descent of Man*. They were reading that book, and they looked around at all the crime and everything that’s going on in cities like ours. And one monkey said to the other one, “Man descended, the ornery cuss, but, brother, he didn’t descend from us.”

I heard about some monkeys that had a little baby, and when they were examining the baby to see if it was normal, the mama monkey said to the papa monkey, “Looks like he’s normal.” And the papa monkey said, “Well, I’m grateful. I was afraid of evolution.”

Now, folks, I want to tell you, man sinks lower than the animals, because animals cannot rise as high as man, made in the image of God, can rise.

D. Man Has a Concern for Destiny

What’s the fourth thing? Man has a craving for Deity. Man has a capability for dominion. Man has a capacity for depravity. And man has a concern for destiny. No animal knows he’s going to die. He doesn’t think about dying. Even if an elephant goes to the elephant burial grounds, he doesn’t know why he’s going there. That’s instinct. You see, God gave to animals instincts He didn’t give to human beings. But He gave to human beings spiritual insight and revelation He didn’t give the animals.

Animals have instincts. A bee can build a six-sided cell in the honeycomb. It’s an amazing thing to see how that beehive is run. Beavers can build dams. Spiders can build spider webs. But the spider cannot build a six-sided cell, and the bee cannot build a beaver’s dam, because they have instinct. They don’t have knowledge. They don’t have logic. They don’t have conscience. They don’t have these things that man has.

And man is made different from the animals. He knows that he is here for more. The Bible says of man that God has set eternity in his heart. We are not mere animals. Ecclesiastes 3, verse 11: "He has set eternity in their heart." (Ecclesiastes 3:11) We don't believe in immortality because we have proved it. We move heaven and earth to prove it because we believe in it. I mean, it's instinctive in us. A Gallup poll showed that sixty-nine percent of all Americans believe in life after death.

Conclusion

So what is God's plan for us in our relationship to the animals? I mean, what is all of this about? Can animals be killed for food? Well, are you more compassionate than Jesus, who ate broiled fish? Of course they can! Friend, don't ever, ever think that you're more righteous than the Lord Jesus Christ, who created everything. God says, "I've given you this for food." Of course, God gave us animals to eat for food. Can animals be used to help human suffering? Of course they can! Can they be used for research? Yes. Should we, therefore, be cruel to animals? Absolutely not! Not gratuitous cruelty. The Bible says, in Proverbs chapter 12, verse 10, "*A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast, but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.*" (Proverbs 12:10) Should we love God's creation? Of course we should! Should we be environmentalists? Yes. But should we put animals on a plane with human beings made in the likeness, the similitude, of God? Absolutely not! Should we teach our boys and girls that they are mere animals, that they have come from animals? If we do, don't be surprised if they begin to live like animals: for self-preservation, self-propagation, and self-gratification. That's what an animal lives for.

By the way, let me tell you, nature lives by the law of the tooth and the fang and the claw. Now these people who are standing in front of butcher shops, I suggest they go up to Alaska and stand in front of a Kodiak bear when he's after a salmon. Start there. God gave the creatures for food. And there's a food chain.

Let me tell you something, folks, that God made us for Him. And Augustine said that our hearts are restless until they rest in Him. You're not an animal. You're made in the image of God. And one day you will reign with Him.

Would you bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. If you have not yet given your heart to Jesus, let me tell you that God has a destiny for you. God has a heaven for you. God has a wonderful, incredibly glorious plan for your life. It would be so tragic if you missed it. I am a Christian, and I'm going to heaven. But knowing what I know now, I'd want to serve the Lord Jesus and be a Christian if there were no heaven and no hell, just to know Him in this life. There is a heaven. There is a hell. And I don't mean to imply there is not. But oh, how sweet to know Jesus!

If you'd like to be saved, let me lead you in this prayer, and you can receive Him

tonight right where you are. Just put everything else out of your mind, and pray this prayer: “Dear God, I thank you that you love me. I thank you that you died to save me and that you promised to save me if I would trust you. I do trust you right now. I receive you by faith as my Lord and Savior. Come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Save me, Lord Jesus. Save me, Jesus.”

Pray that, folks, and mean it. Don’t just mumble the words. Say it from your heart: “Save me, Lord Jesus.” Did you ask Him? Then pray this way: “Thank you for doing it. I trust you to do it, and that settles it. You’re now my Lord, my Savior, my God, and my Friend. And, Lord Jesus, because you died for me, by your grace and for your glory, I will live for you. In your name I pray. Amen.”

Now, look up here. “Pastor Rogers, if I prayed that prayer, did Jesus save me?” Well, it all depends. Depends on what? Were you sincere? Were you sincere? “Well,” you say, “I believe I was. How can I know?” Well, one of the best ways is this: Are you willing to make it public? You see, the Bible says, “He that believes on Him shall not be ashamed.” (Romans 9:33; Romans 10:11) Jesus said, “If you’re ashamed of me and of my word before this sinful and adulterous generation, I’ll be ashamed of you when I come in the glory of the Father with the holy angels.” (Mark 8:38) But Jesus said, “If you’ll confess me before men, I’ll confess you before my Father.” (Matthew 10:32) Now, listen. Walking the aisle doesn’t save you. It’s what it indicates that saves you—that you’re not ashamed of Jesus.

You know, if I had an opportunity, I believe I’d want to stand on top of the tallest building with the biggest megaphone made and tell the world that Jesus is Lord. I would. And those of you who said tonight, “Lord Jesus, I trust you to save me,” I want you to do something wonderful. I want you, when we stand and sing, just to leave your seat and come forward. It’s your way of saying, “I’m not ashamed of Jesus. I believe He’s the Son of God. He died for me, and I’m coming to acknowledge Him tonight as my Lord and Savior. I know I’m weak. I know I’ve got a lot of growing to do. I know there’s much I don’t understand, but tonight I am giving all I know of me to Him and receiving all I know of Him into my heart tonight.” And He’ll start with you there and help you to grow.

Harmony in the Home

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: April 7, 1991

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 1:27

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.”

GENESIS 1:27

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Introduction

Genesis chapter 1 and verse 27: *“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.”* (Genesis 1:27) We are continuing our series of messages on “The Music of Marriage.” And we are saying that there needs to be harmony in the home, and that’s the title of the message this morning: “Harmony in the Home.”

Last Sunday, we talked on “Dad, the Leader of the Band.” Now some think the pastor ought not to be speaking this much about music because I don’t know that much about music. But to the contrary, I have been studying and I asked Brother Whitmire the other day, I said, “Brother Jim, I think it’s time I sang in church, don’t you?” He said, “Yes, Pastor, I think it’s time.” I said, “Brother Jim, what would you like for me to sing?”

He said, “Sing, ‘On a Hill Far Away.’ ”

I don’t know that much about music, but I know a lot about the home. I know a lot about being a man because I am one. And I know a lot about—no, I take it back—but I am married to a lady. And I am learning and I hope to learn a little bit before it’s over about the opposite sex and the wonderful creature that God made called a woman.

Well, we are talking today about “Harmony in the Home,” and how to have it. You know, your marriage ought to be a duet, not a duel. And I did learn this about music: There are three components to music, any kind of real music. There is melody, there is harmony, and there is rhythm. Now in the home there ought to be melody. That is, we all ought to be singing the same song. And there is harmony; we sing different parts. And there is rhythm; we ought to sing it together. So there will be this music in marriage.

Now I want to just take one of those components out and think a little bit about harmony. We in our home, as husbands and wives, we sing the same song, but we don’t sing the same part. We sing different parts. There is to be harmony in the home. God made us in the beginning, Genesis tells us, male and female. (Genesis 1:27)

Now God made us equal, but God certainly did not make us alike. Now we know that men and women are equal in the sight of God. For the Bible tells us, in Galatians chapter 3 and verse 28, “*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.*” (Galatians 3:28) He is not here talking, however, about sameness of function. He is talking here about equality of worth. We all don’t function alike, but we all are worthy in the sight of God. Now God could have made us the same, and I am glad He didn’t. I am glad God made boys and girls different. I am glad that God doesn’t want us to sing in unison. He wants us to sing in harmony. How boring it would be if Joyce were like me, or if I were just like Joyce. That would be very boring.

They asked a little boy one time: “What is the term that describes when two people stay married together all of their lives?” He said, “Monotony.” No, it’s monogamy, not monotony. But I think that some people have a marriage that is monotonous.

Well, dear friend, I want to tell you that the Rogers family is not monotonous, because I married a girl very, very different from me. And I am glad that I did. I married Joyce when we were both quite young, and we had the opinion that two could live as cheaply as one. And that is true if one is a sparrow and the other is a horse, or if one doesn’t eat and the other doesn’t wear anything. We did find, however, that when we got married, we did not even dream the differences that were between us. I am not talking physiological; I am talking about psychological and emotional differences. And those differences are as real, or more real today, than they were when we got married.

And I thank God for all of those wonderful differences. It’s those differences that bring out the excitement in marriage. And so the Bible teaches that we are different, and

God made us different that He might make us one. You know, put in your margin there Ecclesiastes chapter 4 and verse 9. This is what the Bible says: *“Two are better than one.”* (Ecclesiastes 4:9) Oh, I love that: *“Two are better than one.”* (Ecclesiastes 4:9)

So there are three things today I want us to think about as we think about the harmony in the home:

I. A Divine Design

First of all, I want you to see God’s divine design—God’s divine design. Now you are in chapter 1, verse 27—just go to chapter 2 and verse 7: *“And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”* (Genesis 2:7) So God makes Adam. Adam is a mud-man. He is made out of the dirt, out of the dust, and God makes him out of the elements of the earth and breathes into his nostrils the breath of life, and he becomes a living soul. And then go to chapter 2 and verse 18, and look: *“And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.”* (Genesis 2:18) And here you have in this one verse the three reasons that God made Eve and the reasons for marriage.

A. For Companionship

First of all, for companionship. *“It is not good that the man should be alone.”* (Genesis 2:18) God knew that Adam needed someone like him, not another animal. Even Adam, who had face-to-face fellowship with God, was still incomplete, and God said, “He needs someone as a companion.” And I am so grateful for the companion that God has given to me. And there is no sweeter, deeper, more wonderful companionship, in my estimation, than husband and wife.

B. For Cooperation

But not only for companionship, but for cooperation. Verse 18 says, *“I will make him an help meet for him.”* (Genesis 2:18) And that’s what she’s to be. She is a helper. Now this is a noun, not a verb. God doesn’t say, “I am going to give him help.” God says, “I am giving him a helper”—not just a buddy, not just a friend, but someone who is a helper; not just someone to pick fruit in the Garden of Eden, but somebody who would help him to be all that he ought to be, someone who would enhance his life to help him to reach his full potential.

And again, I married a girl like that. When I was in high school, I played football, and Joyce was a cheerleader, and we were sweethearts. One of my cherished pictures that I have of Joyce is a picture of her in her cheerleader outfit, and she autographed it to me, and she said, “I will always cheer you on.” And when I left the house this morning, she gave me a hug and a kiss, and she said, “There goes my preacher man.” That

made me feel good. That just encouraged me. I'll preach a little bit better today just because of that encouragement that I got from my wife who cheers me on. And she is a helpmeet, someone to help me to reach my potential. And I know that I know that I know I am a better man because of the girl that I married.

C. **For Completion**

For companionship, for cooperation, and for completion. God says, "I will make him a helper fit for him"—not a helpmeet, but a fitting helper. Well, *meet* means "fit," someone who will complete him. We laughingly call our wives "the other half," but that's not a joke; that's very apt.

You see, Adam, when God made him, was like a violin without a bow. And he couldn't make music, really, the kind of a music that he needed to make, until he had a wife.

She was to be his completer, not his competer. Women, you are to complete your husband, but not finish him off. God put husbands and wives together for companionship, cooperation, and completion. So there is, first of all, a divine design. Got it?

II. **A Definite Difference**

All right now, we are going to get to the interesting part. God also made them male and female for a definite difference, or God made a definite difference. In chapter 1, verse 27, God says, "*Male and female created he them.*" (Genesis 1:27)

May I tell you that this unisex idea was born in hell. Men and women are made of God to be different. We have people who are moving heaven and earth to try to blur that distinction and say, "There is no real difference between men and women except some physiological differences." My dear friend, that is absurd. And you wouldn't even have to have the Bible to know it.

Psychologists have told us, and Dr. James Dobson has pointed out, that the brains of little boys and the brains of little girls are wired differently. I mean, they come into this world differently. A little boy's brain on the right side seems to take predominance. And a little girl's brain on the left side seems to take predominance. And that's the reason little boys seem to be more manually oriented and little girls seem to be verbally oriented.

I have noticed my little granddaughters are rattling off phrases, and my little grandsons, they are not talking, but they are banging away with hammers, and it is just a difference. Now it's not that one is superior to the other; they are just different. I mean, you look at these little boys. Send a little boy off to a birthday party: Who is it that rips and tears and pulls the girl's hair and smears the birthday cake? It's the little boys who do that. The little boys, they go for the trucks; and the little girls go for the dolls. And the

modern behavioral psychologists today will tell you that's just culturally learned. But they have studied, and they say it is not culturally learned. My dear friend, it is not cultural; it is creational. This is the way God made them.

You give little girls a puzzle; they'll try to work it out. Give a little boy a puzzle, and he'll throw it across the room. It is just the difference in the way these little creatures are made. Give a little girl a doll. I watched my little granddaughter yesterday. She had a little baby whale, and she was holding it like it was a little baby, and she said, "That's little baby Shamu." That's what Rachel was saying: "Little baby Shamu." You give a little boy a doll, and he will make a hammer out of it. And there is just the difference.

You go to the high school and watch the way that the boys carry their books and watch the way girls carry the books. If you don't believe it, you watch. Boys will carry their books under their arms. Girls will cradle their books like it's a baby. They just hold their books just like *this*—that's the way that the girls will hold their books. It's an amazing thing how God has put these differences in.

Now, let me just show you the differences that God designed right here in the Bible.

A. **Man, Provider; Woman, Helper**

First of all, God designed the man to be the provider, and God designed the woman to be his helper. Genesis chapter 2, verse 15: "*And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.*" (Genesis 2:15) God said, "Adam, you have the responsibility to go out into the workplace. I have put you in the garden to dress it and to keep it." And then the Bible says, in Genesis chapter 2, verse 18, that he made a woman, and the woman is to help the man. (Genesis 2:18) She is to be a fitting helper. She is to support him. She is to provide support so he can work. God did not give her to the man primarily as a buddy, but as a companion. And women want to know that they are a fitting helper.

My wife's greatest desire, I believe, is to know that she is my companion, that she has a part of my life and a part of my ministry, and that she is here supporting me, as I am the breadwinner in our home. Now today we have many husbands and wives who both work. And I think, if at all possible, the woman should be a keeper at home. Sometimes in today's society it is not possible, but if you have a two-income family, in my estimation, it is far more desirable and far more near the biblical pattern for the man to be working for the necessities; that is, for the house, the clothes, the food, the transportation. And if a woman must work outside of the home or inside the home, let her work for those other things, those other things that are needed, but never at the expense of her family. Learn, young couples, to get along with less. Joyce and I made up our minds early that we could get along without anything except one another. Epicurus, who was a philosopher, a Greek philosopher, said this: "To whom little is not enough, nothing is enough." That's a good thought.

B. Man, Protector; Woman, Nurturer

Now in the Bible, the man is the provider and the woman is the helper. The man is the protector and the woman is the nurturer. God gave the man to protect and the woman to nurture. For example, look in Genesis chapter 3, verse 16: *“Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life.”* (Genesis 3:16–17) And then skip on down to Genesis 3, verse 20: *“And Adam called his wife’s name Eve; because she was the mother of all living.”* (Genesis 3:20)

So here you have the husband as the protector. You have the wife as the nurturer. You see, Adam was to stand against all danger for Eve. Adam really failed Eve when he did not stand between Eve and the serpent. God did not blame Eve, primarily, for the Fall. God blamed Adam. The woman failed, but the man, who was the protector, was held responsible.

Therefore, in Romans chapter 5, verse 12, the Bible does not say that the sin came through Eve, although she was first in the Fall. God lays the responsibility at Adam’s feet. Romans 5:12: *“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”* (Romans 5:12) Adam was responsible. God made him to be the protector. And you men today are to protect your family.

I tried to preach last week on the fact that the great problem in America is not juvenile delinquency, but dropout dads. Dads need, as the protector of the family, to learn how to say *no*. They need to set limits for the children. I don’t mean a Tarzan *no*, but a loving and responsible *no*. And they need to be able to set limits for their wives, for the wives’ protection.

Yesterday, we had a deacons’ retreat here at the church. My wife has recently had surgery, and she was helping our daughter to pack some things. And I looked at Joyce, and I could tell that she had overdone it just a little bit and was tired. And I said, “Honey, I don’t want you to go to the deacons’ retreat.” Now that freed her, because she felt that if she had not gone, she felt maybe some of the deacons’ wives might have wondered, “Well, why isn’t Joyce here?” Or maybe God would think that she failed a little bit by not being at a church meeting. But I knew she needed to stay home. And when I said to her, “Honey, I don’t want you to go,” that gave her a sense of relief and release, I believe, where she didn’t have to feel like “I am failing them,” or “I am under my husband’s authority; I am under my husband’s protection.” And there is a great sense of relief and release when a husband will do that for his wife.

C. **Man, Leader; Woman, Enhancer and Maker of Beauty**

The Bible teaches that man is to be the leader, and the woman is to be the enhancer and the maker of beauty. For example, the Bible says in all of these scriptures that the man is the head of the woman; he is the protector; he is the provider. And therefore, in a home, what's the man more interested in? He wants to get better tools. What does the woman want in the home? She wants objects of beauty. It would be a mistake for you, sir, to try to stamp out your wife's desire to create beauty, because that is built into her by Almighty God. She wants her surroundings to be beautiful because she is the one who wants to build that nest. She has a nurturing instinct.

Now I am going to give you some traits about men and women, and these are generalizations.

But before I do, I want you to look at your hands. Hold your hands up and look at them, just like I am looking at mine. And go ahead and do it. Now if you are a woman, your hands are going to be different from the man's hands, generally. Now I asked my wife to do this earlier today, to see if it is really true. And I believe that it is true—at least it is true on my hand. And I think it is true on most people's hands. Men, look at your index finger, and then look at your ring finger. On most men, your ring finger is going to be just a tad longer than your index finger. Not on all, but on most men. It is on mine. All right, my index finger is definitely shorter than my ring finger, and on almost all men it is that way, but not all men. Now, look. Don't say, "Preacher, I am messed up," if it's not that way. That's a tendency, but not a rule—a tendency, but not a rule. Now it doesn't mean that you are weird or odd if it doesn't just work that way, but that is generally a tendency with men as over against women. That's a small thing.

D. **Men Tend to Be Stronger Than Women**

Now what I am going to be giving you right now are tendencies about men and women. For example, men tend to be stronger than women. Now there are some women here who can beat up some men here—I know that. I mean, there are some that you'd better not mess with; they are tough. But as a rule now—as a rule, we are talking about tendencies—men are physically stronger than women. You just have to admit that.

And the Bible calls the woman, over there in 1 Peter chapter 3, verse 7, "*the weaker vessel*," (1 Peter 3:7) or the more fragile vessel. Why is that? Well, what job did God give man? It was to tend the garden; that is, to weed and hoe and chop and dig and carry. And also what's he to do? He is to protect the woman.

Now, what did God make the woman to be? Gentle and tender, to nurture. Have you ever noticed the difference?

I mean, a woman, when she sees a little kitten, she wants to pick it up and mother it. That's just her nature. Men are different. Have you ever watched a man change a diaper? I mean, they just lay that baby down, and they change a diaper like they're

putting a saddle on a horse or something like that. There is just a difference. God made them different.

That is the reason it is so silly and so foolish to put women into combat. That is one of the dumbest things I have ever heard of, to put women into combat. You know the Israelis tried that back in 1948? They were so hard-pressed they put women in combat, and they kept the women in combat for three weeks, and then they pulled them back. They found out that they were having higher casualties on both sides. The men were putting their lives in jeopardy to protect the women because that was their instinct. And they were finding out that their mission was failing because the men were more concerned about protecting the women than the mission. And they found out the other side, the Arab armies, were fighting harder than ever because they didn't want to say they were defeated by women. And casualties on both sides went up. And the Israelis said, "Hey, that's a bad experiment," and they used the women somehow behind the lines for support. But they thought, "How foolish to put a woman into combat!" She is just simply not made for that any more than she is made for professional football. She is just not made for that.

And so the man is physically strong; the woman is more fragile. That is by divine design. God made her physiognomy different than men. A man is built for battle; a woman is built for babies. It is just the way it is.

E. Men Approach Problems Head First; Women Heart First

Have you ever noticed that men tend to approach problems head first; women tend to approach problems heart first? Now neither one of these is legitimate or illegitimate any more than the length of your fingers. It is just different. It is the difference between the logical and the emotional.

Women know what's going on without knowing what's going on. It's incredible. We call that a woman's intuition. Why? Because she thinks, being a nurturer, she deals in the area of feelings and emotions. And so, because she feels and she lives emotionally, she talks emotionally. She transmits emotionally. Mister, when she transmits emotionally, don't you try to receive logically. Joyce says, "Don't listen to what I say; listen to what I mean." And so I am in this job of translating, you know.

F. Men See a Goal; Women See the People

And because men look at a problem differently, they see a goal. And men will go after it, because that is what God made them to be. I mean, the man has to be an achiever. He sees a goal and he goes after it. And he doesn't really think about who may or may not get hurt.

I say, "Joyce, we are going to rearrange the Sunday School." She says, "Oh?" "Yes, we are going to put everybody in separate departments according to age." She said,

“Well now, there are some people who may not feel that way. Somebody may fit in this group better than that group. You may hurt somebody’s feelings.” That’s just the way a woman thinks. She’s thinking about one individual or two individuals who may be hurt. What do men think about? We think about how to have the best Sunday School. Who is right or who is wrong? We are both right and both wrong to some degree.

G. Men Tend to Be Oriented Toward Success; Women Toward Security

All right, men tend to be oriented toward success; women toward security. I mean, a man, he says, “Hey, let’s try it. Hey, man, let’s go for it. Don’t worry about the obstacles.” However, the woman says, “Now, wait a minute. Before you go for it, don’t mess everything up. I mean, I want to know everything is in place.” I mean, you can’t create beauty and have nurturing on the run.

For example, a man may say, “Honey, I am going to take all of our savings; I am going to take all of our investments, all of our nest egg, and I am going to invest it in this particular project.” And that just threatens her to pieces.

You see, a man, because he is the provider, he sees his work as an extension of himself. The woman sees her home as an extension of herself. Now if a man’s work is not right, he’s greatly ill at ease. If a woman’s home is not right, she’s greatly ill at ease. And if you really, sir, want to make your wife happy, don’t just buy her a big present; go fix some little thing at home.

Joyce gets so happy when every seven years I get a screwdriver out and will fix some little broken thing. She says, “Hey, he really cares about our home.” And if I will just get out and do those little things around the house, she’s just so happy when she finds me puttering and doing those little things, just fixing little things. You see, when there are broken things around the house, she feels rejected. When the house is cluttered, she feels cluttered, because that’s just the way we are. Men tend to look for success, and women tend to look for security.

H. Men Tend to See the Big Picture; Women, the Details

As a result, men tend to see the big picture, and women tend to see the details. I am telling you that all of these things, just like the fingers, are not always true.

All right, but men see the big picture. I mean, a man will think about his career. He will think three or four years down the road, “What am I going to do?” The woman, she is right there thinking about today and now. So he comes in, and he says to her, “Guess what?” She says, “What?” He said, “I found a wonderful new project and a wonderful new product,” and he said, “I am investing in it. We are going to sell this house, and we are moving to Cincinnati. We are starting a new business. It’s going to be wonderful.” She begins to cry. He says, “Why are you crying? I told you—look, we are moving to Cincinnati. We are going to take everything invested...we are gonna...it’s going to be

wonderful!” This time, she doesn’t cry; boy, she tells him off. And he can’t figure it out.

You know what she is thinking about? She is thinking, “What do you mean, ‘move’? I just made dental appointments for all the kids. The kids got braces. This is the only doctor we’ve got. He knows he started those braces on those kids. He’s got to go through with that. And the kids are in school. Are you going to just pull the kids out of school? And we have our own doctors here,” and so forth. And she is thinking about security. She’s thinking about now. She’s thinking about details. A man just says, “Oh, we can work all that out. Let’s go.”

Now if he were a wise man, he would tell his wife what he plans, and talk over with her what he plans for her security and the children’s welfare. And then rather than having her as an adversary, he can have her as a helpmeet.

I. Men Tend to Be Insensitive; Women Sensitive

See if this isn’t true. Men tend to be insensitive, and women tend to be sensitive. Isn’t that true? Now, have you ever said to your wife—I have said to Joyce so many times—“Honey, you are just too sensitive”? And she wanted to say, “You are a brute.” Well, I am not a brute. I am really gentle and sweet, but you know. A man, because of what God has called him to do, he just has to have a little bit harder shell. I mean, it is a jungle out there, and a guy has got to make decisions. And he’s got to face sometimes unpleasantness and competition, and sometimes danger, and so God just gave the man a nature where the man has a thicker shell. And the woman—she’s just more sensitive; she’s more feeling.

J. Men Tend to Be Defensive; Women Trusting

I have got to rush through these. Men tend to be defensive, and women tend to be trusting. Why is a man defensive? Because he is the protector. Therefore, if he sees a new danger, I mean, if he sees somebody coming up, a stranger or something like that, that may be the enemy, and he is protecting his turf. The wife says, “Hey, you were curt to that person. You were discourteous to that person. You were rude to that person. You just didn’t open up and show them hospitality.” Women just, on the other hand, they see a stranger: “Hi, who are you? How are you? We live next door. I’m glad to meet you.” And they are just more hospitable. Men ought to be, but they are not always.

Women are more trusting. They trust their children. They believe the children when nobody else believes the little things. And they even believe their husband. “You know, my husband is a good man at heart.” Now he may be terrible, but she has a trusting nature.

You know, in traveling today, because of the uproar and the problems in the Middle East, they have extra security in the airports. Several weeks ago, Joyce and I were traveling, and we were in Charlotte, North Carolina. And over and over again they are

saying at the airport, “Do not leave your bags unattended.” “Do not pick up anyone else’s bag.” “Do not carry anything for anyone else.” “Do not take possession of anyone else’s bag.” On and on and on, “Be careful!” “Be careful!” “Be careful!” And this thing is going constantly.

We are sitting in the airport. I am reading, and Joyce is off somewhere reading. After a while, she comes over to me, and she says, “Honey, a strange thing happened.” I said, “What is that?” She said, “Well, you see that bag over there by my bag?” I said, “Yes.” She said, “A young man came and asked me if I would keep this for him awhile, and he has been gone a long time, and he hasn’t come back, and so I am just wondering what I ought to do.” I said, “You what?” She said, “Yes,” she said, “a young man came and just said he had to go somewhere, wanted to know if I would just watch his bag for him and sat it down there.” I said, “You have got to be kidding.” I mean, man, things are hot and heavy in the Middle East about that time. She said, “No.” I said, “Well, honey, didn’t you hear the announcements?” “But,” she said, “he was such a nice-looking young man.”

I went straight to the man there at the desk. I said, “Sir, we have a problem. A man left my wife a bag there, and he has been gone fifteen to twenty minutes. And I don’t know whose it is or what it is. He hasn’t come back.” He said, “That’s a no-no.” I said, “She did it.” I should have protected her, but that is where I failed my instincts. Women just tend to be that way. They are just trusting.

Conclusion

Well, God made us different. There is a divine design and a definite difference. God made us different that He might make us one. And, you see, we are singing the same song, but we sing different parts. And that’s “Harmony in the Home.” That’s what God intended. And it’s exciting. But I want to tell you, really, in the truest sense, it is not a duet; it is a trio. A real marriage is a union of a man, a woman, and Jesus Christ.

Harmony in the Home, Part 1

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: April 7, 1991

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 1:27; 2:18

“And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.”

GENESIS 2:18

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Conclusion

Introduction

Find, in your Bibles, Genesis chapter 1—that ought not to be hard—verse 27. We’re in a series of messages entitled “The Music of Marriage,” and last week we talked about “Dad: The Leader of the Band.” Today, we’re talking about “Harmony in the Home”—all of it under the aegis “The Music of Marriage.”

Now, in order to prepare these messages, I’ve been thinking a lot about music. I’ve just decided it was time for me to sing a solo in church. And so, I went to Brother Jim Whitmire, and I said, “Brother Jim Whitmire, may I sing in church?” He said, “Yes, you may, Pastor. You’re the pastor, so if you say, so you may.” And, I said, “Well, Brother Jim, what would you like for me to sing?” He said, “Why don’t you sing ‘On a Hill Far Away’?”

Well, in all seriousness, I don't know a whole lot about music. I know something about music, and I know that music is made up of three parts: there is melody; there is harmony; and there is rhythm. Now, melody—you sing the same song, and husband and wife need to do that. But, harmony—you sing different parts, and that's what we're going to be talking about today: a husband and wife may sing the same song, but they don't sing the same parts. And, but in rhythm, they sing it together. So, it's so important that we sing the same song, we sing it in harmony, and we sing it together.

Now look, if you will, here in Genesis chapter 1 and verse 27: *“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them”* (Genesis 1:27)—male and female. God thought up the idea of boys and girls; we didn't think it up. The unisex idea was not created by God; it was born in Hell. God made man and woman, male and female. God did that by divine design, as we're going to see in a moment. And, you're going to see in this verse that both the man and the woman are both in the image of God.

A woman is absolutely as valuable and as important—as gifted, and all of the other things—as any man could possibly be. The Bible teaches that God does not value one sex above another. Galatians chapter 3, verse 28 makes that plain: *“[There's] neither Jew nor Greek...bond nor free...neither [is there] male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus”* (Galatians 3:28). Now, he's not talking about in society. He's not saying that there's to be a blurring of the distinction between the sexes, but he is saying in Christ, male and female, bond and free—we're all one.

In spite of that, God has made us different. God made us different that He might make us one. And, I thank God for the difference. I want us to celebrate the difference today, because it's our differences, not our likenesses, that bring us together as husband and wife. And, how important it is that we be brought together as husband and wife! For the Bible says in Ecclesiastes chapter 4, verse 9: *“Two are better than one”* (Ecclesiastes 4:9). And, that is so true.

I. The Divine Design

So, first of all, this morning, I want you to think about what I'm going to call “the divine design”—“the divine design.” Now, God made by design the difference in the sexes, and He did this for a purpose. And, He tells us what the purpose is. Go on over to Genesis chapter 2, and look, if you will, at verse 18—Genesis chapter 2 and verse 18: *“And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone”* (Genesis 2:18). Now, He had created all of these things, and He says, “It's good. It's good. It's good. It's good.” Every thing God created, He would say, “That's good. That's good. That's good.” And then, God made man, and He said, “That's not good.” You ladies stop laughing. He said, *“It is not good that...man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him”*

(Genesis 2:18). And, right there, my dear friend, in that verse, you have the divine design; you have why God created male and female.

And, let me give you the three reasons very quickly.

A. For Companionship

First of all, for companionship. *“It is not good that...man should be alone”* (Genesis 2:18). None of the animals could satisfy the hunger in Adam’s heart—and not even God Himself. Adam—think about it; it’s incredible—Adam had a face-to-face relationship with Almighty God in the Garden of Eden, and yet that could not satisfy the deepest need that Adam had. It is... And so, God created woman, first of all, for his companionship. I thank God for the precious companion that He’s given me.

B. For Cooperation

But, not only for companionship, but also for cooperation. Notice what it says: *“I will make [a helper] for him”* (Genesis 2:18)—“a help meet” or “fitting” for him. Now, the word *helper* there is a noun; it is not a verb. He’s not just saying He’s going to give him some help. Adam just... I... Adam could have... God could have given Adam a friend to help him pick fruit, a buddy, or some body. No, that’s not the idea. The idea is of someone who is going to cooperate with him, someone who will become a part of a team with him, someone that will make him more than he could have been without that particular person, someone to help Adam to reach his full potential. Adam could not have been what he ought to have been, in my estimation, at all without Eve, any more than I could be what I ought to be without Joyce that God has given to me. And, Joyce has been this helper to me throughout my life, our married life, and our ministry.

When we were dating in high school, I was playing football, and she was a cheerleader. And, one of the pictures that hangs on the wall of our home is a picture of her in her cheerleading outfit with these words inscribed on it: “To Adrian: I will always cheer you on.” And, that’s been true right up ’till this morning when I left the house—through this morning, I’ll say. When I left the house this morning, she put her arms around me, and gave me a kiss, and said, “There goes my preacher and my mighty warrior.” So, she set me out to preach today, and I’ll just preach better ’cause of that kiss. I’ll just tell you, it’s just something about the hug and that encouragement, and don’t any of you say, “She should have kissed you longer” after this sermon. But, I will... I’ll just do better because she is an encourager to me, and I thank God for that.

C. For Completion

So, God made woman for companionship. God made woman for cooperation. God made woman for completion. You see, the Bible says in verse 18: *“I will make [a] help meet for him”* (Genesis 2:18). That means “a fitting helper, someone to make up that part which is lacking.” And, it is not just mere folklore that God took Eve from Adam’s

side. It is that there is something missing until she is returned. And, it is not by mere happenstance we speak of our husbands or our wives as “the other half”—and they are. We are half a person without our mates, and that’s the way God designed it.

Now, if we’re thinking about the music of marriage, you think of Adam as a violin; you think of Eve as the bow. And, it is together that they make the music that they are suppose to be. She is to complete Adam.

Now lady, *you are to be his completer, not his competer*. You are to complete him but not to finish him off. Now, you are husband and wife together. Now, this is God’s divine design.

II. The Definite Differences

I’m going to move from there to talk about not only a divine design, but a definite difference. It is because of that design that God made a difference in the sexes. Genesis 1, verse 27: “God made them male and female” (Genesis 1:27). Men and women are different, and we don’t need the Bible to tell us that. And, the difference is more than the physiological differences. There are deep emotional, and spiritual, and psychological differences. Now, psychologists tell us that. For a long time, the radical feminists have been trying to tell us that all of the differences—the emotional differences and the psychological differences—are only cultural. They are not only cultural; they are creational.

And, there’s a difference, for example, in the way that the brains of men and women are wired. Little boys have a predominate proclivity in the right side of their brain and girls in the left side, and that’s the reason that boys tend to be a little manually dexterous and women tend to be more verbal. Have you noticed that? Well, they are. Little girls will begin to talk quicker than little boys. And, there’s a differences between girls and boys. James Dobson and other psychologists have taught us it’s the way their brains are wired. You send a little boy off to a birthday party, and what will he do? He’ll rip, and tear, and pull the girls’ hair, and smear the cake, and so forth. Little girls want to play the games like they are supposed to be played. That’s because the boys, by nature, are more aggressive. You give the little girls a jigsaw puzzle, and they try to put it together. You give it to a boy, and he’ll sling it across the room—a little boy, I’m talking about; maybe a big boy—I don’t know, but anyway... You give a little girl a doll—she wants to caress that doll; she wants to cuddle that doll. You give a little boy a doll—he’ll make a hammer out of it. That’s just the way he is. I mean, he thinks in those realms, and there’s nothing really wrong with that. They want a hammer, and they want to bang; and they want to go *pow, pow*. These guys are just different. Sometimes the feminists of today have tried to change those natural proclivities, but I’m going to show you that they are built in of God. They are part of the way that God made us.

You go to the high school and watch the way boys carry books and girls carry books. Next time you're around a high school, watch. The boys will but put their books under the arm, and they'll carry the books *like this*. You know how the girls will carry the books? *Like this*—like it is a baby. The girls will actually cradle their books in their arms. That's just the way that they are built. Nothing wrong with either way. But, my dear friend, there is a divine design and a definite difference. These are not, I say, cultural; they are created. Why? Because of what God made the man to do and what God made the woman to do.

A. The Man is to Be the Provider; and the Woman, the Helper

For example, God made the man to be a provider, and God made the woman to be the helper—“*a help meet for him*” (Genesis 2:18). For example, in Genesis chapter 2 and verse 15: “*the LORD God took the man, and put him [in] the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it*” (Genesis 2:15). God said to the man, “That’s your job—by the sweat of your brow.” Later on, after they had failed, even, God said, “Adam, you’re going to till the soil; by the sweat of your face you are going to eat your bread.” That’s what God made man to do. And then, the Bible says in 2:18, “I will make a helper to him” (Genesis 2:18). But, the man is to be the supporter and the provider for the home, and the woman needs to feel that she is there to help him to do what God made him to do.

I am certain today that that we have some where the wife is the provider. The husband, because of physical illness or because of the mere fact of the matter he does not have a job... And, she provides—and that’s God’s provision, and we’re grateful for that. But, whenever possible, the husband should be the breadwinner, the provider. And, if it is a two-income family—the woman perhaps works out of the home or has a side job, and she can still take care of her babies—the husband’s income should be used for the food, the shelter, the clothing, the transportation; and the woman’s income (if possible, now) should be that supplementary income but not the main support. If not, there can be bitterness and division, and she herself can become tough-minded in a way that God did not intend for her to become.

B. The Man is to Be the Protector; and the Woman, the Nurturer

The man, secondly, is to be the protector; the woman is to be the nurturer. Now, God made the man to protect the woman. You know, when Eve sinned, God blamed Adam. Did you know that? When Eve sinned, God blamed Adam. In Genesis 3, verse 17: “*And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast harkened unto the voice of thy wife...eaten of the tree...which I [have] commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake*”—“not for her sake, for you sake, Adam.” You’re to blame Adam—“*cursed is the ground for [your] sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life*” (Genesis 3:17). And, Romans chapter 5, verse 12—when the Bible says that sin came

in the world, it doesn't blame Eve; it blames Adam. Romans 5:12: *"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin...so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."*

The husband is meant to protect his wife. A wife needs a husband who will protect her, and children need husbands who are protectors. We need husbands who will set limits for children—not drop-out dads, but dads who will say to boys and to daughters, "That is a no. You may do that." I don't mean a Tarzan "No!", but just a "no, you can't do that." They need to learn how to say "no" and to be in charge. You need to see what your wife's needs are and to protect her because God made her to dwell from your side, from under your arm, to be protected by you.

C. The Man is to be the Leader; and the Woman, the Enhancer

God made the man to be a leader, and God made the woman to be the enhancer. For example, in Genesis 3, verse 16, God said to the wife, *"Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee"* (Genesis 3:16). The husband is the leader, but the woman is the enhancer; she is to be the nurturer. For example, in Genesis 3, verse 20: *"And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living"* (Genesis 3:20). Now, he has the protecting instinct; she has the mothering instinct. And, as a result of that, he has to win the bread. As a result of that, he's interested in tools; she's interested in things of beauty. And so, he when he goes shopping, he wants to visit a hardware store; she wants to go to the home furnishings. She is interested in making herself beautiful, and that is an instinct that God has given. It is a major thing for a woman to be beautiful and to be surrounded by beauty, and no man should ever try to wash that instinct that God has put in her.

Now, I'm going to talk to you about some things that are tendencies. I'm not talking about hard and fast rules. What I'm going to give you now are tendencies between the male and female.

1. The Man Tends to Be Stronger Than the Woman

For example, as a tendency, the man is stronger than the woman. Isn't that right? That's just one of the tendencies. The man is physically strong. Now, not always—I mean, there are some women who can beat up some men in here. I mean, now, don't mess with them. I'm telling you, there are some that can do that. I'm just talking now about tendencies. I'm saying as a tendency, if we put all the men on one side of the room and all the women on the other side, and had a fight... Well, I'm getting in too deep here. But anyway, the Bible says in 1 Peter chapter 3, verse 7 that the woman is the weaker vessel (1 Peter 3:7). Why? Because of what God made man to do, which was what? Tend the garden. Man has to be able to dig, and to chop, and to carry, and to protect, and to provide. What did God make the woman to do? She is the mother of all living

(Genesis 3:20). She is to be gentle. She is to be tender. She is to be the nurturer and to take care of...

Have you ever watched a woman as she'd see a little kitten—how she'll be with a kitten? I mean, she just wants to be tender. That's just her nature. On the other hand, have you ever watched a man change a diaper? *Whoomp!* I mean, it's like you're putting a saddle on a horse or something here. He just doesn't have that. I mean, but God didn't make him to be that way. God made the man physically strong. That's the reason it is the epitome of absurdity to try to put women in combat. We, as Americans, I don't know...are we going to let these radical feminists make insane people out of us? Women are not built for battle; they are built for babies. That's a good place for an "amen."

Now, listen to me, folks. The Israelis—the Israelis—back in 1948, tried to press their women into service. They needed soldiers so badly that they put the women into service in the battle lines. You know how long they kept them there? Three weeks. And, they found out it was a tragic mistake. There was a loss of more lives on both sides. On the Israeli side, the men soldiers were fighting not to win the battle, but to protect the women. They were risking their own lives to protect the women and forgot the cause of the battle to protect the women. And, more Israeli men lost their lives protecting their women. And, on the other side, there were more Arab lives lost, because the Arabs were not going to allow themselves to be defeated by an army of women. They were throwing themselves in the battle. After three weeks, the Israelis backed off and said, "We'll use the women behind the lines; we'll use them for as support, but not in battle." It's the thing that keeps women from playing professional football. I mean, dear friend, God just made them different.

2. Men Tend to Approach Problems Head First; Women, Heart First

The men tend to approach problems head first; women approach problems heart first. That's just the way they are. A woman—her emotions come more to the surface. When you get into the male and female battle, the battle of the sexes, it's generally, not always, logic verses emotion. And, when I say this, some women get angry, and they think, "Well, he doesn't think I know what's going on." Well, you do. But, the thing that always astounds me is the women know what's going on without knowing what's going on. I mean, that's a woman's intuition. I mean, very frankly, my wife's a scholar. She made top grades in school. I would hate for you to see her report card and my report card. She's a better scholar than I was—and a very intelligent person. But, I'm telling you something, my dear friend—I'm not talking about her intelligence; I'm just talking about the way she comes to a problem—I come to a problem head first; she comes to a problem heart first.

You see, men are goal-oriented. They say, "I'm going to do this," and they don't think

about who may get hurt. But, the women say, “Now, wait a minute. Before you do that, have you ever thought about So-and-so?” Who’s right? Who’s wrong? Neither is right or wrong; it’s just simply the way that people come at the deal. I mean, they think about emotional problems, and those are good; we need that.

3. Men Tend to Be More Success-Oriented; Women, Security-Oriented

Men tend to be more success-oriented; women tend to be more security-oriented. For example, a man—he’ll think of something. He’ll say, “Man, I’m going to go for it. I’m just going to try it. I’m going to take our nest egg. I’m going to invest in something, in a project.” But, she wants to get everything right; she wants everything in its place. She wants the furniture just right. She wants the accouterments on the wall of the home just right, because God gave her a nurturing instinct. She wants to create beauty. She wants to create a home, a nest.

You see, a man sees his work as an extension of himself. And, if a man’s work is not going right, he’s not happy. But, a woman sees her home as an extension of herself. These are generalizations now—generalizations. But, a woman sees the home as the extension of herself. And, therefore, if her home is cluttered, her life is cluttered. She is interested not primarily in success, but in security. That’s the reason, mister, if you really want your wife to be happy, don’t just go out, and buy her a big present, and bring it home. Fix little things around the house. Listen, boy, I can tell when Joyce really gets happy—when once every seven years, I’ll get out a screw driver or something like that and I’ll fix something around the house. Why is that? Because he is saying, when he fixes those little things, “Honey, what is important to you is important to me.” She wants that; she has that nesting instinct, and that’s a God-given instinct. And, when her home life is cluttered, then her—when her home is cluttered—then she feels that her life is cluttered.

4. Men Tend to Look at the Big Picture; Women, the Details

Men tend to look at the big picture; women, on the other hand, look at details. Being goal-oriented, a man will say, “Well, in four or five years, I’m going to do so and so.” And, the woman will think, “But, what’s going to happen in between?” And, many men announce the big plans to the woman without letting her know that he has thought about what is going to happen in between. As a matter of fact, I don’t even think about what’s going to happen in between. If I see a goal, I just say, “Somehow I can do that. By God’s grace I can, and I will. And, I’ll meet the problems when I get to them, but I’m going to reach that goal.”

The woman sees it one step at a time. The fellow comes home, and he says, “Guess what?” And, she says, “What?” He says, “I’ve found a product we can make for one dollar and sell for two dollars. I’ve sold everything. We’re moving to Cincinnati next

month.” She begins to cry. He says, “What’s the matter? Listen, this is the best deal we’ve ever had. Can’t you think straight?” Now, he tells her again, and she tells him off. She’s no longer crying. He says, “I just don’t understand you.” Well, when he talks about what he’s going to do, do you know what she thinks? “Do you realize the kids are in braces and our doctor is right here? And, do you realize it’s four weeks to graduation? Or, do you realize this, or do you realize that?” She thinks about these things. He doesn’t even think about those things. He just says, “Hey, we’re going to do it.” Now she becomes an adversary, rather than a companion; rather than a completer, she becomes a competitor, because he has not taken time to recognize her instincts of security. If he were to say to her, “Now honey, I realize this, and this, and this; and, therefore, let’s talk about it and see if we can do this and at the same time meet your needs for security.” And, the first thing, you know, he has her now as a helper and as a companion. But, men just tend to be that way.

5. Men Tend to Be Insensitive; Women, Sensitive

Men tend to be insensitive, and women tend to be sensitive. Well, why is that? Men are not really insensitive; they’re just thick-skinned. They have to be—I mean, they’re out there in that working day where God put them to earn the bread. And, there’s a world of competition, and a world of danger, and a world of unpleasantness, and a world of decisions. And, he is the provider; he is the protector, and he is the leader. She’s the nurturer. She’s sensitive. And sir, she can be a great help to you if you’ll allow her to be sensitive for you.

6. Men Tend to Be Suspicious; Women, Trusting

But, men tend to be more suspicious; women tend to be more trusting. The reason that men are more suspicious is they’re the protector; they don’t know whether that person may be there to damage, so they’ll say, “Now woman, lock the doors. Don’t do this; don’t do that.” I find myself just protecting my wife, and my daughters, and my grandchildren, and just having a protective nature. But, sometimes women are more trusting. They trust their children. They believe the little things are telling the truth always. They trust their husband. When nobody else believes in him, they’ll believe in him. They are just that way.

We were in the Charlotte airport here a while back, and it was right in the height of this Middle East War—this Iraq War. A lot of people were afraid to fly on airplanes because of terrorism. And, over and over and over again, in the airport, the announcement was made, “Do not take your eyes off your baggage. Do not take gifts from someone else. Do not carry any one else’s baggage. Never leave your baggage unattended. Report any unattended baggage.” Over and over and over again, this thing is going in the airport. I’m sitting there reading. Joyce is sitting there reading. After a

while, she comes to me. She says, “Adrian,” she said, “you know, there’s something strange.” She said, “You know, I’m watching a young man’s things for him, and he’s been gone for a long time.” She said, “I…” I said, “You what?” And, she said, “Yes, he came up to me.” I said, “Who is he?” She said, “I don’t know,” she said, “but he just came up to me and asked could I watch that bag for him, and he had to go somewhere.” I said, “Where did he go?” “Oh,” she said, “he didn’t say.” I said, “When is he coming back?” “Oh,” she said, “he didn’t say. He just said watch that bag for him.” I said, “Which one is it.” She said, “that one over there.”

I said, “Joyce, how could you? Didn’t you hear all these announcements?” She said, “But, he was such a nice looking young man.” Said, “He had on a tie. Now, you know, terrorists never wear ties—you know that. I mean, that’s… He had on a neck tie, and he was so nice.” I went immediately to the desk, and I said, “Let me tell you what’s happened.” I said, “That young man there left that bag. He’s been gone 15 or 20 minutes.” I said, “I don’t know who he is, where he’s gone, what’s in it.” “Boy,” he said, “that’s a no-no.” I said, “It’s her fault.” You see, I wasn’t the protector that I ought to have been right then. Boy, they brought the security squad right out there, right away. She just trusted him. Why? Because that’s the way God made her to be—to be receiving and trusting. God makes men to be protective.

Conclusion

This, my dear friend, is the difference that God brought into us. Why did God make us so different? That He might make us one—not just to sing in unity, but to sing in harmony. And, I want to tell you something: the girl named Joyce needs me, and I sure need her—and that’s the music of marriage. God made them in the beginning male and female (Genesis 1:27). And, may I say this, dear friend: that a home a home is not really a duet; it’s a trio—a man, a woman, and Jesus Christ.

Let’s bow our heads in prayer. Heads are bowed; eyes are closed. Father God, I pray in the name of Jesus that You would give us godly, Christian homes. Thank You, Lord, that You made us different that You might make us one. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

How to Prepare Kids for Marriage

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: April 27, 1986

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 1:27; 2:18–24

“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.”

GENESIS 2:24

Outline

Introduction

- I. Leave: The Priority of Marriage
- II. Cleave: The Permanence of Marriage
- III. Be One Flesh: The Purpose of Marriage
 - A. We Are to Be One Flesh Physically for Continuation
 - B. We Are to Be One Flesh Psychologically for Communication
 - C. We Are to Be One Flesh Spiritually for Communion

Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take your Bibles this morning and turn to Genesis chapter 1—Genesis chapter 1—and in just a moment we’re going to begin reading at verse 27. So when you have it open in your lap, look up here. Genesis chapter 1 and verse 27.

How’s your imagination today? Okay? Then I want you to imagine today a great mountain, and on top of that mountain there begins a road. And that road is a narrow, twisting road with sharp curves in it. And there are deep precipices and sharp cliffs, and there are no guardrails, and there are some loose rocks on the road. But the road leads down to a beautiful, beautiful, happy valley. Now at the very top of that mountain is a row of automobiles. And in each of those automobiles is a young man and a young woman, and they’re starting down that road wanting to get to the happy valley below. But of every nine couples that start out, five are wrecked. Now sometimes, before they wreck that automobile, they pick up some passengers, very little passengers, and those passengers are also wrecked and maimed and brutalized by that wreck.

That, ladies and gentlemen, is a picture of marriage in the United States today. Out of every nine marriages, five are ending in a marital wreck. And I want to tell you, it is a national tragedy. No nation has ever survived a greater than a forty-percent marriage-divorce rate. We in America are far beyond that, and we lead every nation in the world

in the area of divorce in so-called “God-blessed” America.

Now, what should we do? Well, the very first thing I want to mention is that we need to have compassion on those who have already wrecked their automobile. It is not a time to point a finger of accusation and a finger of blame. But it is a time that we need to open our hearts and open our homes and open our churches and tell you in Jesus Christ there is love, there is mercy, there is forgiveness, there is restoration, there is rebuilding. Amen? Now we need to say that, because there are a lot of people who don't need a finger of accusation. They need a helping hand. They need love.

I'll tell you what else we need to do. We need to work on that road. We need to put up some guardrails. We need to remove some loose rocks. We need to have some more marriage counseling seminars. We need some more preaching on how to have a happy home. We need better teaching. We had better work on the road.

But I'll tell you the main thing that we need to do—and that's what I'm going to be talking about today: We need to train the drivers—we need to train the drivers. You know what is wrong, friend? It is easier to get a marriage license than it is a driver's license. Did you know that? I mean, you have to study something to get a driver's license; you have to take a test. About the only thing you have to take to get a marriage license is a blood test. I mean, that's about it. It's so easy to get a marriage license. And yet it is so fraught with the potential for good and ill that we need to prepare our kids for marriage.

And so in this continuing series on “The Home on the Rock,” I want to talk to you about “How to Prepare Your Kids for Marriage”—“How to Prepare Your Kids for Marriage”—because you see, if you don't prepare your kids for marriage, who is going to do it? It's one of the most vital and meaningful relationships that they'll ever enter into. The three big decisions are life's mission, life's master, and life's mate. And parents need to be right in the middle of preparing their children for all three.

You see, there is a vicious cycle. Do you know why we have so many broken marriages? Well, you see, those who come from broken homes tend to have broken homes. There is the reproduction element. You see, broken homes produce broken humans that produce broken homes that produce broken humans that produce broken homes. Now somewhere in there, we need to break that cycle. Hey, I can't do anything about my ancestors, but I can do something about my descendants. You know, the Bible says, in Psalm 112 and verse 2, “*The generation of the upright shall be blessed.*” (Psalms 112:2) As a matter of fact, that's a verse that I have just chosen for my children and my grandchildren; it is my life's verse: “*The generation of the upright shall be blessed.*” (Psalms 112:2) And I know that while I can't do anything about what's happened behind me, I can certainly, by the grace of God and the power of God, train my children and train my grandchildren to be blessed to break that cycle.

You see, one of the great problems in marriage today is inadequate preparation for marriage. I perform a great number of wedding ceremonies, and I have been impressed that the average bride and groom spend far more time preparing for the wedding than they do the marriage. They spend more time, more energy, more planning, and more discussion for the wedding than they do for the marriage. And you know that is true. Oh, they'll put extraordinary amounts of money and energy into the wedding, but very little preparation for the marriage.

And you dads, I said last week, the Bible says that you are to *"train up a child in the way he should go."* (Proverbs 22:6) And I reminded you last week that it says *"train,"* not *"teach."* Now those of you who played sports, you know the difference between training and teaching. You don't learn to play football by watching a coach draw things on a board, right? The way to learn to play football is by training, by discipline, by rigor, by hands-on experience. That's the way you train a person, and that's the way you train a child. We are to train a child, not just teach a child. Anything that you teach a child, somebody else can come along and teach him something else. But when you train somebody, you build something into that child. We are to train up a child in the way that he should go.

Some of you men who are hunters spend more time training your dogs than you do your children. Then you tie the dog up at night and let the kids run wild, and you wonder what goes wrong.

Now the Bible says that we are to *"train up a child in the way he should go."* (Proverbs 22:6) And there is no greater training, in my estimation, than to train them, to prepare them, for this matter of marriage. How very, very important it is! You know, it's just so easy to get married today. All you have to do is just grunt, and you're married. And that's it. And here now, they are married. No training. No preparation.

"Well," you say, "Pastor, this message doesn't really apply to me. I'm already married," or "I don't have any kids," or "I'm not going to get married." Let me tell you something. This message applies to the Body of Christ. The ministry of this church is to prepare our kids for marriage. It is the ministry of every father and mother. It is the ministry of every grandparent. It is the ministry of every pastor. It is the ministry of every youth worker. It is the ministry of all of us together. We have, in my estimation, in this day no greater ministry as a church than to prepare kids for this exciting adventure of marriage.

Now like everything else, I want to say, when everything else fails, read the instructions. Now, let's look in Genesis chapter 1 and verse 27. Let's find out what God's purpose for man is in Genesis chapter 1, verse 27: *"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them."* (Genesis 1:27)

Now the very first thing I see here is the masculinity and the femininity of the race, the polarity of the race: male and female. *God did not create she-men and he-women. God created men and God created women. And God made them different that God might make them one.*

Now a man is never to lose his masculinity. A woman is never to give up her femininity. You say, “Well, I’m a liberated woman.” Well, I want to tell you, dear lady, no woman needs to be liberated from femininity. You are to be feminine. God gave you that femaleness. And God gave the male the maleness. You say, “Well, I’m not inferior to a man.” That’s right! You’re not inferior to a man. As a matter of fact, you’re superior to a man... at being a woman. And a man is superior to a woman at being a man. God made them different that He might make them one. And any society that blurs the distinction between male and female is headed for disintegration and for disaster. And in America today we are reaping the result of the unisex movement that was born in *h-e-l-l*. Now, my dear friends, God made them in the beginning male and female. And you parents need to do all you can do to encourage masculinity in boys and femininity in girls.

Now the Bible says after God did this, He continued His creation, and after each creative act, God said it was good. And then we come to the last verse in chapter 1: “*And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good*”—verse 31—“*very good.*” (Genesis 1:31) But then we go over to chapter 2 and verse 18, and here’s a verse that just jars us. Now everything is “*good,*” and “*very good,*” and then in chapter 2, verse 18: “*And the LORD God said, It is not good...*”—well, what is it that’s not good?—“*It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.*” (Genesis 2:18) Now that means a helper that is fit for him, someone that will match him just right. “I’m going to make a helper for him.”

Now here is Adam. Adam is in perfect health. He’s in a perfect environment. He has a great potential. He has communion with God, and yet God says there’s something that is not good. He needs a helper. He needs somebody by his side. Now that’s what He says in verse 18. (Genesis 2:18) And then in verse 19 He tells Adam to begin to name the animals. (Genesis 2:19) Now, why is this? Well, God is using some heavenly psychology on Adam, and God is creating a thirst and a desire in Adam for a bride. You see, whatever God wants us to have, He first of all gives us a thirst for. God wants us to have Jesus; He gives us a thirst for Jesus. God wants us to have a bride; He gives us a thirst for a bride.

So we see here, “*And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.*” (Genesis 2:19) So Adam is given the job now. He’s to name the animals. Now that must have been very difficult. Well, most of it. Some of it wasn’t so hard. I mean, for example,

it's not hard to name a hippopotamus. What else would you call it? It looks like a hippopotamus. Or a skunk. My goodness, you know a skunk is a skunk. And Adam is naming the animals. And why does God say, "It's not good that man should be alone," and then says, "Adam, name the animals"? Because Adam is watching. And there is Mr. Hippopotamus and there's Mrs. Hippopotamus. And there is Mr. Skunk and there's Lady Skunk. And there's Mr. Giraffe and there's Mrs. Giraffe. Adam says, "I need a friend. Not that one. No, not that one! Hey, there's nobody fit for me. There's nobody like me. I need someone like me."

And so God is building a desire in the heart of Adam. You can see this as we continue to read. It makes it so clear. Verse 20: "*And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him. And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept...*"—by the way, the man who invented chloroform used this verse as his inspiration, the first surgical operation performed by God Himself—"God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man." (Genesis 2:20–22) Now verse 23: "*And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh.*" (Genesis 2:23)

Now, did Adam say that? Well, the Bible says he said it, and the Bible's correct, so that's what he said. But let me tell you something, folks. That just doesn't translate right. I mean, that's what he said, but you miss it. And I'm certainly not a Hebrew scholar, but the Hebrew scholars tell us that what Adam said, loose translation, was "Hot dog!" I mean, he really says, "Wow! Man, this is it! I mean, that's what I have been looking for! I mean, this is it! That's right, God! You did it right! This is what I want!"

And now you come to verse 24. And when you get to verse 24 you come to the key verse. Now, watch that little word *therefore*. Whenever you find the word *therefore* in the Bible, always ask what it's there for. It is there to help you to understand that you're coming to a conclusion, an application. So put a big star right there by *therefore*. "*Therefore...*"—verse 24—"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." (Genesis 2:24)

Now there are three verbs there, and I want you to underscore them: *leave, cleave, be one flesh*. Underscore those three things: *leave, cleave, be one flesh*. And there you have, dear friends, an outline for preparing any child for marriage. There is the marriage relationship summed up in a verse. That is one of the key verses in all of the Bible.

I've been a pastor for a good many years, and I've done a lot of marriage counseling, and I have not done any marriage counseling ever, nor shall I ever do any, that the problem was not caused by people not understanding the meaning of this one verse—not understanding what it means to leave, not understanding what it means to

cleave, not understanding what it means to be one flesh. In those three verbs you have the priority of marriage, you have the permanence of marriage, and you have the purpose of marriage—right in those three verses.

I. Leave: The Priority of Marriage

First of all, I want you to think of what I'm going to call the priority of marriage. It is summed up in that word *leave*. A man is to leave his father and his mother. Now what a wonderful relationship is the relationship of parent and child! But the Bible teaches that there is a higher relationship. There is a priority over the priority of child-and-parent relationship, and it is husband-and-wife relationship. Do you understand that? You must understand that the highest human priority is not father/son, mother/son, mother/daughter, father/daughter. Parent/child, that is not the highest relationship—beautiful relationship—but the highest relationship is husband and wife.

Now you'll need to understand this: Husband and wife is the highest human relationship. *“For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife,”*—the Bible says—*“and they...shall be one flesh.”* (Mark 10:7–8) Now this is difficult for parents in preparing their kids for marriage, because do you know what your job is as a parent? It is to prepare your child to leave—to prepare your child to leave. And that's painful. That's difficult, to give up our children.

Now I want to emphasize something, and you pay close attention about how God made us, our human psychology. You see, God made parents with a need to be needed. Why do people want children? When I preached the other Sunday on “Children Are the Heritage of the Lord,” I had people come to me with tears in their eyes and say, “Pastor, pray for us. We want a baby. We want a baby. Pray for us. Pray that God will give us a child.” Why is that? What is there in the human heart, in the bosom of every woman and man who is married, to want children—at least ought to be there? It's something God put there, because we have a need to be needed.

Now when a little child comes, a child just has needs. He doesn't need to be needed. He's just a bundle of needs. And there are two kinds of love. There is need-to-be-needed love and there is need-love. And that's the reason parents and children just fall in love immediately. I mean, listen. When that little baby just comes out of the womb and is handed to that mama, she just loves him. I mean, she doesn't even know the little rascal, but she loves him. Isn't that true? Grandpas love them too—just love them, just love them. Why? It's just something that God gives. And the little baby is going to love his mama. It will love whatever mama it gets. Why? Because the parent has a need to be needed, and the child has a need. Need-to-be-needed love and need-love: so far, so good. That's the bonding that God has put there.

But what is the job of a parent? The job of a parent is to work himself out of a job, to

work herself out of a job, to bring that child to the place where the child no longer needs the parent. Do you know what my job is as a father? It is to bring my children to a place where they're no longer dependent upon me, where they reach a place of maturity where they can function without me, because I won't be here always, and because God wants them to have a life of their own. So my job is to build into them principles and love and character and maturity and all of these things, so they can go out in this world and no longer do they have to be dependent upon me, that they can be the individuals that God intended for them to be. And I must work myself out of a job to where I'm no longer needed.

And by the way, that sometimes cuts against the grain. But as that child is growing up and he is maturing and maturing, he wants to take on more responsibility. He wants to be his own person. Nothing wrong with that. That's natural. That's normal. That's the way God intended it. But when so many teenagers begin to be their own person, the parents begin to get threatened, because as the child progressively no longer needs the parents, sometimes the parents still have a need to be needed. And so there comes a point of tension. And then many times, at this point, the parents will begin to create artificial needs to keep the child still tied because the parent still has a need to be needed. At that point, the child tries to break away. Then the parent just tightens the grasp, and the child tries to break away, and the parent says, "You are rebellious." Maybe not—at least not now—but if that parent continues to put those unnatural demands there, the child may indeed become rebellious, and a relationship is broken. And a lot of so-called teenage rebellion starts right there, not with the teenager, but with the parent who will not work himself out of a job.

Now, listen. You work yourself out of a job, but you don't work yourself out of a relationship. Now, you pay attention. Friend, no longer are you their chaperone; you then become their friend. It's an interesting thing. The tighter grip you hold on your kids, the more they're going to want to get away. But the more you teach them to function and operate on their own, and the more you give them that freedom that God wants them to have, the more they want to be your friend. You can't keep them away. That's the way God intended. You work yourself out of a job, but you do not work yourself out of a relationship. Your job, as a parent, is to prepare that little eagle to leave the nest. Your job is to give your children wings and to help them to mature.

Now they're going to make some mistakes. A businessman told me one time, "Adrian, raising children is a lot like producing business executives. If you're the CEO, the Chief Executive Officer, and you've got a junior executive there, you have to allow him to make some mistakes—you have to allow him to make some mistakes." But then he smiled and put his hand on my shoulder and said, "Adrian, you don't allow him to make any big mistakes."

So it is with children. So it is true. There are times they're going to make some mistakes, and you just have to stand by and just grit your teeth and let them make them. But you still can't let them make those big mistakes. And God will give you wisdom. But I'm saying, dear friend, that it is our job, our privilege, to work ourselves out of a job, but not out of a relationship.

And so the very first thing is what I want to call the priority of marriage. You need to teach your children, and you need to understand yourself, that God's highest priority is for one man to be married to one woman till death do them part, and that priority is higher than the priority between parents and children. *"For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother."* (Mark 10:7) Now that's the word *leave*.

II. **Cleave: The Permanence of Marriage**

Now, let's move to the second word, the second verb, and that is the word *cleave*—*cleave*. And that speaks of the permanence of marriage—the permanence of marriage. That word *cleave* means "to weld, to glue, to fasten together in an unbreakable bond." Marriage is to be God's super glue. Jesus, commenting on this passage of Scripture in Mark chapter 10, verses 7 through 9, said, *"For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and [shall be joined unto] his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh."* And then Jesus said, *"What...God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."* (Mark 10:7–9)

Divorce is a transgression of the will, the law, the purpose of God. And you parents need to teach your children that divorce is never an option.

Now you show me two people who began their marriage with the idea that if it doesn't work out they'll get a divorce, and I'll show you two people who are highly likely to get a divorce. You show me two people who begin a marriage with a commitment, a total commitment that, "No matter what, we're going to stay together," and I'll show you two kids who are likely to make it. When you get on this airplane, you just throw away your parachute, folks. I mean, you just don't even have divorce as an option. You just cut that word out of your dictionary. If somebody mentions divorce, you get a blank look and say, "What does that word mean? I don't understand that word. What language is that? We don't even discuss that. That is not even an option. We don't even talk about it." It is not God's plan. It is not God's will. It is not God's way. No to divorce! *"For this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother, and he shall cleave to his wife."* (Mark 10:7–8; Matthew 19:5)

Now the proof of what I'm talking about is this, dear friend, that people who get divorced and people who don't get divorced, they all have the same kind of problems. Don't think that the people who got divorced, they had problems, and the people who don't get divorced, they don't have problems. Folks, if you're married, you've got

problems. Say *amen*. You have to watch the man who says he understands women. He'll lie about other things too.

I want to tell you something. This marriage road is a winding road and a rocky road, but it leads to a happy valley, and it is worth it. But I am telling you that God's plan is to cleave. You say, "Well, what if I don't love her anymore?" Friend, the Bible says, "*Husbands, love your wives.*" (Colossians 3:19) That's not a request. That's not a suggestion. That is a command. You make up your mind to love. Now, listen—listen to me. *It is not your love that sustains your marriage so much as it is your marriage that sustains your love.* It is that commitment that sustains that love and keeps it going. *Divorce is the only game people play where both sides lose.*

We hear about a no-fault divorce. There's no such thing. Generally, if there's a divorce, somebody's at fault, and most likely two people. It's a thin pancake that doesn't have two sides. But there's no such thing as a no-fault divorce. And we need to teach our young people and let them live in a home where there's no divorce, let them see a husband and a wife who are committed to one another, let them come up in that kind of an environment, and break this horrible cycle of marriage and divorce. And we need to say to our young people, and teach to them, and preach to them, that the highest earthly commitment that we have, one of permanency, is this matter of marriage. More important, mister, than your business is your marriage.

I read the other day where a guy opened a fortune cookie, and it said this: "Man who spends too much time making his fortune may lose his cookie."

Your priority is your home. And because of the priority of that home, Jesus speaks of the permanence of that home, and God speaks of the permanence of that home.

III. Be One Flesh: The Purpose of Marriage

There is the word *leave*: That's the priority of the marriage. There is the word *cleave*: That is the permanence of the marriage. And then there is *be one flesh*: That is the purpose of the marriage. Oh, my dear friend, that you might find that ideal that God has for you, the blending of lives into one flesh, where you become something together that you could never have been apart!

Here's a violin. Here's the bow. The bow can't make certain music, and the violin cannot make that music, unless they come together. They come together to be what the creator of that violin and that bow intended for them to be.

A. We Are to Be One Flesh Physically for Continuation

Now when the Bible says, "*they shall be one flesh,*" (Genesis 2:24) it is not just talking about the union of bodies. It includes that, but it is more than that. Animals can do that. You don't marry a body; you marry a person—body, soul, and spirit—a triune person. And so you're to be one flesh physically. There's to be the union of that body. As those

bodies come together, there's nothing dirty; there's nothing impure about sex. Sex is a marvelously wonderful gift of God. Sex is a way of saying, "I love you," that cannot be put into words. And when God says, "*Flee fornication,*" (1 Corinthians 6:18) when God says, "*Thou shalt not commit adultery,*" (Exodus 20:14) God is not trying to keep sex from us; God is trying to keep sex for us. He doesn't want it corrupted. He doesn't want this gift distorted. We're to be one flesh physically.

B. We Are to Be One Flesh Psychologically for Communication

We're also to be one flesh psychologically. Not only is there to be a marriage of our bodies; there's a marriage of our souls. We're to be joined together in our egos, in our minds, in our wills, in our hearts, in our love. Not only should we be sweethearts; we ought to be friends. Not only should we love one another; we ought to like each other. And so there's that one flesh psychologically.

C. We Are to Be One Flesh Spiritually for Communion

And then we're to be one flesh spiritually. There is to be a blending of spirits. And this woman loves Jesus, and this man loves Jesus, and together they praise the Lord. Together they study the Word of God. Together they hold hands and pray and worship God. There is no higher communion than somebody who is one flesh physically, one flesh psychologically, one flesh spiritually. The Bible says, "*A threefold cord is not [easily] broken.*" (Ecclesiastes 4:12) They are to be one: one physically, emotionally, spiritually. They are one flesh. This is God's plan, my dear friend. This is how God made man. This is how God made man to function. Now you are to teach your children this. And you are to demonstrate this. They are to see it in your home. And the proverb was never truer than it is right here in the home: I'd rather see a sermon than hear one any day.

Conclusion

You prepare your kids for marriage around these three words: *leave, cleave, be one flesh.*

Millionaire Marriages

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: April 19, 1994

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 2, 3

“And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.”

GENESIS 2:18

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Introduction

Take God's Word, and find Genesis chapter 2. That ought to be easy to find. And, when you've found it, look up here.

Years ago, I read a story about an old prospector. They found his skeleton. He had died out in the wilderness, somewhere in the Yukon, and not too far away they found his old mule. Evidently, he had tied the mule and died, and the mule stayed there until the old mule died. The mule was laden down with saddlebags. Those saddlebags were

filled with ore, because this was a prospector on his search for gold. And, they went through the prospector's bags, and they found out the old mule had been laden down with what they call "fool's gold." It wasn't true gold at all; it was absolutely worthless. He'd been packing around this dirt, these minerals, this mock gold, and this fool's gold. There, he died; the old mule died. The irony of the whole thing is that before the old prospector died, he had written a note and put it in his saddlebag, and this is what it said: "I died rich"—"I died rich." There he was, out in the wilderness, living it hard with an old mule—died, perhaps, in agony and in pain with his saddlebags full of dirt, and he said, "I died rich." Well, he didn't know what true value was, did he?

We live in a generation today that doesn't understand true value. That's the reason I'm speaking today on treasuring family values. And, in order to understand what we're talking about, we're going to have to first understand what we mean by "family," because we have some people today who want to redefine the word *family*, and then we have people today who have absolutely no basis for true value. And so, we're going to be looking at Adam and Eve, the first family. And, by the way, they are the first family—not Bill and Hillary, but Adam and Eve, are the first family. And, we're going to be looking at the first family today and find out some things about marriage.

Now, if you're married, you have a potential of great, great wealth—and I don't mean financial wealth. I mean you can be a marriage millionaire if you understand the value there is in a true, true marriage. Don't be like the man who used to run his wedding movies backwards so he could see himself walking out of the church a free man. Let me tell you, folks, that there is a wonderful, wonderful value in this thing called marriage, properly understood.

Now, we're going to look at Adam and Eve here a little bit, and I do want to say that Adam and Eve maybe had some advantages we don't have. For example, they didn't have any in-law problems. Adam didn't have to listen to Eve tell him all of the other men she could have married, and Eve didn't have to listen to Adam compare her cooking to his mother's cooking. And, of course, they didn't complain about what the younger generation is coming to. They did have some advantages, but put that all aside and let me say that what we find here in the Book of Genesis is a basis for a wonderful, wonderful marriage.

There are three things I want us to see after we read the scripture, but first of all, let's look, beginning in verse 18—this is Genesis 2, verse 18: *"And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called [the] living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all [of the] cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam*

there was not found an help meet”—or, “fitting helper”—“for him. And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: [and] she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, [and] the man and his wife...were not ashamed” (Genesis 2:18–25).

I. A Marriage Made in Heaven

Now, first of all, I want you to see what I’m going to call a marriage made by heaven, and true marriages are made in heaven. Marriage did not come from the swamps of evolution. It’s not—it’s not—the product of societal folkways and mores. Marriage is the most basic instinct in the heart and mind of human beings.

A. The Heavenly Design

God designed marriage. There is a heavenly design for marriage. And, what are the five reasons for marriage?

1. God Gave Eve to Adam for Companionship

Well, right here, first of all, for companionship—for companionship. “[It’s] *not good that the man should be alone*” (Genesis 2:18). That’s the reason that God had Adam to name all of the animals—He knew that no animal could meet the need that he had for companionship. He could not have a true companion in animal. He noticed for Mr. Giraffe; there was Mrs. Giraffe. And, for Mr. Hippopotamus there was Mrs. Hippopotamus, though she probably didn’t want to be called that. All of the animals—all of the animals—had mates, and he didn’t have a mate. And so, God is saying, “Adam, you need a companion.” And, there is no deeper fellowship than the companionship and fellowship of husband and wife. And, I can tell you that after having been married to a precious lady for more than 40 years, it is glorious, wonderful, and sweet.

2. God Gave Eve to Adam for Cooperation

We’re married for companionship. But also, the second reason is for cooperation. God said, “*I will make [a fitting helper]—“a help meet”—“for him”* (Genesis 2:18). Now, that is a noun and not a verb. It’s not that she was just there to help him tend the garden; another man could have done that. The emphasis here is not on what the wife does; the emphasis is on what the wife is—that is, that together—together—there’s a synergy, as she is a fitting helper to him. The two of them are there for companionship; they’re there for cooperation, to strengthen one another, for the Bible says, “*Two are better than one*” (Ecclesiastes 4:9).

3. God Gave Eve to Adam for Completion

And the third reason is for completion—completion. *“I will make [a fitting helper]”—“a help meet”—“for him”* (Genesis 2:18). There’s a part of the man that is missing without his wife; there’s a part of the woman that is missing without the husband. That’s the reason we call our wives, our husbands, “the other half”—“the other half.” Adam without Eve was like a violin without a bow, and that’s the reason that while Adam and Eve were both made in the image of God, she was to be like him, but she was not to be the same as him, because she was to make up that part that was missing. She was to be different. She’s to be a supporter. She’s to be a completer, not a competitor.

4. God Gave Eve to Adam for Communication

Now, here’s the fourth thing: they were made for communication. Look, if you will, in verse 23: *“And Adam said, This is now bone of my [bone], and flesh of my flesh”* (Genesis 2:23). Now, if you’ll take that passage and go all the way to Ephesians 5, you’ll find out that the Bible also uses that as an analogy for Christ in the Church. And, a husband and his wife are to communicate a principle; they are to be a picture of the Church and the Lord Jesus Christ. Did you know that the greatest sermons that could be preached on this earth are not necessarily preached from pulpits like this, but from homes like yours? The greatest testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ is a Christian home. Christianity in the early Church went from house to house, and that did not mean that somebody went down a street and was knocking on every door. What that meant was simply this: that the Christ that lives in our house is introduced to the Christ that ought to live in your house. And, Christianity...or are introduced to that Christ is introduced to your house, may I say. And, Christianity is to go from house to house; our homes are to give praise to Him. You see, it’s not your marriage; it’s His marriage. It’s not your home; it’s His home. It’s not your children; they belong to Him. And, our marriage is to communicate, to praise, the great God. Your home is to be the center of God’s glory.

5. God Gave Eve to Adam for Continuation

And then, the last reason that God gave us marriage is for continuation—that is, procreation—so that we can have children, so that we can have offspring. And, Adam and Eve were to replenish the earth. That, my friend, is why, as it has well be said, they were Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve. Do you understand? For procreation, for communication—that God gave us marriage for the continuation of the race. You don’t have to be a rocket scientist to figure all that out.

Companionship, cooperation, completion, communication, continuation—now that is the heavenly design.

B. The Human Difference

But I want you to see the human difference, because God had all of these things in

mind. God made us male and female. Now, here's a key verse. Look, if you will, in chapter 1 and verse 27: "*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female*" (Genesis 1:27). In this day and age, I suggest that you just underscore that and put a star by it; teach it to your children: male and female. God made a difference in the races. The devil has tried to blur that distinction. There is nothing more devastating to a Christian marriage than to blur the distinction between man and woman. A man is not superior to a woman; a woman is not superior to a man, but they are different. And, I want to say, viva la difference! God made us different, and the unisex idea was born in Hell.

James Dobson, the Christian psychologist, has pointed out that even the way that our brains are wired, if I can use that term, in boys and girls is different. Boys think primarily—or have a greater proclivity to think—from the right hemisphere of the brain, and girls from the left. What does that mean? It means that boys are by nature more manually oriented, and girls by nature are more verbally oriented. Have you noticed that? Now, one way is not superior to the other, but they are different. And, you can see it. You know, they try to tell us that these things are cultural. They're not cultural; they're creational. They come right out of who we are. Take little boys and little girls. Go to a birthday party. Who is it that rips, and tears, and smears the cake? It's the little boys. It's the little girls that want to play the games. Give a little boy a puzzle—he'll throw it across the room. Give a little girl a puzzle—she'll try and work it out. Give a little girl a doll—she'll carry it like this. Give a little boy a doll—he'll use it for a hammer. It's an amazing thing. Have you ever notice just the way... Go past a high school some time and watch the boys carry their books. They're carrying their books *like this*, if they carry them. Watch the girls carry their books. They'll carry their books *like this*, like they're carrying a baby. That's the way the girls will carry the books. There's just an instinctive difference.

Let me give you nine differences, now, between men and women. We're talking here about a heavenly design, but a human difference. Now, I gave you five reasons for marriage, but let me give you nine differences between men and women. And, these differences are God-given differences.

1. Man Is to Be the Provider; Woman, the Helper

Number one: Man is to be the provider, and woman is to be the helper. Now, look again in chapter 2 and verse 15: "*And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it*" (Genesis 2:15). And, in verse 18: "*And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make an help meet for him*" (Genesis 2:18). The wife is to support the husband. The husband is to be the breadwinner in the family. You see, this is God's original plan. We're destroying that plan in our day and in our age. And, God gave the wife not as a buddy, but as a

companion. And, if you want to have a happy wife, let her know that you need her to support you while you support her and you're the breadwinner.

Now, sometimes in today's economy it's impossible unless both work, and that is a tragedy. We've gotten things skewed. If the wife does work, let the husband's work go for the basic necessities: the home, the food, the clothing, and the transportation. Let the wife's income be used for other things. But, let me say this: if at all possible, let the wife stay home. If she becomes the breadwinner, I'm going to tell you what she eventually will become: tough-minded. She will resent her husband. You say, "Well, if we don't have all of these things, we just can't stay up." Friend, you ought to have such a wonderful home at home that all of these people who have other things will be envious of what you have at home, if you have the real valued home. Do you know what a Greek philosopher said? It's one of the wisest things I've ever read. He said, "To whom little is not enough, nothing is enough"—"to whom little is not enough, nothing is enough" (Epicurus). Think about that; chew on that. The husband is the provider; the woman is the helper.

2. Man Is to Be the Protector; Woman, the Nurturer

The husband is the protector; the woman is the nurturer. Look, if you will, in verse 16: and God said here to the man—"*And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of [the] tree of the garden [of Eden] thou mayest freely eat*"—God is giving the warning to Adam—"*But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die*" (Genesis 2:16–17). Now, look over in chapter 3 and verse 20: and God called his wife's—"*And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living*" (Genesis 3:20). Now, I use those two verses to show you that the man is to be the protector. It is the woman who is to have the mothering instinct, the nurturing instinct. Now, God made the man to protect the family. He is to stand against danger, and he especially is to stand against Satan. You know, God gave Adam dominion over all the beasts of the field. Satan came in the form of one of the beasts of the field. And, did Eve fail, or did Adam fail? Who was it that fell into temptation first of all? It was Eve, but who did God hold responsible? Put this down: in Romans chapter 5, verse 12—don't turn to it, but let me read to you: "*Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin*" (Romans 5:12). God did not point the finger of blame to Eve; He pointed the finger of blame to Adam because Adam was to have been the protector. And, God made the man to be the wife's protector. He made the woman to nurture and have a mothering instinct.

3. Man Is to Be the Leader; Woman, the Enhancer

Let me go on. The man, therefore, is to be leader, and the woman is to be the enhancer. And, God gave Adam instructions as how to lead. Look in verse 16: "*And the*

LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat" (Genesis 2:16). And then, again, chapter 3, verse 20: the woman is the mother (Genesis 3:20). If you'll look at the way that men and women are built, a man wants tools; a woman wants things to beautify the house. And mister, it's wrong for you to try to stamp out your wife's desire for beauty in the house. God made her with a nurturing instinct; He made you with a building instinct. That's of God.

4. Men Are Physically Strong; Woman, Physically Weaker

Now, the man—here's the next thing—the man is physically strong; the woman is more fragile. Now, all of these things are generalizations, okay? You can find an exception, but if you'll listen, you're going to find out that what I'm saying are true if you take them as generalizations. The man is physically stronger—the man is physically stronger.

Now, there's some women can beat up some men—I know that. But, as a class, the man is physically stronger. The Bible says in 1 Peter 3, verse 7, that the husband is to give *"honour unto the wife, as a unto the weaker vessel"* (1 Peter 3:7). Now, that doesn't mean that the man is superior because he's stronger.

What is superior—silk or blue denim? Blue denim is stronger than silk, but silk is more delicate, more fragile, and actually more valuable than blue denim. The fact that the wife is a weaker vessel—more fragile, more beautiful—that does not...it just simply means that God made the men to dig, to chop, to carry, to protect. God made a woman to be gentle, to be tender, to nurture. Watch a woman, if she finds a little kitten, watch how she'll pick it up. A man will pick it up *like that*. Have you ever seen a man change a diaper? Puts that kid down, *plomp, womp*, you know...

The stupidest thing—the stupidest thing—we could ever do is to send women into combat. That's absolutely stupid. Did you know what God says is judgment on a nation? Read in the Bible. When God says, "I'm going to send judgment to a nation," He says, "I'm going to make your soldier like women." That's the judgment of God. God says, "I will make your soldiers like women." (Nahum 3:13)

Did you know, in 1948, the Israelis thought they would put some women into battle, and they armed their women and put them into battle? And, after a few weeks, they said, "We have made a colossal mistake." Do you know why? The Israeli men were taking greater chances to protect the women, and the Arab troops were fighting harder than they would have fought, and they were taking unnecessary chances because they didn't want to be defeated by women. And, the carnage was terrible. And, they said, "This is a colossal mistake to put women in the front troops." Listen, the man is physically strong; the woman is more fragile.

5. Men Tend to Approach Problems Head First; Women, Heart First

Men, because of the job that God has given them, men approach problems head first,

and women approach things heart first. Have you noticed that? It's the classic battle between the logical and the emotional. Now, I'm not saying that men don't have emotions and women are not logical. But, I'm talking about something that is uncanny that a woman—a woman—knows what's going on without knowing what's going on. She has this intuitive thing, and she is an emotional creature. God made her that way. Why? Because it is her job to mother, to nurture, to show love, to be tender. He has to face that world out there. He has to have that shell. He has to go out into the jungle. He has to go out into farm. He has to go out into the factory. He has to go out there. And so, she just thinks emotionally, and he thinks logically.

Now, here's something; guys, I want to tell you something: when she transmits, she transmits emotionally. So, therefore, you've got to learn how to receive that transmission. You're going to have to translate it. I mean, it's tough—it is tough. Joyce said, "Don't listen to what I say; listen to what I mean." I said, "Why don't you say what you mean?" "You're supposed to know what I mean"—"you're supposed to know what I mean."

6. Men Are Goal-Oriented; Women, Security-Oriented

Now, men tend to strive for achievement, and women strive for security. A man sees something he wants to do—he sees a goal—and he goes after it. Now, he just says, "Go for it." He may see some deal that he wants to do and take the whole family savings, the nest egg, and invest it. But the woman doesn't want to do that. She's not happy unless everything is in place.

7. Men See Their Jobs as Extensions of Themselves; Women, Their Homes

The man sees his job as an extension of himself because he's the breadwinner. The woman sees her home as an extension of herself because God made her to nurture. Sometimes these things can come in conflict. A man can be so busy making a living out here that he fails to fix the washing machine; he fails to put in the light bulbs at the house, to do those small things around the house. Did you know that that a woman gets great, great joy out of seeing you fix something at home? Joyce does. I don't like to fix stuff at home. I could say, "Honey, look, there's somebody who knows a whole lot more about that I do." But, she likes to see me do it. Do you know why? It just means that I care, that I care about her world. And, for me to pay to have it done is one thing, but for me to do it is another thing. Now, a man sees his job as an extension of himself; a woman sees the home as an extension of herself.

8. Men Tend to Think More Logically; Women, More Emotionally

Well, we're going to bog down here. Let me let me just say this: that a woman, therefore, tends to be more sensitive, and men tend to be insensitive. Is that true, ladies? Men tend to be insensitive. Why? I'm not saying that insensitivity is a virtue that

we ought to cultivate, but I'm saying that what some women might call "insensitivity" is a God-given instinct to be tough-minded. A man needs a harder shell; he needs a thicker skin. But, thank God for your wife's sensitivity. Your wife can help you out.

Now, if you're like a nuclear sub, your wife is like a sonar: she can tell you where the danger is.

9. Men Tend to Be Less Trusting; Women, More Trusting

Men tend to be defensive; women tend to be trusting. A woman can be so trusting she'll meet a stranger and say, "Hi, who are you? My name's So-and-so," and just have a wonderful little conversation. A man says, "Who is that guy? Who is that woman? What are they about?" And, men are just this way. God made men to be this way. A woman will find good in her husband—she'll find good in her children—when nobody else can find good, because that woman is just such a trusting person. A man tends to be more defensive.

I think I told you about when we were having the war there in the desert, Desert Storm, and Joyce and I were traveling. And, in all of the airports they had these alerts: "Don't let any body give you anything to carry"—they were afraid that somebody's going to put a bomb on an American airplane—"Don't carry any body else's luggage. Do not leave your luggage unattended. Do not *da da da da da da*." Over and over again in the airport were these warnings. Joyce and I were in Charlotte—I mean, right in the middle of this thing. We're sitting there. I'm doing some reading. Joyce is sitting over there about as far as Dan is from me. And, after a while she says, "Adrian," she said, "there's a man gave me a suitcase to watch," and said, "He's a nice looking young man," said, "but I've been watching it now for almost thirty minutes, and he hadn't come back. What do you think I ought to do?" I thought... I started to say, "Run." I couldn't believe it. I mean, the announcements were coming out all the time. I said, "Joyce, how could you do that?" But, she said, "He was such a nice looking man." I went immediately to the desk, and the desk came and got that suitcase. Whether it was what, I still don't know to this day. But, that's a woman's nature. A woman tends to trust; men tend to be defensive, and that's the way that God made us.

Here was a marriage—here was a marriage—made in Heaven. There was—there was—a heavenly design, a human difference. God made us different, that He might make us one. Is a man superior to a woman? Is a woman superior to a man? Listen, a woman is infinitely superior to a man at being a woman, and a man is infinitely superior to a woman at being a man. God made us male and female, and the devil is hard at work trying to blur the differences between the sexes. I feel uncomfortable sometimes going in a restroom. I see a creature in there—I don't know whether it's a man or a woman. I always look for the Adam's apple. I mean, it's weird today. That is of Hell. Men are to look like men; women are to look like women.

II. A Marriage Marred by Hell

Now, here was a marriage made in heaven, and here was a marriage marred by hell. Look, if you will, in chapter 3—look at it: *“Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent”*—now, right away, she should have said, “Adam, come over here,” but she didn’t do it. She didn’t do it, and the woman... And, Adam should have been there watching her, too, and loving her and protecting her—*“And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, [You] shall not eat of it, neither shall [you] touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day [that you] eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and [then] ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil”* (Genesis 3:1–5).

Now I’m not going to do an exegesis of these five verses except to say that in these five verses, you see Satan’s plan. What is Satan’s plan? First of all, to deny the authority of God. Secondly, to debase man. Thirdly, to deny morals. Fourthly, to destroy the family. And fifthly, to dominate the world. That’s what Satan has been at since time immemorial. Satan has his war against the home. Here is a Satanic strategy. And here was a domestic tragedy. Here’s what happened. Look, if you will, in verse 7: *“And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons”* (Genesis 3:7). First of all...or, excuse me, in verse 6: *“And...the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes...a tree to be desired to make one wise [and] she took the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat”* (Genesis 3:6).

The very first thing you see here is selfishness. Here is Eve taking what she wanted. Homes have been ruined today by immorality, drugs, alcohol, pride. They’ve turned wedlock into deadlock because of selfishness. If your home is not what it ought to be, it is primarily selfishness. After selfishness came shame. In verse 7: *“they knew that they were naked”* (Genesis 3:7). God meant for sex to be holy, beautiful, and wonderful, and Satan has perverted it. And after that shame came separation—verses 12–13 (Genesis 3:12–13). They began to blame one another. The communion is broken. And, as you listen to Adam, it sounds like he wishes he didn’t even have Eve. And then, in verses 16 and 17, there was sorrow (Genesis 3:16–17).

I wish I had time to develop those, but I’m going to give you some statements today, and I want you to listen to them. I want you to listen how Satan is marring our families. Not only do we have this happening in the Garden of Eden, but I read in *The Commercial Appeal* just recently, American feminist researcher Shere Hite has scorned

the traditional two-parent family as outdated, authoritarian, and the cradle of many of society's injustices, and saying it is a structure not worth having. She's saying that a marriage—a traditional marriage—is a structure not worth having. "Well," you say, "anybody could say that." But this is a woman who's written up in a long article in our newspaper. And then, she says this—and I quote the newspaper: she says, "The holy family model of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph is an essential repressive one, teaching authoritarian psychological patterns and a belief in the unchanging rightness of male power." She said, "If you take the family—Mary, and Joseph, and Jesus," she said, "that's an unhealthy pattern." I cannot believe that we could read such things.

Let me quote from good ole' fatherly Hugh Downs on *20/20*—and I quote: Hugh Downs says, "During times of social stress, humanity usually regresses into the family." He explained what he meant: "In the 1920s, the Ku Klux Klan urged the nation to adopt family values and to return to old-time religion. In a similar way, Adolf Hitler launched a family values regiment. Hitler's methodology centered on his idea of motherhood. Fanatics in the Ku Klux Klan, the Nazi Party, and the Hezbollah, or any other intolerant organization who refer to themselves as 'religious warriors'—as 'warriors,' 'fanatics'— censor the thoughts of others and love to burn books. In the modern United States, new proponents of family values continue this tradition of fear and intolerance." Can you imagine that? He's saying that when we, today, stand up for family values, we're like Hitler, the Ku Klux Klan, and the Hezbollah. We are the ones who are trying to say, "There is a way that is right—there is a way that is right—and it is come right out of the Word of God."

III. A Marriage Marked by Hope

Well, let me say that here was a family—here was a family—made by heaven. Here was a family marred by hell, but here was a family marked by hope. Look in verse 15: and God said, "*And I*"—this is chapter 3, verse 15—"*And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; [and] it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel*" (Genesis 3:15). There was a prophecy of Jesus coming. Do you know when the first miracle was performed? Jesus performed His first miracle where? At a wedding, when Jesus turned water into wine. And, I tell you that Jesus can turn the water of your sorrow into the wine of joy, and Jesus can take your home and let our home be a miracle—He really can.

Conclusion

If your home today is filled with sorrow, shame, separation, blame, heartache, bring that home to Jesus, and Jesus will change you. I promise you on the authority of the Word of God that Jesus can make you a marriage millionaire. Your home can be a little bit of

Heaven if you'll bring it to the Lord Jesus. And, the Jesus that turned water into wine will turn arguments, strife, and heartache into peace, and purpose, and joy. Do you want a Christian home? You can't have a Christian home without Christians any more than you could have a cherry pie without cherries. Give your heart to Jesus.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Heads are bowed; eyes are closed—no one stirring, no one looking around. Begin to pray right now for others who may not know Jesus. This is the most important part of the service today. This is the part where we're going to invite people to give their hearts to Christ. Someone sitting near to you may not be saved. This may be their final opportunity to receive Jesus. This may be the last public invitation someone will be in today. Would you pray for that individual, that he or she might come to know Jesus?

And, if you don't know Jesus, begin to pray for your own heart, your own life. Say, "Lord, I need you. Help me to get it settled right now." And, if you want Jesus as your personal Savior and Lord, let me invite you to pray like this: "Dear God"—that's right. Just pray out of your heart—"Dear God, dear God, I know that you love me, and I know that you want to save me. Jesus, You died to save me, and you promised to save me. I believe you're the Son of God. I believe you paid my sin debt on the cross. I believe God raised you from the dead. I receive you now in repentance and faith as my Lord and Savior. Come into my heart. Forgive my sin, and save me, Lord Jesus"—ask Him—"Save me, Lord Jesus."

And then, pray this: "Lord Jesus, help me not to be ashamed of you, because you died for me. In your name I pray. Amen."

The Rest of Your Life

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: February 1, 1981

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 2:1–3

“Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.”

GENESIS 1:1–2

Outline

Introduction

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II. The Formal Rest

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C. Rest Restores the Body

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Introduction

Genesis chapter 2, verses 1 through 3: *“Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.”* (Genesis 2:1–3)

And so we’re going to deal today with this subject: “The Rest of Your Life.”

Do you ever get tired? A lady asked her maid, “Don’t you ever do anything in a hurry?” She said, “Yes ma’am. I get tired in a hurry.” Well, I think many of us do. I heard of a lady who had an identity problem and an energy crisis at the same time. She didn’t know who she was, and she was too tired to find out.

And I think many of us can identify with that. We live in a day in which we really do get run down. And the Lord has come to teach us to rest. Now it’s spiritual to work. And we ought to work. We sing that song, “Toiling on, toiling on,” and “We’ll work till Jesus comes.” And it is spiritual to work. And I’m going to say something about that. But I want you to learn that it is spiritual to rest also. And Jesus said, *“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”* (Matthew 11:28)

Now we're going to be talking about that rest today, because you're not really ready to work until you've learned to rest. And here, tucked away right in the threshold of God's book, we're going to learn a very wonderful and marvelous lesson about spiritual rest. I want you to learn something about how to rest in the Lord: this faith work, this faith rest, resting in the Lord. Our outline today is going to be exceedingly simple. First of all, I want you to see the first rest; secondly, I want you to see the formal rest; and thirdly, I want you to see the faith rest. That will be our little outline that we will think around this morning.

I. The First Rest

First of all, I want you to see the first rest. The first time anyone rested was when God rested after He created the heavens and earth. And we find that there, of course, in Genesis chapter 2, the first three verses. The Bible says when God finished His work, then God rested on the seventh day. Now right away, that brings up a very interesting question: Why did God rest? Was God tuckered out? I mean, was God tired? Did God wipe His brow and say, "Phew, man, I'm tired; I've got to rest a while"? Of course not! God doesn't get tired. You might want to jot in your margin Isaiah chapter 40, verse 28: *"Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding."* (Isaiah 40:28) God never gets tired, and God never gets perplexed. God is never surprised at anything, and God is never tired.

So if God never gets tired, why did God rest? Well, God's rest here was not because God was weary. He doesn't get weary.

God's rest here was very similar to the rest in music. When you have a rest in music, that doesn't mean that the musician is tired. It just means that it's time for a pause, it's time for an emphasis, it's time to reflect, it's time to just simply stop for a while and let what has already happened sink in. And so God rested, not because He was tired, but because God had done something very marvelous.

And God is going to teach us through His rest something that we need to learn about spiritual rest.

When I think about God not getting tired, I think about the college student who came to his pastor and said, "Pastor, do you think there's life on other planets?" The pastor said, "No, I really don't." He said, "You mean, in all those millions and billions and myriads of stars, don't you think there's life?" He said, "No." He said, "Well then, I want to ask you a question: Why did God go to all of that trouble to make all of that?" And the pastor said, "What trouble?"—"What trouble?" He spoke, and it was so. He just spoke, and it was so.

You see, God didn't go to any trouble when He made this world. He just spoke, and

it was so. And so God wasn't tired. God created the heavens and the earth, and when He did, He rested for emphasis. But He also rested in order that He might teach us a very wonderful truth.

II. The Formal Rest

Now, let's just leave that point and make that a very brief point, and think not only about the first rest, but think about the formal rest, because God took this day and formalized it, and told His people that they ought to rest on the seventh day. Turn to Exodus chapter 20 for a moment—Exodus chapter 20—and let's begin reading in verse 8. God here commands, *“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour...”*—and by the way, don't forget that. I'm going to come back to that. A lot of people fail to understand that God commanded work as well as rest—*“Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.”* (Exodus 20:8–11)

Now God took this first rest and formalized it and gave it to Israel as a day of rest. And actually, there are two principles that are elucidated here in this scripture that I just gave you: There's the principle of work, and there's the principle of rest. And God told His people that they were to work. They were to work and then rest. Six days they were to work, and then on the seventh day they were to rest.

Now I want to tell you that work is good and honorable, and the cottage of the Lord Jesus Christ was the cottage of a workingman. And Jesus knew what it was to work with His hands. He was the carpenter's son, raised in the carpenter's shop, and Jesus knew work. And later on, Jesus, of course, entered into His public ministry. But whether it was mending plows or mending persons, Jesus knew what it was to work. Jesus was a workingman.

And, you know, we've come to the place in America today where people think that work is, perhaps, an evil to get out of. And a lot of people are wanting to come to the place where they can get enough money so they can retire and not have to work anymore. Friend, that ought not to be your goal. You ought to be like the chairman of our deacons, Jim Glover. He retired so he could come here and work, amen? You are not going to get out of work. God wants you to work. He wants you to work right on up till the time that you die.

Now your work may not be as strenuous; it may not be the same kind of work. But it's not a good thing not to work. Work is a good thing. God wants you to work, no

matter how much money you have. And let me tell you something about work. God says, “*Six days shalt thou labour.*” (Exodus 20:9) The Bible teaches that a man who will not work, or a woman who will not work, is not worthy to live. Listen to it again. A person who refuses to work is not worthy to live. You say, “Where is the scripture for that?” Second Thessalonians chapter 3, verse 10: “*For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.*” (2 Thessalonians 3:10) When a man refuses to work, don’t feed him. If a person will not work, he ought not to eat. Let him go two or three days without eating; he’ll decide he might want to work, amen? That’s right. You say, “That’s hardhearted.” No, friend, that’s biblical. You see, we are to take care of those who cannot work, not those who will not work. Now if a person cannot work, he should be taken care of, but the first person who refuses to work is not worthy to live.

Now we’ve come to a place in America today where we want to make it easy for people not to work, and we say, “Well, we want to help the poor.” And we ought to help the poor. And as you read the Bible, you find out that there is much, much, much in the Bible about helping the poor and needy. But *you cannot legislate the poor into freedom by legislating the wealthy out of freedom, and you cannot multiply wealth by dividing it. And the government cannot give to the people anything except that which it first takes from the people.*

That’s such a simple thing, but we seem to have forgotten it. If anyone receives something without working for it, someone else must work for it without receiving it. And there’s nothing that will break the spirit of a nation any more than for half the people to get the idea they don’t have to work because someone else is going to take care of them, and for the other half of the people to get the idea it does no good to work because someone else is going to eat the fruit of their labor. “If a man won’t work, don’t let him eat.” “*Six days shalt thou labour.*” (Exodus 20:9)

And while we’re talking about this matter of rest, I want to tell you that work is a very honorable thing. I’m not talking about not helping those who cannot work. We need to have those who can work to work so we can help those who don’t work, amen? It’s all right to say *amen*. It won’t hurt.

A. **Rest Replenishes the Spirit**

Okay now, listen. What I’m trying to say is that work is a very honorable thing. But not only did God say that we are to work, but there is the principle of rest; we are to rest. Now, why are we to rest? Because we are body, soul, and spirit. And what does rest do? When we have this formal day of rest—when we stop and rest—well, the very first thing it does: It replenishes the spirit. Did you know that your spiritual life can just sort of run down just like a battery can run down, and it needs to be recharged? That’s the reason we meet to worship our Lord on this day: just to recharge our spirits. You see,

everybody has a tendency to run down, even you diehards. There is a tendency just to run down. And so God gave us this day of rest to replenish the spirit.

B. Rest Refreshes the Soul

Not only did He give us this day of rest to replenish the spirit, but He also gave us this day of rest to refresh the soul. Now the soul is the emotional, psychological, mental part of you. The mind, the emotion, the will—that's the soul. And you need this formal rest just simply to refresh your soul. Oh, we are so jittery, and we are running around knocking things over.

One Christian reminds me of a man that swallowed an egg: afraid to move, afraid it will break; afraid to sit still, afraid it will hatch. And I know a lot of Christians who are just that nervous and high-strung. I read a while back that monkeys in the zoo have been known to have an emotional breakdown by watching the people watch them. That's the kind of a generation that we are.

Well, we need just to be still and rest awhile. Jesus said: "*Come ye...apart...and rest a while.*" (Mark 6:31) You know, we're so busy. I spent this last week in an airport. It's amazing to watch people. I mean, they're coming and going, coming and going, coming and going. And, you know, I think Dr. Vance Havner said, "About all we have really added to civilization is speed and noise. We get there quicker; we still don't know where we are going."

C. Rest Restores the Body

And so God has given us this day, this formal rest, not only to replenish the spirit, but also to refresh the soul, and then again, to restore the body. You say, "Well, if I work seven days rather than six days, I'll get more done." Yeah, but not for long! A little couple wanted to get married. They said, "Well, two can live as cheaply as one." I said, "Yeah, half as long." Let me tell you something, friend. You may be able to work more, but you'll do less. A woodchopper does not waste time when he sharpens his axe. And so God says, "Six days you labor; one day you rest." (Exodus 20:9)

Now He formalized this rest. In the Old Testament that day of formal rest was the Sabbath day, the seventh day. We as Christians do not worship on the Sabbath day, the seventh day. We worship on Sunday, the first day, the Lord's Day. Now there's been a lot of confusion about this. And let me tell you, dear friend, that God gave the Sabbath, not to Christians; God gave the Sabbath to the nation Israel.

You should be in Exodus 20 if you haven't lost your place. Just turn to Exodus chapter 31. Let me show you something. I want you to see that the Sabbath is primarily Jewish, not Christian. Exodus chapter 31, verse 12: "*And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak thou also unto the children of Israel,*"—now, remember he's talking to the children of Israel—"saying, *Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep:*"—that is, the children of

Israel—*“for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations...”*—that is, it’s a sign between God and who? Between God and Israel—*“throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you.”* That is, “I set you apart.” Who? Israel. All right: *“Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you:”*—that is, to Israel—*“every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people.”* (Exodus 31:12–14)

Now we have some people today who claim to keep the Sabbath. I wonder if they are cognizant of verse 15. All right: *“Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD: whosoever doeth any work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death.”* Sabbath keepers, pay attention: *“Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath...”*—who? The children of Israel—*“shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant.”* Now, notice verse 17 and put a star by it: *“It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.”* (Exodus 31: 15–17)

Now it is a sign between God and the children of Israel. I’m going to show you that the Sabbath was not given to the Church. The Sabbath was given to the Old Testament Jew. The Sabbath was not given to the New Testament Christian. I want that to be very clear. We do not worship on the Sabbath. The Sabbath is Saturday. And don’t call Sunday the Sabbath. Sunday is not the Sabbath. Sometimes I hear people stand up in a Sunday School class and say, “Lord, we thank you for this beautiful Sabbath morning.” It is not a Sabbath morning. The Sabbath was yesterday. Today is Sunday. It is the Lord’s Day. The Sabbath was the last day of the week. Sunday is the first day of the week. And we do not worship on the last day of the week. We worship on the first day of the week. Why? Because our dear Lord and Savior Jesus Christ came out of the grave on the first day of the week. And the early Church worshipped, therefore, on the first day of the week.

Now I want you to jot these facts down so you will have them, because if you don’t have them, somebody is going to come along and confuse you. Jesus arose the first day of the week: Mark chapter 16 and verse 9. (Mark 16:9) He first met with His disciples on the first day of the week: John chapter 20, verse 19 and 20. (John 20:19–20) The Holy Spirit was imparted to the disciples on the first day of the week: John 20, verse 22. (John 20:22) They were commissioned to preach the gospel on the first day of the week: John 20, verse 21. (John 20:21) Pentecost—the Day of Pentecost—came upon the first day of the week. I’m not going to give you a Scripture reference for that except simply to show you that *Pentecost* means “fiftieth.” That is, after forty-nine days, after this period of time, on the first day of the week, the Holy Spirit was poured out on the Day of Pentecost. The book of the Revelation, as we saw, came upon the first day

of the week. God revealed to John His plan for the future, in Revelation chapter 1 and verse 10. (Revelation 1:10) Early Christians, therefore, met to worship upon the first day of the week: Acts chapter 20, verses 6 and 7. (Acts 20:6–7) The offerings were laid aside for the work of the Lord upon the first day of the week. First Corinthians chapter 16, verse 2: *“Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him.”* (1 Corinthians 16:2)

Never once is Sabbath-breaking ever mentioned as a sin for Christians. Never once are Christians ever commanded to keep the Sabbath. Jews, under the law, were commanded to keep the Sabbath. It is the seventh day. We do not keep the seventh day; we keep the first day. And when you understand why, it’s going to be a blessing to your heart, because there’s a great spiritual truth there. And the last day of the week and the first day of the week are greatly contrasted. You see, the last day of the week, the Sabbath, commemorates the finished work of natural creation. The first day of the week, the Lord’s Day, commemorates the finished work of supernatural creation. The last day of the week speaks of natural life. The first day of the week speaks of supernatural life. The last day speaks of life in Adam. The first day speaks of life in Christ. The last day commemorates the work of God’s hand, but the first day commemorates the great work of God’s heart. The last day is a display of God’s power, but the first day is a display of God’s grace. The last day was given to Israel. The first day is given to the Church. *The last day of the week is a day of law. The first day of the week is a day of love. And those who insist on keeping Saturday rather than Sunday are living on the wrong side of Calvary.*

Turn to Colossians chapter 2 for just a moment, and I want you to see this very clearly—Colossians chapter 2. Galatians, Ephesians, Philipians, Colossians: “General-Electric-Power-Company.” All right? Colossians chapter 2. Now, look with me, if you will, at verse 14. It speaks of something that Christ did when He died on the cross. And the Bible says, *“Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us,”*—that is, the written law—*“which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;”*—Jesus took those Old Testament ceremonies and He nailed them to the cross. Why?—*“and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.”* That is, He just beat the devil. And by death, through death, He destroyed him that had the power of death. Now, let’s go to verse 16: *“Let no man therefore...”*—now when there’s a *therefore*, find out what it’s *there for*. Now, listen—*“Let no man therefore...”*—it’s because Jesus died on the cross, because of the death of Christ on the cross. Listen—*“Let no man therefore judge you in [food], or in drink, or in respect of [a feast day], or of the new moon,”*—that is, they had the feast of the new moon—*“or of the [sabbath]”*—your Bible may read *“sabbath days,”* but literally it is “of the Sabbath.” “Don’t let anybody judge you.” Anybody comes up to you and tries to

make you feel guilty about not keeping Saturday, just read them this verse—just read them this verse. Say, “Don’t you judge me about this. That was taken out of the way. It was nailed to the cross.” It says, “Don’t let anybody judge you of the Sabbath.” Now, notice verse 17—“*which are a shadow of things to come;*”—the Sabbath was a shadow of something to come—“*but the body is of Christ.*” (Colossians 2:14–17)

Now my body here is casting a shadow on this platform. Which is more important, my body or that shadow? Don’t answer that. “*The body is of Christ.*” There’s just a faint outline of me down here on the platform. That’s my shadow. Now there’s a difference between the person and the shadow. You see, the Sabbath was a shadow. Jesus is the person who made the shadow.

Now in the Old Testament they could just see dimly the Lord Jesus. All they could see was the shadow. In the New Testament the light is thrown upon Jesus Christ, and we see Jesus.

And those people who are still trying to keep the Sabbath are chasing shadows. You see a dog down here chasing the shadow of a bird down on the ground, and the crazy dog doesn’t know that the bird’s up there in the air. He’s just chasing the shadow.

You see, dear friend, the Old Testament Sabbath was a ceremony that was to picture and prophesy and to teach us about the faith rest that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. And if you are still trying to keep the Sabbath, you are living on the wrong side of Calvary, and you are chasing shadows.

III. The Faith Rest

Now that brings me to the third point. First of all, we’ve talked about the first rest: God rested in order to teach us a lesson. Then we talked about the formal rest: In the Old Testament it was the Sabbath; in the New Testament it is the Lord’s Day. John said: “*I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day.*” (Revelation 1:10) Now, let’s get into the real meat of the message. And I hope you’ll not miss it, because whether you keep Saturday or Sunday, if you miss this point, you’ve missed it all: not only the first rest, not only the formal rest, but the faith rest.

Now, what do I mean by the faith rest? Friend, there is a marvelously wonderful truth taught in the Bible called faith rest. That means that we simply trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and are forgiven. Now, you see, in the Old Testament, God did what? He worked six days. We read there in Genesis chapter 2, verses 1 through 3, He worked six days, and then He rested. (Genesis 2:1–3) God worked, and then He rested, and the first creation was finished.

You know, the Bible says, “If any man be in Christ Jesus”—he’s what?—“a new creation.” (2 Corinthians 5:17) Well, how was that new creation done? The Lord Jesus Christ worked, and then He rested. You see, Calvary is the finished work of the Lord

Jesus Christ. Jesus worked. He said, *“My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.”* (John 5:17) Jesus worked. And when He’d finished, He said, *“It is finished.”* (John 19:30) And then Jesus rested. What is Jesus doing right now? He is at the right hand of God. And where is He? He is seated. He worked, and then He rested.

Now, pay much attention. Jesus worked and then rested that you might rest and then work. Now here’s the difference between law and grace. In the Old Testament men worked six days, and then they rested the last day. In the New Testament we rest the first day and then work six days. You see? In the Old Testament they worked in order to rest. In the New Testament we rest in order to work. Don’t ever call Sunday the weekend. Friend, it’s the week beginning. Sunday is the first day of the week. You see, when you’re in the house of God on Sunday, you’re starting your week. I feel sorry for people who don’t start it with God. You know, how you start has a lot to do with how you finish. And so, you see, Jesus worked and rested that you might rest and work. You start by resting.

I think we all ought to retire while we’re young and then work when we’re old, amen? Well, we can’t do that in the natural world. But, dear friend, in the supernatural world, we do. As an interesting thing, you might take the book of Ephesians sometime and just read the first several chapters, and you’ll find over and over again *sitting* is mentioned. And then in the last part of the book of Ephesians, *walking* is mentioned. You see, in the Christian life, we *sit* before we *walk*. That is, we worship before we work. We sit with Christ, in Christ. Then it is not until you have rested that you are ready to work. It would be a great day in America when Christians learn that worship comes before work. We rest in order to work! And so Jesus worked and rested that you might rest and work.

In the Old Testament they worked six days; they earned their rest. Friend, we don’t have anything to earn. You see, it’s all of grace. We just receive our rest. Jesus said, *“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”* (Matthew 11:28) You see, it’s not the weekend. Dear friend, it is the beginning. And so in the Lord’s Day we commemorate the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. When that last drop of blood fell to the ground beneath, Jesus cried: *“It is finished.”* (John 19:30) It’s done!

The secret of salvation is to learn that there’s nothing to earn. *Salvation is not a reward for the righteous; it is a gift for the guilty. It is not a rest that you earn because of your work; it is a rest that enables you to do your work. You see, salvation doesn’t come by trying; it comes by trusting.* The Bible says, *“But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.”* (Romans 4:5) Oh, there are so many people trying to have a works salvation! You know, you ask the average person, “How do you get to heaven?” They say, “Well, do the best you can”; “Keep the Ten Commandments”; “Obey the Golden Rule”; “Go to

church”; “Get baptized”; “Do *this*; do *that*.” Oh, friend, that can’t save you. The Bible says it’s “*not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.*” (Titus 3:5) The Bible says, “*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.*” (Ephesians 2:8–9)

You see, you enter into a faith rest. You just come and say, “I can’t; you never said I could. You can; you always said you would. I’m going to let you. I just trust you. I believe on you. I receive you. I enter into this faith rest. I’m resting in you, Lord—in your finished work. And now because I’m resting, now I’m fit to work.”

There are three prepositions that I want you to learn in Ephesians chapter 2, verses 8, 9, and 10. Now Ephesians chapter 2, verses 8, 9, and 10 are great verses. I’ll tell you why: because they tell you how to be saved, and they tell you how not to be saved. Okay? Now, listen to Ephesians 2:8, 9, and 10, and I want to give you these three prepositions. Listen to it: “*For grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves...*”—see, did you hear that?—“*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it*”—salvation—“*is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.*” (Ephesians 2:8–9)

You see, if you could work for it, you could brag about it. Now Brother Bob Sorrell is sitting up here. He knows how to handle his money a whole lot better than I. So let’s say that Brother Bob gets exceedingly wealthy, and you know, his rich uncle dies in the poorhouse or something. And so Brother Bob says to me, “Pastor, we’ve been good friends now, and you’re my pastor, and now I’m very wealthy. I want to buy you a Ferrari. So he comes driving up to my house with a big twenty-thousand-dollar Ferrari. Let’s make it thirty thousand. All right, so he comes up here with this big, very expensive sports car, and he says, “Pastor, I want to give you this.” I say, “Now, Bob, my goodness sakes alive! You can’t give me that. That’s just too big a gift for one man to give another.” “No, I want to do it, Pastor.” “You mean, you’re just going give it to me? How much did it cost?” “Thirty thousand dollars.” “Oh, Bob, now I just can’t do that. I can’t allow that. Here, Bob, let me help pay for it.” And I give him a quarter—two bits. “There you are, Bob. I want to help pay for it.”

Now, look, friend. If somebody is going to give you a Ferrari, you don’t offer him a quarter, do you? That’s an insult to the giver, isn’t it? Sure. You see, if I were to give him a quarter, and then I’m driving that sports car, and somebody says, “Say, Pastor, that’s a pretty nice-looking car you’ve got there,” and I say, “Yeah, how do you like it? Bob Sorrell and I bought this car,” and I’d be right. I’d be telling the truth. He pays 29,999 dollars and seventy-five cents; I pay two bits, and I say, “Look what we did.” Friend, listen. When you get saved, you’ll never be able to say, “Look what we did.” You’ll say, “Look what He did,” amen?

The Bible says it's "*not of works, lest any man should boast.*" (Ephesians 2:9) You'll never be able to put your puny two bits worth of self-effort to what Jesus did on the cross. When Jesus died on the cross, He said, "*It is finished.*" (John 19:30) And that Greek word means "paid in full." And don't you insult God by thinking that you can earn your salvation! "*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*" (Ephesians 2:8–10)

Now if you'll learn these three prepositions, you'll keep your theology straight, and no false cult is going to get you. What are they? *By, through, and unto.* For *by* grace, *through* faith, *unto* good works. Got that? *By* grace, *through* faith, *unto* good works. You see, you must rest before you work. God worked and rested that you might rest and work. That's the truth that is shown to us there in Genesis chapter 2, verses 1 through 3. That is the great spiritual lesson, that we learn to enter into the rest.

Friends, it's so wonderful when you stop trying and start trusting. I'm not saying that you're not going to serve the Lord. I'm not saying there's not work to do. I'm not saying that you ought not to keep the Golden Rule. I'm not saying you ought not to obey God's commandments. I'm not saying you ought not to be baptized. I'm not saying you ought not to pray and study the Bible. But you don't do those things in order to be saved; you do them because you have been saved.

You rest before you work. Because He worked and then rested, you could rest and then work. And that's the reason we keep the first day, not the last day. You see, in the Old Testament, they were trying to earn their rest. They worked six days and rested the last day.

We start out by faith. We just say, "Lord Jesus, in order that I might have the strength to work, I receive you as my personal Savior. And 'nothing in my hand I bring, simply to thy cross I cling.' I'm not trusting my good deeds. I'm not trusting my good works. I'm not trusting my efforts. I am trusting you, Lord Jesus. You said: '*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.*' (Acts 16:31) Lord, I'm believing. It is done. I am resting—resting, resting, Lord, in thee."

Now I'm afraid some of you are going to miss that rest. And oh, what a shame it would be if you miss that rest! Turn to Hebrews chapter 4. Let's look at something. Hebrews chapter 4—back toward the back of your New Testament, but not too far back. All right, Hebrews chapter 4, verse 1: "*Let us, therefore, fear...*"—now that's a strange command, isn't it? All over the Bible it says, "Fear not." "Fear not." "Fear not." But, "*Let us, therefore, fear...*" What is it that we are to be afraid of? What is it that we are to have an apprehension about? What is it that we are being warned about? All right, listen to the warning now. Here it is. God is giving it to you. Don't let it go in one ear and out the

other—“*Let us, therefore, fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.*” (Hebrews 4:1)

Oh, friend, if Jesus said, “*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*”—if He said that and meant it—you’d better be careful that you don’t miss it. (Matthew 11:28) For notice verse 2: “*For unto us was the gospel preached...*”—now, what is the gospel? The good news that Christ died for our sins, that He was buried and raised again the third day, and that we’re saved by trusting Him—“*For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.*” (Hebrews 4:2)

Did you know, dear friend, that you can come to church this morning and hear this sermon, and it will do you not one scintilla of any good if you don’t mix what you hear with faith? See? “*The word preached did not profit them.*” (Hebrews 4:2) Why? They didn’t enter into that rest. Why? Because they refused to believe it, to receive it, to appropriate it. And then verse 3 goes on to say, “*For we which have believed do enter into rest.*” (Hebrews 4:3) Amen? Not, we who have worked do enter unto rest—we who have believed, we who have trusted the Lord, and we who have understood the gospel. And when we hear the gospel, we mix it with faith, and we believe, and we find rest unto our souls—resting in Jesus. “ ’Tis done, ’tis done; the great transaction’s done.” It doesn’t mean we are not going to work.

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

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Amen?

But it is *by grace, through faith, unto salvation*. In the Old Testament they worked and rested. We rest that we might work. You’re not saved by trying; you’re saved by trusting. You’re not saved by labor; you’re saved by love. It is God’s work, marvelous work, of grace.

Conclusion

And oh, friend, I hope now that you would just simply trust Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. And you say, “Brother Rogers, I’m a sinner. What should I do with my sin?” Why don’t you just trust Jesus and put your faith where God put your sins: on the Lord Jesus Christ. You know, it is so simple to be saved. I didn’t say that it was cheap—simple, so simple that I’m afraid some of you are going to miss it. You are going to look for something big and hard to do, when the Bible says sweetly, sublimely, and surely, “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.*” (Acts 16:31)

Years ago, I read a story somewhere of some people traveling in Europe who came up to a big old castle and wanted to see the inside of it. They found the caretaker and asked him, “Can we go inside?” He said, “Yes, just go right on in.” And so they went to this big massive door—they had one of these big iron keys—and they tried to make the key turn. And they wrestled and they wrestled and they wrestled. And they tried and tried and tried. They jiggled it and did everything. And finally they came back to the caretaker, and they said, “We’re sorry, you’re just going to have to come help us. We can’t unlock the door.” “Oh,” he said, “I forgot to tell you. The reason you couldn’t unlock it is it’s already unlocked. Just lift the latch and go on in.”

Now, friends, those who are trying to be saved never will, because it’s already been done. Would you just lift the latch and come on in? You see, Jesus said, “It’s done; it’s finished.” That’s what He meant when He cried out in victory upon the cross, “*It is finished.*” He worked and rested that you might rest and then work. “*For by grace are ye saved through faith ... unto good works.*” (Ephesians 2:8–9) You are not saved by doing good works. You are saved by faith in the crucified Son of God, the One who said, “*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*” (Matthew 11:28)

Sometimes when a person dies, we put on the grave marker “Rest in Peace.” But, friend, it will take more than a tombstone to bring rest to your soul. And if you don’t have that faith rest, you will never have that final rest. For the Bible speaks of those who die without the Lord Jesus, and it says, “*They have no rest day nor night.*” (Revelation 14:11) You have to rest in Jesus. But when you have that faith rest, you’ll have that final rest. And it will be the rest of your life.

The Anatomy of Salvation

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: December 2, 2001

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 2:7

“And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”

GENESIS 2:7

Outline

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Introduction

Genesis chapter 2. You know that Almighty God made everything. He spoke, and universes sprang from His fingertips. He’s the One who scooped out the seas. He’s the One who heaped up the mountains. He’s the One who made the plants. He’s the One who created the animals. But God’s crowning creation is mankind. Look in the Scripture, if you will, in Genesis chapter 2, verse 7: *“And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath”*—literally, it’s *chay*, the plural, “breaths”—*“of life; and man became a living soul.”* (Genesis 2:7)

Now the Bible says that *“God formed man of the dust of the ground.”* (Genesis 2:7) Actually, the word for *forming* is the word that was used of a potter who would carefully craft a vessel. And God made the first man. With His almighty hands He formed that man.

Some lady said, “God looked down after He’d made Adam and said, ‘I can do better than that,’ and He made a woman.”

Well, we know that women are superior to men at being women, and men are superior to women at being men. And God made mankind as man and woman.

Now we are told today that actually it didn't happen this way, that somehow matter just happened to happen, and somehow in eons past, in the measureless years of yestertime, there was some slime, some primordial ooze, and out of that biotic soup came man. Well, if that's true, we've come from soup to nuts. I don't believe that for a moment. I don't believe we evolved from any kind of an animal. You can believe that King Kong is your cousin if you want to. *Some of my ancestors may have hung from the neck, but none hung from their tail.* I mean, that man is an accident, many people believe.

George Gaylord Simpson, here's what he said—he is a world-famous evolutionist: “Man is the result of purposeless and natural processes that did not have him in mind”—“purposeless and natural processes that did not have him in mind.” That is, you were not in the mind of anything; you just happened.

Well, friend, you don't have to park your brain behind the door to believe that God created you. And let's look at the Scripture one more time, and you're going to find out how God created you. God created you in His image. And God is a triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and therefore you have a triune part to your nature. “*And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground,*”—that's his body—“*and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life;*”—that is his spirit—“*and man became a living soul.*” (Genesis 2:7)

Now, look in 1 Thessalonians 5:23. Don't even turn to it; just put it in your notes right now—1 Thessalonians 5:23. Here's what the apostle Paul prayed for the church at Thessalonica, and he says, “*And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” (1 Thessalonians 5:23) You are, precious friend, a body, a soul, and a spirit. Paul calls it “*spirit and soul and body.*” (1 Thessalonians 5:23) We're going to look at it in reverse order for simplicity this morning. And I hope *you are going to understand, first of all, what you are, and who you are, so you can understand why you are.*

Now man is body, soul, and spirit. Therefore, we're going to look at the marvel of the human body. We are going to look this morning not only at the marvel of the human body, but we're going to look at the magnificence of the human soul. Then we're going to look at the mystery of the human spirit. And once we see this marvel, this magnificence, and this mystery, we're going to say, “Glory, hallelujah! Thank you, Lord, for what you had in mind when you created me, when you made me.”

I. The Marvel of the Human Body

Now, let's think for a moment about the marvel of the human body. *"God formed man of the dust of the ground."* (Genesis 2:7) You see that there in Genesis chapter 2 and verse 7. I say again, this idea is that God fashioned you very much as a potter would fashion a vessel.

Now for years people used to laugh at this, to think that the human body is made of dirt, that the human body is made of earth, of clay, of dust. They don't laugh anymore. As a matter of fact, the *Reader's Digest* reported, in the Ames Research Center, NASA's Ames Research Center, they looked at the elements in the human body—are you ready for this?—every element—this is science now; this is not Adrian; this is science, NASA's Ames Research Center—every element—every element—in your body is found in the ground; every element, exactly as God said back here on the front door of the Bible. You, friend, are formed of the dust of the earth. Now NASA has some engineers, but I'll tell you one thing they'll never do: They will never make a human body.

Put this verse down—Psalm 139, verses 13 and 14—here's what the psalmist said: *"For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb."* And by the way, that thing in a mother's womb is a child: *"thou hast covered me in my mother's womb."* Yes, go ahead and clap on that. It's not some little blob of protoplasm; it is a child. *"Thou hast covered me in my mother's womb."* And then he says, *"I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth well."* (Psalms 139:13–14) That's the reason I'm calling it the marvel of the human body.

A. The Cell

I've spent some time this week just thinking again about the human body. I think of the cell, one cell in your body. If you were to take a part of your skin, about the size of a postage stamp, that one part, that one little piece of skin, would have about nineteen million cells. Let's just look into one of those cells. That cell has in it both matter, what we call "stuff," and it also has information in it. Now you have to understand that there's a difference between matter and information.

For example, this book is matter. It is paper and ink. But that isn't what makes it a book. What makes it a book is the information in it. Now your cell has matter, but friend, your cell, just one of these millions of cells, is stored with information. How did that information get there? Now, first of all, the scientist cannot even explain the origin of matter, much less can he explain the origin of life, much less can he explain how that information got there. Do chemicals produce information? Does matter produce information?

There's a great scientist today; he's written a great book. I mean, it has knocked the evolutionists on their heels. It was written by Michael Behe, and it's called *Darwin's Black Box*. Now, what is a black box? Well, it's a code name. You see, doctors used to have to put up with quacks, charlatans, who would go from town to town, and they would tell people, "We can cure you of whatever ailment." They would hook you up to all kinds of wires and apparatus, and they would all run to a black box. And they would say, "Now you can't see what's in the black box; that's my secret." Of course, there was nothing in the black box. It was all a hoax. But he'd have a black box, some mysterious black box, and all of the works are supposed to be in that black box, kind of like the Wizard of Oz—you know, the wizard back there behind, doing all this stuff. But it's all hokum; it's all a fraud, just like the wizard in *The Wizard of Oz* was a fraud. These people have this black box, and they say, "Let's see what's in that black box."

Well, Behe wrote his book called *Darwin's Black Box*. Darwin said, "There's the cell, and then the cell begins to develop and adapt, and so forth, until you have the present thing that we call a human life." But Behe said, "Let's look into the cell. Let's look into the black box." When you take the lid off that black box, you see it's not just a cell. Friend, there is an incredible amount of knowledge in there, information that would fill literally library after library with information that is in just one cell. What this brilliant man has done, he's brought it all down to what he calls irreducible complexity. Don't check out on me now. Irreducible complexity: He's saying that when you get down to the basic element of all life—let's just say the cell—and you look at all of the intricacy in a cell, that one part in that cell cannot exist without the other part, without the other part, without the other part, without the other part, without the other part, without the other part, without the other part, without the other part, without the other part. He says none of these can exist by themselves. They all have to exist together for any of the other parts to work. One cannot come out of the other part.

You can't say, "I've got this; now I'll get this; now I'll get this; now I'll get this." No, they all have to exist at the same time for any one of them to work. It's all loaded with incredible information. I'm telling you that those who are arguing for evolution today are having difficulty with all of this, but they still don't want to accept it. Let me tell you something, friend. Evolution is not science. You say, "What do you know about it, you dumb old Baptist preacher?" Evolution is not science. Evolution is philosophy.

Now, let me give you a statement that will prove that. Harvard geneticist Richard Lewontin, he's one of the most influential biologists in the world. Here's what he wrote. And I want you to listen to it. I don't like to read long quotes, but I want you to listen to this. He says, "It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us to accept a material explanation of the phenomenal world, but, on the contrary"—he's saying our methods don't force us to accept materialism—"but, on the contrary, that we

are forced by our”—here’s a word you may not be familiar with—“*a priori*”—that means “our mind-set before we ever start; our predisposition”—“our *a priori* adherence to material causes to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counter-intuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover, that materialism is an absolute, for we cannot allow a divine foot in the door.”

I don’t know whether you heard what he was saying or not. He says it doesn’t make any difference what any intuition will tell us. Before we ever start, we say, “It can’t be done by God.” I mean, we have a predisposition, an *a priori* idea, that it cannot be of God. Evolution is the next best guess of the person who will not accept God. I mean, there are scientists who say that. Maybe you didn’t understand all the convoluted things that he said, but that’s exactly what he said.

B. The Heart

You think not only of the cell, but you think of the circulatory system in your body. It wasn’t until recently that William Harvey even discovered that the blood circulates in the body—just a few hundred years ago. Every minute of our lives our heart pumps ten to thirty pints of blood through about 100,000 miles of arteries, veins, and capillaries. I mean, that’s happening every minute. Now something is traveling about 100,000 miles inside your body. You didn’t even know you had that many miles in you, did you? Well, you do. Listen. You have twenty-five trillion red cells that are carrying oxygen and nutriment. You have about twenty-five billion white cells, and these are fighting diseases. These are soldiers inside your body. You have in your body these capillaries, these little tiny tubes. If you were to spread them out in one body, they would cover a space of about one-and-a-half acres.

Now the blood is pumping through your body right now while I’m talking. I mean, trillions of red cells, billions of white cells, are going through your body right now. Can you imagine FedEx out here delivering trillions of packages to sixty trillion business customers over a route of 100,000 miles of territory every minute? That’s what’s happening inside your body right now as you sit there, as that red river of life is going through you. Each cell has a number of different nutrients and chemicals, and these blood cells are going to the cells in your body. Each time the red river of life passes, your cells are selecting these things that you need. The white cells are circulating through your body with soldiers there that are arming themselves to fight the diseases in your body. An incredible thing is happening inside this body! You’re telling me that all that just happened?

Your heart is about the size of my clenched fist right there; that’s all it is. And yet God put that heart inside of you. And hopefully, it will beat for eighty or more years before you go to meet the Lord Jesus Christ. It is beating, beating, beating, beating,

over and over and over again. You work your arms for a while; they get tired. You work your legs for a while; they get tired. But your heart goes on and on. It weighs less than a pound, yet it pumps one-and-a-half million gallons of blood—one-and-a-half million gallons every year.

C. **The Eye**

Think not only of that, but think of your eye—think of the human eye. There is no scientific instrument as sensitive to light as your eye. Your eye, in the dark, has a sensitivity that increases ten thousand times. Now man can make a camera, but man has never made a camera like the human eye. It's self-adjusting, it's automatic, it is constantly focusing, and it takes its pictures in color. They are instantaneously developed.

Do you take eyesight for granted? When a little baby is born, that little baby begins to develop. And his or her optic nerves—approximately a million of them— begin to grow from the brain to the eye. Then there are another approximate million of these nerves, and they begin to grow from the eye to the brain. From up *here* these nerves are growing; from down *here* in the eyes these nerves are growing—a million of them—and each one of them connects. We think it's great when engineers can dig a tunnel, and the two ends of one tunnel will meet when they're doing it with dirt. Friend, no wonder the psalmist said, "*I am fearfully and wonderfully made.*" (Psalms 139:14)

D. **The Ear**

Think of the ear. It is an architectural wonder, the human ear. Sound waves activate your eardrum 73,000 vibrations per second, and they move from the outer ear to the middle ear. These ossicles begin to vibrate, and finally it's picked up by these nerves. It's so complicated that I couldn't begin to explain it to you. Volumes have been written about it. If I were to show you a radio and tell you this just happened, you'd say, "Call for the boys with the butterfly net."

And yet there are people who want to tell you this just happened, that this just happened, that this blood system just happened, or your nervous system. I'm talking about these nerves.

E. **The Brain**

We talk about having a laptop computer. Friend, I've got a head-top computer, I mean, in my head—a brain. No computer on earth can even begin to approximate what's in the human brain: eighty billion nerve cells known as neurons, and these are all interconnected. The brain has billions of components, and in every split second the brain is working. And after billions of dollars and many years, the scientists have never ever done anything like the human brain.

Here's a ten-year-old boy. He's standing over here. Here's another boy on the

playground. He's standing over here. He takes a football and he throws it. That ten-year-old boy over here, he turns around, and he sees that football coming. Something happens in here that is incredible. He looks with that marvelous eye that God has given him, begins to read the information, and that brain begins to compute. It computes the distance from here to there. It computes the speed with which that ball is thrown. It computes the arc. It computes the estimated arrival time. It computes all of this in a nanosecond. And it sends information—it sends information to the hands and the legs and the body. And that ten-year-old boy reaches out and catches that ball. You think that's all an accident? Friend, no wonder the psalmist said, *"I am fearfully and wonderfully made."* (Psalms 139:14) That's the human body.

Let me tell you something. It's not the human body that makes you unique. Now your body—put these scriptures down—your body is an earthly house. You live in a house. Second Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 1: *"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."* (2 Corinthians 5:1) You live in a house. Your body is your house. What you're seeing right now is not Adrian; you see the house I live in. Now my body is also a temple to be inhabited by God. First Corinthians 6, verse 19—put this down: *"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you...and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price."* (1 Corinthians 6:19–20) My body has been purchased. My body doesn't belong to me. That's the reason I don't have a right to use it to put alcohol in it, prostitute it, or harm it in any way. It's not mine. I'd be messing up the Holy Spirit's property. "You're not your own. You're bought with a price." (1 Corinthians 6:19–20)

Now, therefore, my body is to be presented to God. Put this scripture down—Romans 12, verse 1: *"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."* (Romans 12:1) Now that's the body. That's what I call the marvel of the human body. I am wonderfully and marvelously made.

II. The Magnificence of the Human Soul

But now, secondly, let's think not only about the marvel of the human body, but the magnificence of the human soul. Remember our scripture again: *"And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became"—a what?—"a living soul."* (Genesis 2:7) More wonderful than your body is your soul. Jesus said your soul is worth more than all of the world. Put this scripture down—Matthew 16, verse 26: *"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"* (Matthew 16:26)

Friend, inside your body is the real you—your personality, your idiosyncrasies, your

proclivities, your sense of humor, your winsomeness—all of those things that make you the wonderful person that you are. That is your soul. The Hebrew word here is *nephesh*, and in the New Testament it's *psuche*. It is a word that speaks of living life. It's the psychological part of you. And so here's what your soul is primarily. Now, listen. We're talking about anatomy now. Your soul has anatomy just like your body has anatomy. Your soul is mind, emotion, and will.

Now, let me give you some scripture. We're going to run through this quickly.

A. **Mind**

Psalms 139, verse 14—I already referenced that: *“I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.”* (Psalms 139:14) A tree doesn't have a soul, so it can't know that it's marvelously made. But you've got a soul. Your mind tells you there's something wonderful about you, *“that my soul knoweth.”* (Psalms 139:14) You see, your soul is mind. For example, again, Proverbs 2, verse 10: *“When wisdom entereth into thine heart, [the] knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul.”* (Proverbs 2:10) So your soul is mind.

B. **Will**

But not only is your soul your mind; it's also your will. First Chronicles 22, verse 19: *“Now set your heart and your soul to seek the LORD your God.”* (1 Chronicles 22:19) What you have to do is to take your soul by the nape of the neck and say, “Soul, we're going to seek God.” Set your heart and mind to seek God, because it is your will that is in your soul, as well as your mind.

C. **Emotions**

But also, the soul is the center of your emotions. Put this scripture down—1 Samuel 18, verse 1: *“The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David,”*—that is, they loved one another—*“and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.”* (1 Samuel 18:1) Love—emotion—is in the soul: mind, emotion, and will.

III. **The Mystery of the Human Spirit**

Now we're not going to get finished unless I move on to the third and most important part. We've talked about the marvel of the human body. We've talked about the magnificence of the human soul. But I want you to think, thirdly, with me about the mystery—and I've chosen the word carefully—the mystery of the human spirit. You would never know you had a spirit unless God revealed it to you. No way possible would you ever figure it out by your intellect. It is a mystery, when the Bible says that God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul. Now the word *breath*, I tell you, is the word *chay* in Hebrew. In New Testament Greek, it is *pneuma*. It is the breath of God. God not only enabled him to fill his lungs, but the life of

God came into Adam, and Adam now had a spirit.

Now, remember our scripture that I gave you before? 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 and verse 23: *“And I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* (1 Thessalonians 5:23) You are spirit, soul, and body. Some people think spirit and soul are interchangeable. They’re not. They’re distinct, but only the Bible can prove it. Hebrews 4:12: *“The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword...dividing asunder [between] soul and spirit.”* (Hebrews 4:12) That’s what the Word of God does—the Word. No psychologist, no psychiatrist, no philosopher could understand that. The only way you’re going to know that is by the Word of God.

Now what keeps you from being a clever animal is this, that God breathed into your nostrils the breath of life. God says something about man He doesn’t say about the plants and He doesn’t say about the animals. You have a spirit. You are in the image of God, and God is spirit.

Now, listen. *With your body you have world-consciousness. With your soul you have social and self-consciousness. With your spirit you have God-consciousness.* Now, put these scriptures down. Luke 1, verse 47: *“And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.”* (Luke 1:47) John 4, verse 23: *“But the hour cometh,”—Jesus said—“and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth.”* (John 4:23) Romans 8, verse 16: *“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.”* (Romans 8:16) The organ of knowledge to know God is the human spirit. You cannot know God unless you know Him spiritually. The spirit is to your spiritual life what blood is to your physical body.

Now, friend, man has a spiritual crisis. The only way you can know God is through the Holy Spirit. So you lay your intellectual pride in the dust: No matter how much you know, you’ll never think your way to God. Here’s a critical verse—Proverbs 20, verse 27: *“The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD.”* (Proverbs 20:27) Now the word *candle* may be, and could be, and should be translated “lamp.” “The spirit of man is the lamp of the LORD.” (Proverbs 20:27) You have a spirit. That spirit is the lamp that God uses when He wants to illumine you. When God wants to teach you spiritual things, He does it through your spirit. “The spirit of man is the lamp of the LORD.” (Proverbs 20:27) But what good is a lamp without oil? A symbol of the Holy Spirit is oil. Now, friend, if your lamp is dry, if the Holy Spirit is not in you, then you’re not going to know God as you ought to know God.

Now, let me show you how a man is supposed to operate. He has this spirit, this innermost part of him. God’s Holy Spirit is the oil that ignites that lamp, and then a person knows God through the spirit. He knows God intuitively. The human spirit then speaks to the soul—the mind, the emotion, and the will. As the Holy Spirit speaks to the

human spirit, and the human spirit speaks to the mind, the emotion, and the will; the mind, the emotion, and the will speak to the body—the hands, the eyes, the feet. This body goes out and manifests the life of God. And if you see the life of God being manifested in the man standing up here and speaking and talking today, who is it? It is God in my spirit speaking to my soul, my mind, and coming out of my lungs and my voice. And it ought to be the life of God being manifested—God in the human spirit speaking to the soul, motivating the body, expressing Himself in the world. That's the way we're supposed to operate. That is the anatomy of mankind. That's how God made man.

Then He says, in Matthew 5, verse 16, *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven,”* (Matthew 5:16) because it's not you; it's the Holy Spirit in the human spirit, through the human soul, to the body.

Now having said all that, what does it mean for a man to be unsaved? Does it mean that he's a murderer or a terrorist or a rapist? No, no. Just to be unsaved means there's no oil in your lamp. It means that you don't have the Holy Spirit in your human spirit. God said to Adam and Eve, “Don't you sin against me. Don't disobey me, because in the day that you do—in the day you do—you will surely die.” (Genesis 2:17) Well, Adam disobeyed God. Did he die that day? Well, his body went on to live for hundreds of years. His brain was still working. His mind, his emotion, and his will were still working. But he died spiritually. God went out of him. *“He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.”* (1 John 5:12) Jesus is talking to people whose minds are working, whose hearts are pumping, whose body is animated, and He said, “I've come that you might have life.” (John 10:10) Death is not the separation of the soul from the body, but the spirit from God. How did Adam die? He died immediately in his spirit, he died progressively in his soul, and he died ultimately in his body.

What does it mean to be lost? You don't have to be the worst person in Memphis to be lost; you are just minus God. And therefore, you can't understand a thing in the world about God, for the Bible says, in 1 Corinthians the second chapter, *“The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God...neither can he know them, [for] they are spiritually discerned.”* (1 Corinthians 2:14)

Your dog would rather have a bone than a library full of books. Why? He has no appreciation. Now an unsaved man can appreciate this beautiful tree. He can appreciate the music that Ashley sang, and so forth. He can appreciate the logic of the sermon. But he will never know the things of God. They are spiritually discerned. And because he is spiritually dead, he's dead in trespasses and sin. He doesn't need improvement. He needs for God to come back into him. Friend, listen to me. *Salvation is not getting man out of earth into heaven; it is getting God out of heaven back into*

man, and getting that spirit illumined so a man can know God. When he knows God, he's changed from the inside out, not from the outside in, and he is twice born.

Now God puts in reverse exactly what the devil did. Remember Adam? Adam and the devil did it together. Adam died immediately in his spirit, progressively in his soul, ultimately in his body.

Now, let me tell you what happens when you get saved. Here's the hallelujah part. When you receive Jesus Christ, you are justified immediately in your spirit. Friend, you are made just before God, and there's never one sin that will ever be marked up against you. I'm not saying that you are going to be perfect. I'm not saying God will not have to chastise you. But so far as judgment is concerned, the Bible speaks of "*the spirits of just men made perfect.*" (Hebrews 12:23) Right there, you receive Christ and God says, "That's it. It's done. He's born from above." The Holy Spirit comes into that man.

Now he is justified immediately in his spirit. He is sanctified progressively in his soul. You're learning more and more about Jesus. Your mind, your emotion, your will are accepting more and more of Him. *And then one day, you'll be glorified ultimately in your body.* When Jesus comes, your old body will have every vestige of sin taken from it, and you'll be like the Lord Jesus Christ. Hey, folks, the best is still yet to come—the best is yet to come.

Conclusion

This is the anatomy of salvation. This is what it means to be a child of God! And oh, that everybody in the world would know what God had in mind when He formed man—when He "*formed man of the dust of the ground, breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.*" (Genesis 2:7) And if you'll give your heart to Jesus, in the ages to come you'll understand God's marvelous plan, and you'll bless Him forever for it. He suffered, bled, and died that you might be saved.

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. And if you know the Lord Jesus, would you begin to pray for those around you who may not know Him? It may be your husband, your wife, your child, your mother, or your father. It may be your friend. But just pray, "Lord, if that person doesn't really know you, help them to be saved today." And if you know that you're not saved, just pray, "Lord Jesus, save me today. I need you."

Now if you're sincere about wanting to know God, I want to guide you in a prayer. Would you pray this prayer? "Dear God, thank you for loving me. I know you want to save me. I am a sinner, hopeless without you. I'm destined for judgment without you. I'm eternally lost without you. I need you and I want you. I open my heart. I receive you, Lord, by faith. I trust you now as my personal Lord and Savior. Lord Jesus, you paid for my sin with your blood. I believe it. You rose from the dead. I believe it. And now I

receive it by faith. Forgive me. Cleanse me. Save me. And begin now to make me the person you want me to be. Thank you for doing it. Give me the courage to make it public this morning. In your name I pray. Amen.”

How to Function with Unction

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: December 8, 1996

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 2:7

“And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”

GENESIS 2:7

Outline

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 - B. The Human Eye
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- II. The Miracle of the Human Soul
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Introduction

Take your Bibles and turn to the first book in the Bible, the second chapter of that book, Genesis chapter 2, and tonight we're going to look at one verse, but we're going to look at it from many, many different angles—Genesis chapter 2.

I heard years ago about a preacher in a small country church in the backwoods who asked his deacon to dismiss in prayer. The deacon prayed a long prayer, and in the midst of that prayer he prayed a phrase like this several times—he said, “And Lord, unctionize our pastor. Lord, unctionize our pastor. Lord, unctionize our pastor.” Now the pastor didn't like it very much, because it sounded like something was wrong with him. So he met the deacon at the door and he said, “Now, deacon, you prayed several times for me to be unctionized.” He said, “What does that word *unctionize* mean?” The old deacon scratched his head and he said, “Rev, I really don't know what it does mean, but whatever it means, you ain't got it!” And I think that whatever it means, there are a lot of us who don't have it.

So I want to talk to you tonight about “How to Function with Unction.” And I want you to understand tonight what it means to have unction. That literally means to have the power of God upon your life, to be energized, and directed by the Holy Spirit of God.

Now in order to understand this, you're going to have to understand how God designed you and why God designed you the way He designed you. So look, if you will, in chapter 2 and verse 7: *"And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."* (Genesis 2:7)

Now this is the story of how God made the first man out of the dust of the ground. Somebody said that God made man, stepped back and looked at him, and said, "I can do better than that," and made a woman. Well, that may be true. If you're a lady, you probably believe that it is. But here God tells us how He made the first individual. He made this man: body, soul, and spirit. He made man out of the dust of the ground; that's his body. He breathed into his nostrils the breath or the spirit of life, and that is his spirit. And man became a living soul. (Genesis 2:7)

Now the apostle Paul sums all three of these up in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 and verse 23, where he says, *"And I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."* (1 Thessalonians 5:23) God is a triune God— Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and God made us in His image. And so we have a triune nature: body, soul, and spirit.

Now I want to help you to understand the difference in the body, soul, and spirit, and why God created us that way, and how God put us together. I think you'll get a lot of instruction, and hopefully, you'll get a great blessing and learn some practical ways to live the Christian life, when you understand just why God created us and engineered us the way He did.

I. The Magnificence of the Human Body

The very first thing I want you to notice is what I want to call the magnificence of the human body. God formed the human body, in verse 7: *"And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground."* (Genesis 2:7) Now this word *to form*, when the Bible says, *"God formed man,"* (Genesis 2:7) is a word that is used for a potter who would be molding clay. God just made a man out of dirt out of the earth. For years people would laugh at that as though that is some primitive, ignorant way that prescientific days would describe the making of a man. But in recent years, scientists have been startled to discover that, indeed, man is made of clay and earth. As a matter of fact, NASA Ames Research Center reported—this article goes back to *Reader's Digest* in 1982—that these research scientists, in analyzing the human body, have found out that every element in the human body—every single element in the human body—is found in the dirt in the earth—every one of them. If you give the scientists time, they'll catch up with God; they'll catch up with the Bible. As I've said before, *when a scientist has a good word to say about the Bible, that doesn't give me any more confidence in the Bible, just a little more confidence in the scientist.*

Now, suppose you were going to make a body, and you were to take these elements and put them together, what would you need? According to the reading that I've done, you'd need fifty-eight pounds of oxygen, you'd need fifty quarts of water, you'd need two ounces of salt, you'd need three pounds of calcium, you'd need twenty-four pounds of carbon, you would need some chlorine, some phosphate, some fat, some iron, some sulfur, and some glycerin. You would take these things—let's suppose you took them into your kitchen—you'd say, "I'm going to make me a man; I'm going to build a man." I don't think you'd be very successful. If you were to take just one square inch of skin—just one square inch of human skin, the size of a postage stamp—that one square inch of skin would have millions of cells. Every cell, as Paul Doty of Harvard said, is more complicated than New York City. There would be in that one little postage-stamp piece of skin, there would be a yard of blood vessels; there would be four yards of nerves, one hundred sweat glands, fifteen oil glands, twenty-five nerve endings, in just a little postage stamp of skin. We're not talking about the micro-construction of the skin, but just those things that are more obvious, like sweat glands.

A. **The Circulatory System**

If you were to think about the human body and the circulatory system of the human body, your heart pumps every minute of our lives ten to thirty pints of blood throughout 100,000 miles of arteries and veins and capillaries. I said, 100,000 miles. The average man has about ten pints of blood, and that blood contains twenty-five trillion red cells that carry the oxygen. There are twenty-five billion white cells that fight disease. Now a white cell doesn't live very long. It lives about twelve hours. The red cells will live for about 120 days. And then this blood is oozing through our body in minute, little vessels called capillaries, these tiny tubes that surface the bloodstream. If you were to take these capillaries in your body and my body and spread them out, they would cover a one-and-a-half-acre field. They are interconnected so as to supply the nutrients to your body, all of these millions of cells that require these chemicals.

Now what that would be like, it would be like Federal Express delivering trillions of packages daily to over sixty trillion business customers over a route of 100,000 miles. That's what your blood system is doing in this body that God has made. No wonder the psalmist said, "*I am fearfully and wonderfully made.*"

Now your body knows what each of the cells needs, what the nutrients that are needed are, and these cells send out signals. And as the little truck in the bloodstream stops at each cell, it unloads those particular nutrients and those particular chemicals that are needed for vitality and for life. That's the reason the Bible says very clearly and plainly in prescientific days, "*The life of the flesh is in the blood.*" (Leviticus 17:11) You have not only those red cells, but also you have those white cells that have antibodies that are particularly designed to fight disease. If you get a particular disease, those

white cells will go to get the name, rank, and serial number of that disease. They will organize an army to go fight that disease, whatever that particular germ or virus is. It is an amazing thing that God has put into our bodies.

The Hebrew word for heart is *lev*, and it speaks of not only the emotional part of a man, but it also may speak of that muscle, which is the most powerful muscle in the body, that pumps all of this blood. Hold your fist up about *that* way and clench your fist and look at it. That's just about the size of your heart. Your heart is just about that big. If you live to be eighty, it will work every day. Day in and day out, while you're asleep, that muscle is working. Now if you work with your arms, after a while, your arms will get tired. If you work with your legs, after a while, your legs will get tired. But your heart, weighing less than a pound, will pump one-and-a-half million gallons of blood every year for the rest of your life. I said, one-and-a-half million gallons! In a lifetime, the human heart will pump three billion times. It will push almost one million pounds of blood through the 100,000 miles of blood vessels that make up our body. Again, I remind you that the Bible says, "The life of the flesh is in the blood." Now some people would have you to think all of this just happened, but the psalmist said, "*I am fearfully and wonderfully made.*"

B. The Human Eye

I have obviously been doing some reading on this subject, and you will know that I am not a physician; I'm certainly not a scientist. But I can read, and I have been reading about the complexity of the human eye. The human eye is a marvel. No scientific instrument is as sensitive to light as the human eye. The human eye can see a glow that is less than one-thousandth as bright as a candle. In the dark, the sensitivity of your eye to light increases ten thousand times. Now if you have a camera with an expensive lens in it, you may be proud of that camera, but no man has ever made a lens that is superior or will even equal the lens in the human eye. It changes its curvature to focus on things that are near, the things that are far, the pupil itself adjusting. You don't even have to think about it. The adjustments are automatic, requiring no decision on your part whatsoever. And when your eye takes pictures, it takes them in color and develops them instantaneously.

I was reading something very interesting the other day, that when a little baby is conceived in its mother's womb, there are optic nerves in the eye that begin to grow toward the brain. And there are nerves in the brain that begin to grow toward the optic nerves in the eye. There are more than a million nerve endings in the baby's eye, and more than a million nerve endings in the brain, and these begin to grow toward each other. Now you and I get amazed when we see engineers who, perhaps, will dig a tunnel. They'll start on *this* side of a mountain, and they'll start on *that* side of a mountain. They dig through the mountain, and that tunnel meets. We say, "Isn't that a

marvelous act of engineering?” Well, friend, over a million of those nerves grow from that baby’s brain through the flesh to the optic nerves in the eye, and vice versa, and each one of those more than a million finds its counterpart and gets connected. That is an incredible thing!

And some foolish person will say all of that happened just by chance. But every day, hundreds of thousands of people are born with the ability to see. The human eye is an amazing thing. It has the ability to transmit to the brain over one-and-a-half million messages at the same time. Only God could do that! Psalm 139, verses 13 and 14, says, *“For thou hast possessed me from my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother’s womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.”* (Psalms 139:13–14)

C. The Human Ear

I also did some reading about the human ear. The ear is one of the greatest architectural wonders in the world. No man could ever produce a microphone that would duplicate the human ear. The middle ear contains air. The inner ear contains liquid. What happens is this: When there is a noise, the sound waves activate the eardrum. The eardrum is capable of handling over 73,000 vibrations per second. Now these vibrations are transmitted by the means of small bones called ossicles to the fluid in the inner ear. These act like a piston, driving that liquid back and forth to the rhythm of the sound pressure that is beating upon those ears. Now the movement of that fluid goes to a thin membrane called the basilar membrane. This transmits a stimulus to a complex structure called the organ of Corti containing the nerve endings of the auditory nerves. And the ear is so complicated that volumes after volumes have been written just about the human ear. Now man might design a radio or a television set, and everybody says that is a marvel of design. It is nothing compared to the human ear.

D. The Nervous System

What about the whole nervous complex of the body? Beginning with the brain, between your ears there are about three pounds, more or less—and some of us less—of grey-white matter called the brain. It has more than eighty billion cells known as neurons. All of these are interconnected in an incredibly complicated way. There are literally millions and billions of interconnections inside your head. And your brain is a computer. No computer has ever been built that will begin to match it.

If you’ll think about just simply a boy catching a football, he goes down the field—let’s say some thirty yards—and a man throws a football. That boy’s wonderful eye that we’re talking about sees that ball in the air, and immediately his brain begins to calculate. He calculates the speed, the trajectory, and the distance. Then the messages go to all of the muscles in that boy’s body, and they begin to coordinate themselves to move into position to catch that ball. No man has ever been able to create a computer

that would even begin to approximate what happens that you and I just take for granted when a ten-year-old boy catches a football.

II. The Miracle of the Human Soul

Now we have a body. That body is made of the dust of the ground. It is God's crowning creation. And thank God for it. But remember that God made us body, soul, and spirit. I remind you that plants also have a body. And I remind you that animals also have a body. So what makes man different from plants and animals? Man also has a soul. The Bible says that "God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." (Genesis 2:7) So the body is just simply the house for the soul. Second Corinthians chapter 5, verse 1, calls our body "*our earthly house.*" (2 Corinthians 5:1) And 1 Corinthians chapter 6, verse 19, calls our body "*the temple of the Holy Ghost.*" (1 Corinthians 6:19) So your body is just a temple, an earthly house that you have while you live on Planet Earth.

Now you are not your body; you live in your body. But now you have a soul. And the Bible says, "*Man became a living soul.*" (Genesis 2:7) The Hebrew word for "soul" is *nephesh*, and the Greek word would be *psuche*. It's the word we get *psychology* or *psychic* or *psychiatric* from. That is the you that lives inside the house. Your soul is your real personality. It is your sense of humor, your intelligence, your likes, your dislikes, your idiosyncrasies, and your proclivities—all of those things that make you the uniquely wonderful person that you are. Roughly speaking, your soul is mind, emotion, and will.

Now, let me show you how the Bible describes the soul as being mind, and emotion, and will. For example, in Psalm 139 and verse 14—we've already quoted that—the psalmist said, "*I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.*" (Psalms 139:14) So the soul can know things. A soul enables us to see. As I just gave you these facts a little while ago about the human body, your soul has enough intelligence to say, "Yes, I am fearfully and wonderfully made." So intelligence is in your soul.

Also, the will is a part of your soul. In Psalm 27 and verse 12, the Bible says, "*Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies.*" (Psalms 27:12) Now the word that is translated "will" there is the same word that is translated "soul," and the verse could be translated, "Deliver me not over to the soul of my enemies," (Psalms 27:12) because the will is in the soul. Or listen to 1 Chronicles chapter 22, verse 19: "*Now set your heart and your soul to seek the LORD your God.*" (1 Chronicles 22:19) So if you're going to seek God, how do you seek God? You set your soul to seek God. You say, "I will seek God."

So what is your soul? Your soul is your intelligence. Your soul is your will. And your soul is also your emotion. First Samuel chapter 18, verse 1: "*And it came to pass, when*

he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.” (1 Samuel 18:1) Love—emotion—is in the soul of man.

So you have a soul. Your soul is mind, emotion, and will. So you see the magnificence of the human body. You see the miracle of the human soul, that God created you, and God gave you a mind, God gave you emotion, and God gave you a will, because “God breathed into man’s nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.” (Genesis 2:7)

III. The Mystery of the Human Spirit

But now, let’s tighten the focus a little bit more. What about the spirit? When I was a young Christian, I used to think that soul and spirit were the same thing, that the terms were interchangeable, just the invisible part of a man; that you could speak of a man’s soul or speak of a man’s spirit, and it was six of one or half a dozen of another. But that is not true. The Bible says, in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, verse 23, that I gave to you before, “*And I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” (1 Thessalonians 5:23) Or again, in Hebrews chapter 4, verse 12, “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, dividing asunder between soul and spirit.” (Hebrews 4:12)

Now, what is the difference between the soul and the spirit? Well, let’s back up a little bit. Both men and animals have bodies. Men and animals have souls. Does that surprise you? The Bible teaches very clearly that animals have souls or soulish life—the Bible teaches very clearly that animals have souls or soulish life. Put these verses down—Genesis 1, verse 20, verse 21, verse 24, and verse 30. All of those verses speak of animals as having conscious life, self-conscious life, animals—your pet. If you have a dog, your dog has a mind, emotion, and will. Your dog has a soul, but the dog’s soul will die and perish. Dogs do not have everlasting life. Cats do not have everlasting life. Parakeets do not have everlasting life.

What makes man’s soul different is the spirit. The spirit of man is inextricably united with his soul. Now a man’s soul and spirit are not the same. Hebrews 4:12 and 1 Thessalonians 5:23—they are not the same, but they are inseparable, and it is the spirit that makes man unique—not his body, not his soul, but primarily the spirit that makes us in the image of God. “*God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*” (John 4:24) And when the Bible says that “God breathed into man’s nostrils the breath of life,” (Genesis 2:7) God put Himself into man. The word *breath* is *neshamah*, which means “the spirit of life.” God put Himself into man. He did not do that to the animals. And so you have a human spirit that makes you unique from any of the animals.

You say, “Well, Pastor, what does all this have to do with the way I’m going to live tomorrow?” Well, if you’ll stay and listen for just a few more moments, I’ll tell you. Remember that you have a body, and with your body you have earth-consciousness. You know the world, roughly speaking, the physical world beneath you. With your soul you have self-consciousness. That’s your mind, your emotion, and your will. And you know the world within you, and you know the world around you. That’s the psychological part of you. But with your spirit you have God-consciousness. Animals don’t pray. Animals don’t think of God. Animals cannot reason, because they are not made in the image of God. But we have a spirit that enables us to worship God.

Now, let me give you some scripture that shows you how your spirit relates to God. For example, when Mary was told that she was going to be the mother of the Messiah, she said, in Luke chapter 1, verse 47, “*And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour*”—“*my spirit hath rejoiced.*” (Luke 1:47)

Jesus, when He spoke to that woman at the well, that fallen woman, about worship, He said, in John chapter 4, verse 23, “*But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.*” (John 4:23) The only way that you can fully worship is to worship with your spirit.

Romans chapter 8, verse 16—I mentioned this in the message this morning: “*The Spirit [himself] beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.*” (Romans 8:16) Now your spirit is not identical to your soul, but it can never be separated from your soul.

Now here’s the bottom line. Now I’m going to draw it all together. God made man of the dust of the ground. God breathed into man’s nostrils the spirit, the breath of life, and man became a living soul. You have physical life, psychological life, and spiritual life. With your body you know the world beneath you; with your soul you know the world around you; with your spirit you know the world above you. *When your body is right, you’re healthy. When your soul is right, you’re happy. When your spirit is right, you’re holy.*

Now, how is a man to function with unction? That’s what we said we were going to talk about. How does God intend for you tomorrow morning, or the rest of this evening, to live? Why did God fashion us that way? Well, here’s the key, and here’s a wonderful verse. Put it down—Proverbs chapter 20, verse 27. The Bible says this: “*The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD*”—“*The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD.*” (Proverbs 20:27) That’s what the King James says. But the original word is, “The spirit of man is the *lamp* of the Lord.”

What’s the difference between a candle and a lamp? A candle consumes itself, but a lamp is fed with oil. Now the Holy Spirit, in the Bible, is the oil that illumines your spirit,

which is the lamp. When God wants to turn the light on in your soul, He uses your spirit. It is by the spirit that we know God. And what causes that spirit to burn and to flame is the Holy Spirit of God in your spirit, which is the lamp. Your spirit is the lamp. The Holy Spirit is the oil. Listen to it again: “The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord.” (Proverbs 20:27)

And so here’s the way that I am to function. Here’s the way you’re to function. My spirit, the innermost part of me that animals don’t have, that part of my nature that enables me to know and worship God, has to give me light. Well, as the Holy Spirit of God is in my human spirit, then I am illumined. That is the candle of the Lord to give light. The Bible says, “*The natural man...*”—or “the soulish man” is literally what it says in 1 Corinthians chapter 2—“*The natural man*”—the soulish man—“*receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God...[and he cannot] know them, [for] they are spiritually discerned.*” (1 Corinthians 2:14) A man, by mind, emotion, and will, cannot know God. That’s the natural man. That’s the soul. The soulish man cannot understand the things of God.

Do you know how most of the people that you will meet tomorrow will operate? Their mind will say, “I think I ought to do thus and such.” Their emotions say, “I feel like doing it.” Their will says, “Okay, I’ll do it.” That’s the way they operate. Most of the people that you will meet tomorrow are going to be operating that way. They are soulish. They are the natural man. As we said this morning, Nicodemus was born into the natural world. “*But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God...neither can he know them, [for] they are spiritually discerned.*” (1 Corinthians 2:14) Your spirit is a lamp. The Holy Spirit is the oil in that lamp. And when that Holy Spirit is in your human spirit, then you are illumined on the inside, and then you know the will of God.

Now when you do this, what happens? There is the Holy Spirit in the human spirit. And the Holy Spirit is speaking to the human spirit. And, of course, the Holy Spirit uses the Word of God to do that. He speaks to the human spirit, because we’re born of water—that is, of the Word of God—and the Spirit of God. Those are our parents in the new birth. Remember, in the womb of faith, when we receive Christ as our personal Savior and Lord, there’s a new person that takes place in us. The Holy Spirit of God comes into us, because until the Holy Spirit comes in, our lamps are without oil. They do not burn. They do not function.

What good is a lamp if there’s no oil for it? But when God sends His Holy Spirit back into your heart, then you’re illumined, and you know the things of God. It is the human spirit that is the organ of spiritual knowledge. It is as the Holy Spirit energizes the human spirit that you begin to see and understand the things of God. The Bible says “*they are spiritually discerned.*” (1 Corinthians 2:14) Read the second chapter of 1 Corinthians. It says that we have insight into the things of God through the Holy Spirit of

God. (2 Corinthians 2:12) You say, “That sounds mystical.” It is mystical. The Holy Spirit is to man what instinct is to an animal.

Have you ever thought about the fact that God doesn’t give to human beings instinct? How can animals take care of their young when human beings who are so intelligent need doctors and hospitals to give birth to children, and animals just do this almost naturally? Who teaches an animal those things? Who teaches the spider to build a web? Who teaches the beaver to build the dam? Who teaches the salmon to spawn and to go back to the spawning place? Who teaches the birds to migrate? Who teaches all of that? They don’t need anybody to teach them. They have instincts. Men don’t have instincts. God gave to man the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is a better gift to man than instinct to the animal. But when a man is without the Holy Spirit, or the Spirit of God is vacant from this man’s life—when there’s no oil in the lamp—then what happens to him? For further information, read the newspaper. Without the Holy Spirit, we are like a beehive, as the bees would be, without instinct. And that’s why the world is in the mess that it is: because we do not have the Holy Spirit of God guiding us.

Now, how is a man to operate? How is a man to function with unction? When he gets saved, God puts the Spirit back into the human spirit. Then the candle of the Lord begins to burn, the lamp of the Lord on the inside. This man has illumination on the inside, and he knows intuitively the things of God as the Holy Spirit of God teaches him. When the Holy Spirit of God that’s in the human heart begins to teach this man, and this man knows intuitively the things of God, as the Bible says again, in 1 Corinthians the second chapter, “What man knows the things of man, save the spirit of man that’s in him?” (1 Corinthians 2:11) When he begins to know these things, what happens? The Spirit then begins to talk to the man’s soul. What is the soul? The soul is the mind, the emotion, and the will. It’s a beautiful thing when a man’s mind, a man’s emotion, and a man’s will is guided by the Holy Spirit in the human spirit. When the Holy Spirit speaks to the human spirit, then the human spirit speaks to the mind, the emotion, and the will—the soul.

Now, what are the mind, the emotion, and the will to do? The mind, the emotion, and the will speak to the body—the eyes, the ears, the hands, the feet, and the countenance. Then what does the body do? The body goes out and lives in the world. What does the body show? The body shows the life of the Lord Jesus. And that’s exactly what we’re supposed to do.

I was just up in the New Members Class a few moments ago. They are up there meeting right now. We have a Discovery Class for new members, and they are up there apart from us right now. I sat at a table, and one of my favorite questions is: “What caused you to come to Bellevue Baptist Church?” Do you know what a man told me just a few minutes ago? He said, “You won’t believe this, but,” he said, “I was working on a

house across the street from your house. I saw you out in the yard. I heard you talking to a man who was doing yard work in your yard, and I eavesdropped and I listened to the way you talked to that man. The Spirit of God spoke to me listening to you talk to a man do yard work in your yard. And God got me under conviction, and that's how I got saved and started coming to this church."

Now I had no idea about a man listening to me talking to a person doing my yard. I don't remember anything about that, but what is that? That is just simply the life of Jesus being manifested in me. As the Holy Spirit of God speaks to the human spirit, the human spirit speaks to the mind, the emotion, and the will. The mind, the emotion, and the will speak to the tongue, the eyes, the heart, the brain—all of these things. The hands, the feet, they express the life of God. The Bible says, "Let your light so shine, that men may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven."
(Matthew 5:16)

That's the way we are to function with unction, as we understand that God gave us a body. That body is only to house the soul and the spirit. The soul is to be under the leadership and the dominion of the spirit. And the body is to be under the leadership and the dominion of the soul. And God the Holy Spirit speaks to the human spirit, and the human spirit speaks to the soul—the mind, the emotion, and the will—and the mind, the emotion, and the will drive the body—the hands, the eyes, and feet—out into this world, and it expresses the life of the Lord Jesus. And God's life will then be manifest on this earth as He inhabits our humanity and then He expresses His deity and His glory. When that happens, we begin to function with unction. That's what it's all about. That's why God made us that way. That's why God engineered us that way.

Conclusion

Now, what does that mean to us? What does that mean to me tonight? It means, friend, I must be filled with the Holy Spirit of God. Not only must the Holy Spirit of God be in me as resident, but He needs to be in me as president. I need to yield my human spirit, my body, my mind, my will; I need to yield to the Holy Spirit so that He can express the life of God through me.

I hope that tomorrow morning, when you wake up, you'll just do what I frequently do. At first, I didn't share this with many people because I was a little embarrassed about it. But it's been such a blessing to me I think it would be wrong of me not to share it with you. When I wake up in the morning, before I have a quiet time, I spend just a little time with God, just a little thing that I do. I just lift my hands to the Lord and say, "Lord, I thank you that you gave yourself *for* me. Thank you, Lord." Since He gave Himself for me—He died for me—His blood cleanses from all sin. I can start every day absolutely, totally clean with no unconfessed, unrepented-of sin. And so can you! "Thank you, Lord,

that you gave yourself for me.” Okay? Then I turn my hands up *this* way and say, “Thank you, Lord, that you give yourself *to* me,” because not only did He give Himself *for* me; He gave Himself *to* me. I say, “Lord, you are alive in me. Your Spirit lives in my spirit. You belong in me. You live in me. You dwell in me.” And so I lift my hands *this* way, as though I am receiving, because the Bible says, “Be being filled with the Spirit.” (Ephesians 5:18) “Thank you, Lord, that not only did you give yourself for me; you gave yourself to me.” And then I lift my hands as though somebody had put a gun on me and said, “Stick ’em up!” bow my head, and say, “Lord, I’m reporting for duty. Lord, live your life *through* me.”

Do you see it? *He gave Himself for me, that He might give Himself to me, that He might live His life through me.* So I say, “Here I am. If you have something you want said today, I’m willing to say it. If you want something done today, I’m willing to do it. I am yours. I’m not my own. My body is the temple of your Holy Spirit, which I have, so you express your life through me.” And then I’ll just spread out my hands and say, “Lord, it’s going to be a wonderful day living it with you.” And just try that some morning. It’s so simple.

Now that’s not all of your quiet time, but that just gets you ready so that you can go through the day and function with unction. And every moment, it is His life—His Spirit in the human spirit—driving the mind, the emotion, and the will; the mind, the emotion, and the will giving direction to the body; the body going out into this world and expressing the life of Jesus Christ. And people don’t see us; they see Jesus. They see God’s life incarnate in us. And in a Christian, Jesus lives again. *There’s only one person who has ever lived the Christian life, and His name is Jesus. And if it is lived at your residence, it will still be Jesus in you living that Christian life.* And, folks, that’s how to function with unction.

Now bow your heads in prayer. Father, I thank you that you made us so fearfully and wonderfully. Lord, when we think about the human eye, the ear; when we think about the heart and when we think about the circulatory system; when we think, dear Lord, about the intricacies of our bodies and the DNA and all of this; we just have to stand back and say, “How marvelous, how wonderful, Lord, are your works! Thank you, Lord. And then, God, you gave us a mind, emotion, and a will, that we can choose and think and believe and act. But, O God, you didn’t leave us to flounder. You gave us, dear Lord, a spirit. And then you put your Spirit in our spirit. And you’re the oil for our lamp. Thank you for that, Lord, thank you. Help us, Lord, that we might tomorrow and the next day and all of our lives be obedient and to function as you designed us to function. In your holy name. Amen.

Now we, tonight, want to give you an invitation to trust Jesus to save you. If I had a thousand lives to live, I would want to live every one of them for Jesus, every one.

Secondly, if there were no heaven and no hell—and there is both—I would want to live this life for Jesus. Don't ever feel sorry for me because I'm a Christian. Don't get the idea that being a Christian is some penalty that you pay in order to get to heaven. If this is all there is, I'd still want to be a Christian. But there's far more. Thank God for the Lord Jesus Christ. Thank God for the peace, the joy, the purpose that He gives. And, even in the dark times, and dark times come, and being a child of God doesn't make you immune. But, He will never forsake you. He's always there to give you peace and purpose and joy, even in the darkest of days.

How do you receive Jesus? Through repentance and faith. The Bible says, if you will turn from your sin to Jesus, you'll be saved. To put it in a sentence, the Bible says, *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”* (Acts 16:31) And, that word *believe* literally means “to trust Jesus.” You can believe an airplane can fly, but you don't trust it until you get on it. You might believe all that I've preached about Jesus, but there comes that moment when you make that commitment of trust and faith to Jesus.

How to Function with Unction

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: February 8, 1981

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 2:7

“And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”

GENESIS 2:7

Outline

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- B. The Digestive Tract
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III. With Our Spirit We Know the World Above Us

Conclusion

Introduction

Take your Bibles, if you have them, please, and turn to Genesis chapter 2, and we're going to look only at one verse for our text this morning: It is verse 7. Our subject: "How to Function with Unction." Genesis chapter 2 and verse 7: "*And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.*" (Genesis 2:7) God created man.

A little boy was with his father in the re-created village there in Williamsburg, Virginia, and the little fellow was very interested in what was going on, and he told his daddy: "Daddy, now I know where horses come from." His daddy said, "Oh, where is that?" He said, "The blacksmith makes them." His dad said, "How do you know?" He said, "I just saw him finishing up one, and he was nailing his shoes on." Well now, we would laugh at that, and we'd think the little fellow's mighty naïve if he thinks that a blacksmith could make a horse. But I think there are some people more naïve than that, who think that all of this just happened—it just happened—nothing times nobody plus

time plus chance, and it all just happened.

We reject that. We reject that intellectually, and above all, we reject it spiritually, because we believe the Bible is the Word of God. And the Word of God tells us how man came into being.

But not only does the Word tell us how man came into being; the Word of God also tells us why man came into being, and what man is like. You have to understand who you are to understand how you're supposed to function. And you have to understand what you are to understand how you're supposed to function, because God made you to function. God didn't make you meaninglessly like some Rube Goldberg invention. You're to function with a purpose. You are to function with unction—that is, with the power of God upon your life. And I believe the clue to that is found in Genesis chapter 2, verse 7, (Genesis 2:7) where the Bible tells us how God made man.

Now I want you to notice that man is made in the image of God, and God is a triune God. We worship God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Now, of course, you know we don't worship three Gods. Sometimes people have difficulty believing in the Christian faith because they think that Christians are polytheists. Christians are not polytheists. We're monotheists. We worship one God. But we worship that one God who has eternally revealed Himself in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Now you are only one person, but also there are three parts to your nature made in the image of God: You are body, soul, and spirit. We're going to see that as we look at Genesis chapter 2, verse 7. (Genesis 2:7) And as we see it, we're going to learn some lessons that are going to have a tremendous application to our hearts and to our lives.

I. With Our Body We Know the World Beneath Us

Now, look again at this verse—and the Bible says in verse 7: “*And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground.*” (Genesis 2:7) This word *formed* is literally a word that means “to mold,” like someone would just take potter's clay in his hand and mold a man. The Lord just reached down, and He took this clay. He took this dust of the earth, and He made Him a man. He molded Him a man. And He made man of the very elements that exist in the ground.

And someone has tried to look into these elements and really see what is there from the physical sense. And really, when you think about it, not much, just dust. There's enough sulfur to get rid of the fleas on a dog, enough lime to whitewash a chicken coop, enough fat to make six bars of soap—some of us could make seven—enough iron for a dozen nails, enough phosphorus to tip a penny box of matches, enough magnesium for one good dose, enough sugar for about ten cups of coffee, enough potassium to fire a toy cannon, and enough salt to fill a saltshaker. And somehow you mix it all together

and out comes a man.

Now, suppose you were going to make a man. Suppose you were to take these ingredients—and we'll be a little more specific: You need about fifty-eight pounds of oxygen; you need fifty quarts of water; you need two ounces of salt; you need three pounds of calcium, twenty-four pounds of carbon, some chlorine, some phosphorus, some fats, some iron, some sulfur, some glycerin—and you just take these ingredients and buy them in the chemistry shop, and you go home in your kitchen—or if you want to, go into your laboratory—and see if you can build a man. And, of course, you would know such a thing is absolutely impossible. If you were to take just one square inch of skin—just one little square inch of skin, about the size of a postage stamp—you would be amazed at the complexity. In that one square inch of skin would be millions of cells, and each one of them, as we said several weeks ago, more complicated than New York City—just in a square inch—and there would be yards of blood vessels, and four yards of nerves, and one hundred sweat glands, and fifteen oil glands, and twenty-five nerve endings, and all of these intricately complicated in just one little square inch of skin. So you're going to have quite a job as you try to build your man.

A. The Circulatory System

You think of the circulatory system that God has put into this human body. You see, every minute of our lives our heart pumps about ten to thirty pints of blood through—listen to this—about 100,000 miles of veins and arteries and capillaries. One hundred thousand miles are inside of me, and that blood is just pumping around in there. What a circulatory system that God has in there! And in this blood—about ten pints of this blood—are twenty-five trillion red cells. And not only that, there are twenty-five billion white cells, and the white cells are dying. They only last about twelve hours, so I have to be making more of these all of the time, and they help to fight disease. And the red cells, they live a little longer: They live about 120 days, and they carry the oxygen to these cells so it can consume the food, and so forth. All of this is going on all the time in this fantastically complicated machine.

B. The Digestive Tract

And then along there I have a digestive tract that's also complicated, and I won't get into that; I don't know that much about it. But I was interested to note, as I was studying, that in our lifetime we'll consume about fifty tons of food—fifty tons. And that's the reason we make so much soap. Now all of this food is assimilated into our bodies.

C. The Eye

And just think of the separate organs. Think of man's eye. You know, every now and then man gets all excited because he has invented a color camera, or a Polaroid camera, or a camera with an automatic lens. Friend, listen. God did that so long ago.

Here God gave you your eye, and the curvature of your eye will bend automatically so as to focus on things near or focus on things far off. And the pupil of your eye will open or close, dilate and expand, to let the light in or let the light out. And you've got all instant film. And it develops automatically and in full color. And your eye is so sensitive to light that it can see in pure darkness a glow that is only one-thousandth as bright as a candle's glow. And yet this same eye has such power that it can look out into the heavens and see a star that is twenty-four trillion miles away. That's the eye that God gave. Oh, listen, dear friend. If you didn't believe in God, all you'd have to do is just look at a human eye, and you'd say, "Oh, there must be some great, grand intelligence that created that!"

If I were to show you a beautiful camera and tell you that it just happened, that I'd put some junk parts in a washing machine and out came this camera, you'd say, "He's got room to rent upstairs unfurnished." And yet there are some people who want us to believe that something like the human eye just happened.

D. The Ear

Or your ear—your ear is one of the architectural marvels of the whole wide world. Three parts: There's the outer ear, the middle ear, and the inner ear. And the outer ear is obvious—too obvious sometimes. The middle ear contains air, and the inner ear contains fluid. As I'm speaking to you now, my voice is passing over my larynx, which is making vibrations articulated by my tongue and formed by my lips, and is going into this microphone.

And then there are sound waves that are coming out and being caught by your ears and then coming into your ear. And those vibrations are undulating through the air, and they come in there and they beat upon your eardrum.

And behind that eardrum are little bones called ossicles that start like pistons to drive upon that fluid, and that fluid sets vibrations about 73,000 vibrations per second and up. These beat upon a little membrane, and this membrane is just gorged with little nerves. And these nerves take that sound and interpret that sound and feed it to your brain. And you understand, and you hear.

Men make a microphone, men make a transistor radio, and they don't expect us to believe that just happened. Do you think this just happened? Oh, my friend, what a marvelous body we have! It's so amazing!

E. The Brain

You think of the communication system. You think of your brain. That grey-white matter inside your noggin weighs about three pounds. Some of us don't have one quite that size. But in that brain are literally billions of components, and we brag about our computers.

Man never has—man never will—be able to make a computer that will match the capability of the human brain. I don't mean that you can figure up numbers as fast as the computer. You cannot, but that computer never can, never has, never will, reason. You can. And in a split second your brain performs literally billions of interconnections.

Your brain uses a hundred times more connections than all the world's telephones put together when you think a thought. Think of the vast telephone system: It works just like that. You put your hand upon a stove—a hot stove—and those nerve endings send a message up your arm and up into your head, and the message says, "Hey, it's hot down here." And the head sends a message back down your arm and back down to those nerves and says, "Well then, you nut, move your hand." And you move it, just like that. But it happens just like that. Oh, how quick the message goes! A fantastic communication system!

And you expect people to believe this television station and this radio station—that it all just happened? Well, friend, do you expect me to believe that this mind, this brain, these nerve endings, the basal ganglia, all of that—that it all just happened? Absolutely impossible! God did it! God did it! "*God formed man of the dust of the ground.*" (Genesis 2:7) And when the psalmist got to thinking about man's body, the psalmist said, in Psalm 139, verse 14, "*I am fearfully and wonderfully made*"—"fearfully and wonderfully made"—man is. (Psalm 139:14) But it is not primarily man's body that makes him of such great work.

II. With Our Soul We Know the World Around Us

Now your body is very important. And your body is to be the temple of God's Holy Spirit. But plants have a body, and I don't think that there is one of us as beautiful as those flowers. And animals have a body, but there is something else that man has. Not only does man have a body—he was "*formed...of the dust of the ground,*" (Genesis 2:7) and that is his physical, material part—but man also is a soul. For the Bible says, "*And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.*" (Genesis 2:7) Man not only has physical life; he has soul life. *Nephesh* is the Hebrew word; *psyche*, the Greek word. It's the word we get the words *psychology*, *psychiatry*, and *psychic* from. And this speaks of the mind and the emotion and the will. It speaks of the real you that lives inside this house.

Now what you see today is not me. You don't see me today; you just see the house that I live in. That's my body. Second Corinthians chapter 5, verse 1, says, "*For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a [house] of God...not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.*" (2 Corinthians 5:1) What you see is not really me. You say, "I saw the preacher today." No, you didn't—not really. You see my house, and I know it needs repairs. Woodrow Wilson's favorite limerick went like

this:

*I know how ugly I are.
I know my face ain't no star.
But I don't mind it 'cause I'ze behind it.
It's the fellow in front that gets the jar.*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Now what you see is what I'm behind. I'm on the inside, behind all of this. And there is a me on the inside, and the me on the inside is called the soul, the self. *"Man became a living soul,"* (Genesis 2:7) and your soul is made up of mind, emotion, and will. And I'm going to show you that in a moment. But before I show you that, I want to remind you—and contrary to popular opinion—animals also have a soul. It is not just man that has soulish life; the animals have soulish life.

Just take your Bibles for a moment, and let's look. Look, if you will, in Genesis 1, verse 20—Genesis 1, verse 20: *"And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature."* (Genesis 1:20) That's the same word that's translated "soul" in chapter 2, verse 7. (Genesis 2:7) *"Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving [soul]."* (Genesis 1:20) If you will, look in verse 21: *"And God created great whales, and every living"*—there's our word again—"creature" (Genesis 1:21) —"every living soul," talking now about what's in the sea. And then again, if you will, look in verse 24: *"And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind."* (Genesis 1:24) That's, again, talking about the cattle, and the beasts, and so forth, and it uses the word *soul*. And then look, if you will, in verse 30. Here you see the word used in a little different configuration, meaning the same thing: *"And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life."* (Genesis 1:30) And again the same word is used, translated different ways. So what I'm trying to say is this, that man and animals share soul life.

So what is the definition of soul life? It is conscious life—self-conscious life. Animals have a soul, but plants don't. Plants have a body, not a soul. Men and animals have a body and soul. Men are living souls, but animals are living souls. Now I don't mean that animals are going to heaven. They are not. I do not mean that man, therefore, is only an animal. He is not. I do not mean, when I say that, that man's soul and an animal's soul are of equal worth. They are not—just as man's body is of far more worth than an animal's body. We protect our bodies. We sometimes put animals to death, and we use them for food, and so forth. We certainly don't believe in cannibalism. We see that our bodies are of infinitely more value than the animal's body. And our soul is of infinitely more value than the animal's soul.

But there is a similarity. Both men and animals have mind, emotion, and will. Now, of course, in the animals, it's diminished; it is not developed as it is in man. But I want to

say, lest you be confused—and there are some from false cults who will confuse you, come to your door and point out that animals have souls as men have souls, and they'll try to get you to think, therefore, that what happens to an animal will happen to a man. See? If you don't understand that, that's the reason I'm telling you that, because you need to know that. There is a distinction, however, between men and the animals, and we're going to deal with that in just a moment. We want to show you from the Word of God that great distinction, because, as we will show you, man is not only body and soul; man is also spirit. And we're going to come to that in just a moment. But right now let's just think about the soul.

Now, what is the soul? The soul is the real you; it's the person who lives inside this house. And your soul is worth more than all the stocks, the bonds, the real estate, the rubies, the diamonds, the gems, the gold, the silver, the schools, the education—it's worth more than all of this world put together, for Jesus said, in Matthew 16, *"What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"* (Matthew 16:26) Your soul is of infinite value. It is mind, emotion, and will. It is the seat of the intellect, of the feeling, and the volition.

A. Your Soul Is the Center of Your Intellect

Let me show you; let me give you some scriptures. Let's just see how the soul is the intellectual part of a man. Jot these scriptures down. Psalm 139, verse 14: *"I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well."* (Psalms 139:14) See? We know with our souls. Or Lamentations chapter 3, verse 20: *"My soul hath them still in remembrance."* (Lamentations 3:20) That means that our soul is able to remember things. Look, if you will, in Proverbs chapter 2, verse 10: *"When wisdom [enters] into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul."* (Proverbs 2:10) You see, the soul is able to comprehend knowledge and say, "That is pleasant." So when we say that soul is mind, emotion, and will, we're not just being arbitrary when we say that the mind and the soul are linked together.

B. Your Soul Is the Center of Your Will

But not only is there that intellectual capacity of the soul; there is also that volitional capacity of the soul. The soul is the seat and the center of your will. Jot these verses down, if you're taking notes. Psalm 27, verse 12: *"Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies."* (Psalms 27:12) Now here's a very interesting thing. This word *soul* is translated many ways in the Bible. In this verse, the word *soul* is translated "will" and it may be read, *"Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies,"* (Psalms 27:12) or "to the soul of mine enemies." It does read, *"Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies."* (Psalms 27:12) But the word for *will* here is the word for *soul*. Now what I'm

just simply saying is that the translators rightly interchange these words, because your soul is the seat of your will. Again, we find that same thing in Psalm 41, verse 2: *“The LORD will preserve him, and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed upon the earth: and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies”* (Psalms 41:2) —literally, “unto the soul of his enemies.”

C. **Your Soul Is the Center of Your Emotion**

And then, thirdly, not only is the soul the center of your intellect and your will, but also of your emotion. Let me give you a couple of verses, and then we’ll move on. First Samuel chapter 18, verse 1: *“And it came to pass, when he had [ceased] speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.”* (1 Samuel 18:1) You see here how love is tied up with the soul. Or in the Song of Solomon chapter 1, verse 7: *“Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth.”* (Song of Solomon 1:7) That is, we love with our souls. Second Samuel chapter 5 and verse 8—and the Bible there, in that verse, speaks of those whom David’s soul hates. (2 Samuel 5:8) Now you can look those up when you get home.

III. **With Our Spirit We Know the World Above Us**

But sometimes when we say that the soul is mind, emotion, and will, people say, “Well, you’re just pulling that out of the air.” No, we’re not being arbitrary. With your body you have physical life, and you know the physical world, and you have world-consciousness. With your soul you have self-conscious life, and you know the psychological and the social world, and you have self-consciousness. And so man is more than a body; man is also a soul. But wait a minute. Both men and animals have souls. Men and animals and plants have bodies. But what is it that keeps man from being more than a toad or a turnip? Man has a spirit.

Now, let’s go back again to Genesis chapter 2, verse 7. The Bible says, *“And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the [earth]”—“dust of the ground”—“and [God] breathed into [man’s] nostrils the breath of life.”* (Genesis 2:7) And the Hebrew word is *chay*—literally, “God breathed into man’s nostrils the breath of lives.” It’s a plural word. It speaks of this eternity of man’s existence. And when God breathed into man’s nostrils the breath of life, he created man in His image. And man could no more cease to exist than God Himself could cease to exist. Man has a spirit. Animals don’t have a spirit. And the thing that keeps you from being more than a clever animal that can talk and has a thumb and can stand erect is that you have within you a spirit. And it is that spirit that gives you God-consciousness. With your body you have world-consciousness. With your soul—mind, emotion, and will—you have self-consciousness. And with your spirit you have God-consciousness.

Now listen to these verses. Luke chapter 1, verse 42: *“My spirit hath rejoiced in God*

my Saviour.” (Luke 1:42) Listen to this verse—John 4, verse 23: *“But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth.”* (John 4:23) We worship the Father in spirit. That’s the reason the animals never worship, because animals do not have a spirit. And when we become Christians, the Bible says, in Romans chapter 8 and verse 16, that God’s *“Spirit”*—the Holy Spirit—*“[bears] witness with our spirit”*—the human spirit—*“that we are the children of God.”* (Romans 8:16)

Now the soul and spirit are not the same, but they are always connected. They may never be separated, but they should always be distinguished. Now what happens to your soul ultimately will happen to your spirit. And what happens to your spirit ultimately will happen to your soul. But you are all three: body, soul, and spirit.

Let me give you a couple of verses to show the uniqueness of man. First Thessalonians chapter 5 and verse 23—listen to this—Paul was speaking to that church at Thessalonica, and he said, *“And I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* (1 Thessalonians 5:23) He would never say that about an animal. Animals don’t have a spirit. *“I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body...”* (1 Thessalonians 5:23) You see, we’re made to know three worlds: the world beneath us, the world around us, and the world above us. *With our bodies we know the world beneath us and have world-consciousness. With our souls we know the world within and around us and have self-consciousness. And with our spirits we know the world above us, and we have God-consciousness.* No animal has that. And this is what makes man unique. *“For God breathed in the man’s nostrils the breath of lives. Man became a living soul”—a man made of body, soul, and spirit.*

Now I want to give you a very wonderful verse that has been a source of encouragement and amazement and instruction to me this past week as I’ve looked at it. It’s found in the book of Proverbs chapter 20 and verse 27. And this is what it says. It says, *“The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD”—“The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD.”* (Proverbs 20:27) Now what it literally says though is, *“The spirit of man is the [lamp] of the LORD.”* And the word translated “candle” is translated other places in the Bible “lamp,” which is a better translation: *“The spirit of man is the [lamp] of the LORD.”* You say, “Well, what’s the difference, a candle or a lamp?” A candle burns itself up. It consumes itself when it’s burning.

I heard about a man who went to the doctor, and the doctor examined him and said, “Well, there’s nothing wrong with you. You’re just burning the candle at both ends.” He said, “Doctor, I didn’t come for a lecture. I came for more wax.”

Now that’s what many of us are doing: We’re just burning ourselves up like a candle. But a lamp burns oil. It doesn’t consume itself; it consumes fuel that is put into it. And that is the figure that God uses: *“The spirit of man is the [lamp] of the LORD.”* (Proverbs

20:27)

And in biblical times, what did the lamps burn? They didn't have electric lights. They burned oil. And what is oil a symbol of in the Bible? You know. The Holy Spirit of God. Now you're seeing how we're supposed to understand things and know things spiritually. *"The spirit of man is the [lamp] of the LORD."* (Proverbs 20:27) And when God's Spirit comes into our spirit, there's oil in the lamp. And when there's oil in the lamp, there is light in the man. You see, it is God's Spirit—the oil—in the human spirit—the lamp—that illumines the man. That's the reason the Bible says, in 1 Corinthians chapter 2, *"The natural man"*—and there it uses the term *natural*, which may be translated "the soulish man: mind, emotion, and will"—*"receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God...neither can he know them, [for] they are spiritually discerned."* (1 Corinthians 2:14) You know what that means? It means, friend, you will never figure God out.

You might as well put away your calculator, your slide rule; put away your scales; put away your geometrical theorems and all of your formulas. You'll never figure God out. Can a man by reasoning find out God? No. The only way you'll know God is for God to light the lamp. That's all: for God to light the lamp. They are spiritually discerned, and *"the spirit of man is the candle of the LORD"* (Proverbs 20:27)—*"the [lamp] of the LORD."* And that lamp runs on the fuel of the Holy Spirit. And when God's Spirit in the human spirit is ignited, there's light in the life.

Now that's the way, dear friend, you're supposed to know God. When God the Holy Spirit speaks to the human spirit, then you know things you could never know any other way. These things are not contrary to reason; they are simply beyond reason. It is with our spirits that we know God. And that's the reason, dear friend, we must have a spiritual rebirth to know God. No man will ever figure God out. You'll not find God through the physical body, the five senses. You'll not find God through the soul—the mind, the emotion, and the will. But you will find God in the spirit, that part that makes you uniquely a man. You see, when Adam sinned, he died. He didn't die physically right away. He did not die soulishly right away, or psychologically right away. How did he die? He died spiritually. The lamp went out.

Have you ever read this scripture about the Lord Jesus there in John 1:4? It says, concerning Him: *"In him"*—the Lord—*"was life; and the life was the light of men."* (John 1:4) See? Now, look. What happened when Adam sinned was the Lord went out. And when the Lord went out, the life went out. And when the life went out, the light went out. You see, sin blows out the lamp. And now man is in death and depravity and darkness. That's the way we are by nature, friend: minus the Lord, minus the life, minus the light. But when we're saved, when we're born again, God's Spirit moves into the human spirit. The oil is in the lamp, and by that spark of grace it's kindled, and we know, and we see.

And that's the reason Jesus told Nicodemus, *"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of [heaven]."* (John 3:3) He's blind; he cannot know. And oh, dear friend, when God the Holy Spirit speaks to your heart, that's when the lights come on again all over your soul.

Now I said that I was going to speak to you about how to function with unction. Do you know what God is in the business of doing? Why did God make us? Well, one of the major reasons that God created us was that we might bring glory to Him. The Bible says, *"We were created for His pleasure and to bring Him glory."* (Revelation 4:11) Now, notice when we function with unction how that happens. Here is a man who has received Christ as his personal Savior, and because he has received Christ as his personal Savior, God the Holy Spirit has come into him. You see, *salvation is not primarily getting man out of earth into heaven; it is getting God out of heaven into man.* Oh, we'll go to heaven, but that's just a fringe benefit, you see? It is getting God out of heaven into man. And so a man repents of his sin. He invites Christ into his life. Jesus Christ comes into his life. God the Holy Spirit comes into man's spirit. There's oil in the lamp. The spark of grace ignites it. The light is turned on, and he now knows the things of God revealed to him in the Word. And he knows them intuitively as the Holy Spirit speaks to him day by day. *"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."* (Romans 8:14)

Now the human spirit illumined by the Holy Spirit now speaks to the human soul—the mind, the emotion, and the will. And the mind organizes these things, and the emotion feels these things, and the will acts upon these things, but only under the direction of the human spirit—only under the direction of the Holy Spirit. And then what does the mind, the emotion, and the will do? It tells the body, *"Do this. Turn right. Turn left. Open your mouth. Sit down. Say this. Don't say that. Hand, do this. Foot, do this."* And whatever it is, the mind, energized by the Holy Spirit in the human spirit, is giving direction to the body. And the body moves out into the world, and people see the body. And Jesus said, *"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."* (Matthew 5:16) And that will never happen until you function with unction, until you get back to where God made you to be what God created you to be when God formed you out of the dust of the ground, breathed into your nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.

Now, remember that because you're made in the image of God, and because God has given you a spirit, and that spirit is forever webbed with your soul; your soul will go on endless, timeless, dateless, measureless, through all eternity. That's the reason Jesus said, *"What shall it profit a man, if he...gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"* (Mark 8:36–37)

I heard a story many years ago about a man who was leaving the old country,

coming to this new country, and he wanted to consolidate his wealth. And rather than putting it in stocks or bonds or currency, he sold everything he had and bought a very valuable diamond. And he got on board the ship and was making his way as an immigrant to the new world. On a certain day, he took the stone out of his little pouch that he had for it and looked at it on the deck of the ship, and it would glimmer and shine in the brilliant sunlight. Other people came around and admired it. On another day, he took it out, because he enjoyed the admiration of the people, and held it. This time he held it near the edge of the deck. And someone said, “Don’t hold it that close. You might drop it. It might roll overboard.” “No,” he said, “I won’t do that.”

But he enjoyed the excitement, and he enjoyed the people watching. So on a certain day, he held it out over the edge over the water and looked at it as it sparkled. People gave a gasp, and they said, “You’d better be careful.” This just simply emboldened him a little bit. And then he took it, tossed it in the air, and caught it as they would gasp, and tossed it again and caught it. And he tossed it again, and the ship gave a lurch, and he missed it. And down it went and sank to the bottom of the blue Atlantic.

You say, “Pastor, I don’t believe that story. I don’t believe a man would be that foolish.” I think I agree with you. I don’t believe a man would be that foolish. Yet I believe I know some people who are more foolish than that. Your soul is worth more than all of the diamonds in this world. And yet you’re gambling with your destiny. You are playing fast and loose with your soul. And Jesus said, “*What shall it profit a man, if...he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*” (Mark 8:36–37)

Conclusion

Are you saved? Friend, you’re neither ready to live nor die till you receive Christ. *If I had a thousand lives, I’d give every one of them to Jesus Christ.* I’m so glad I’m saved, and I want you to be saved. And you may not be able to understand everything I’ve said about body, soul, and spirit. And thank God you don’t have to understand it to be saved. You don’t have to understand the digestive system to eat a sandwich, do you? Isn’t it wonderful that you don’t have to understand all of these things to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? Isn’t it grand that the Bible says sweetly, simply, sublimely, “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved*”? (Acts 16:31) Jesus died for you. Your sins have been atoned for. And if you will receive Him as your Lord and Savior and Master, trust Him enough to confess Him before men, “*though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; [and] though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool*” (Isaiah 1:18)—you’ll be born again, and for the first time ever, the lamp will be lit, and you can know things that you’ve never known before.

A Tale of Two Trees

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: February 15, 1981

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 2:15–17

“And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”

GENESIS 2:16–17

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Placing of the Trees
- II. The Purpose of the Trees
- III. The Power of the Trees

Conclusion

Introduction

Now take your Bibles. Turn with me, please, to Genesis chapter 2, and let’s look at verse 15, as we continue through Genesis. At the rate we’re going, it may be a long time before we get finished. But it’s all good. And we’re going to be enjoying this book of Genesis for some time to come. However, as we get into the historical passages that deal with persons, we’ll pick up speed and travel much more rapidly. Genesis chapter 2 and verse 15: *“And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”* (Genesis 2:15–17)

Now this was not a threat. This was a warning: *“In the day...thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”* (Genesis 2:17) Parents are not threatening their children when they say, “Don’t touch a hot stove. If you touch it, you’ll get burned.” That’s not a threat; that’s a warning. And God here in the Garden of Eden had created man, and He placed man there in the beautiful garden and gave him absolutely everything he needed for indescribable happiness and for joy and fulfillment. But in order that man might have a will—and a free will—God gave him the moral opportunity of a choice. And so God created a tree and planted that tree in the Garden of Eden. It was called *“the tree of the knowledge of good and evil,”* (Genesis 2:17) and man was absolutely forbidden to eat

the fruit of that tree.

“The Story of Two Trees”: the tree of death—that is, *“the tree of the knowledge of good and evil...for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die”* (Genesis 2:17) —and Calvary’s tree, which is a tree of life. For Jesus said, “I’ve come that you might have life, and that you might have it abundantly.” (John 10:10) And I want us to see these two trees today as we study them in contrast and in comparison.

I. The Placing of the Trees

For example, as we compare them, let’s notice the placing of the trees. Did you notice that both of these trees were placed in a garden? Go back to Genesis chapter 2, verse 8, and you’re going to see that this first tree was in a garden: *“And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.”* (Genesis 2:8–9)

Now the interesting thing I want to say here is that this tree was planted in a garden. And did you know the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ was placed into a garden? Did you know that Jesus hung in agony and blood in a garden? In John chapter 19 and verse 41—listen to this: *“Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid.”* (John 19:41) Did you know that the first Adam and the last Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, both died in a garden? I’m talking to you now about the comparison, the similarity, of these two trees. The tree of death was in the Garden of Eden. The tree of life—the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ upon which He did die, but He died that we might have life—was also in a garden.

Now I think there are many things that come to my mind, but one thing that I want to point out right here is that Adam died in a beautiful, perfect environment and surrounding. You know, sometimes we get the idea that man’s problems are basically sociological and that man’s problems stem primarily from his environment. And we’re being told today that if we can simply change man’s environment that we’ll be able to usher in utopia; that if we can get everyone properly fed, properly clothed, properly educated, properly cultured; if we can just get man into a good environment; we’ve licked man’s problems.

Friend, I want to tell you that a good environment is fine. And I believe that we, as Christians, ought to do all that we can do to help the environment of our brothers and sisters. I believe we ought to see to it that people are fed, that people are clothed, that people are properly housed. I believe we ought to do all of that. But, friend, after that has all been said and done, even if you get the man out of the slums, you’ve still got to

get what? Some slums out of the man. You see, *you can put a new suit on a man, but only Jesus can put a new man in a suit.* And that's what people need. Man needs more than environment.

Now, don't misunderstand me. We ought to do all we can do to help those who are hurting, and we ought to do all that we can do to feed and clothe and educate those who need it. But if that's as far as you go, you're missing the whole point. You see, we're being told today that man really is more like a computer that's been programmed wrongly, and so what we need to do is just reprogram the computer, and he'll be all right. Not so—not so. And therefore, if man is like a computer that's been programmed wrongly, he's really not to be blamed for his sin. I mean, he's not to be blamed—he's to be pitied. He's not evil—he's ill. He's not sinful—he's sick. He's not wicked—he's underprivileged. But oh, my dear friend, the Bible doesn't teach that. The Bible teaches that there is something inherently wrong in this universe called sin. And I want to tell you, dear friend, that man needs more than a good environment. It was in the Garden of Eden that the first Adam died; and therefore, the second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, the last Adam, had to die for our sin. Notice the placing of the trees: both of them in a garden.

II. The Purpose of the Trees

But I want us to pass quickly over that point, and I want you to think with me also a little bit today about the purpose of the trees. Did you know that first tree—the tree of the knowledge of good and of evil—and Calvary's tree both had the same purpose in a sense? It was through both of these trees that man was to know good and evil. Calvary's tree was also a tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but there was a vast difference. Let me explain the vast difference. Had man obeyed in the first instance, the second instance—the second tree—would never have been necessary. But yet God knew that man would disobey, and Jesus was *“slain [before] the foundation of the world.”* (Revelation 13:8) Calvary was in the heart and mind of God before this world was ever created. But, you see, there are two ways that you can know good and evil. *You can know good and evil through experimentation, or you can know good and evil by grace and revelation.*

Now man wanted to know good and evil by experimentation. God said, “Here's a tree. It is the knowledge of good and evil. Don't touch it.” That should have been enough. “Just leave it alone. Don't eat the fruit of that tree.” That should have been enough. But, you see, there's something about human nature that wants to investigate and see for itself.

Have you ever touched the paint when the sign says, “Wet paint—don't touch”? Nod your head this way. There's something about us that says, when the sign says, “This is

wet paint,” rather than just simply taking what the sign says, rather than just taking the revelation, we want the experimentation. And so we touch, and we have the results there on our fingertips. And the wall is marred, because we cannot just simply believe the sign, obey the sign. We have to see for ourselves.

Now this is really something about the nature of human nature. “And the devil was more subtle than any beast of the field.” (Genesis 3:1) And so when the devil came to Eve, he said to Eve, “Has God said that ye shall not eat of the fruit of every tree of the garden?” (Genesis 3:1) Of course, you know, God didn’t say that. The devil is already twisting the Word of God. God had said, “*Of every tree...thou mayest freely eat*”—“only one tree you’re not to eat of.” (Genesis 2:16–17) But the devil said, “Did God say you will not eat of the fruit of every tree of the garden?” And now Eve says, “There’s a tree in the midst of the garden. God said, ‘You’ll not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it.’ ” (Genesis 3:3) Now she adds to the Word of God. God didn’t say anything about not touching it. But she said, “There’s a tree in the midst of the garden”—this is in Genesis 3—“*Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.*” (Genesis 3:3) And then the devil says, “*Ye shall not surely die.*” (Genesis 3:4) But let me tell you how I think he said it. If you’ve been around some of these super-sophisticated people, you know how he said it. He said, “Oh, surely not, *nah, nah*. Ye shall not surely die. God doth know that in the day that you eat; then your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” (Genesis 3:4–5)

Now it’s very, very important that you understand what the appeal was to Eve. The appeal was, “Eve, you become your own little god, and you choose for yourself what is good and what is evil. You will be as God. Try it, Eve. Now, baby, don’t knock it till you’ve tried it. You see now, sure God says that you’re not to do this, but I mean, after all, maybe God is wrong; maybe God is withholding something from you. Now the thing for you to do, Eve, is for you to taste this fruit. And then, if it’s good, you can have some more; and if it’s bad, don’t eat any more. But you’ll never know whether it’s good or whether it’s bad until you taste it. Now all you’ve got is the Word of God over here or your experience over here. Now, Eve, if you take the Word of God, then God is forever God, and you’re ever listening to Him. But over here, if you experience it, then you can be like God, and you’ll be the one that says what is good or evil, and you can make up your own mind. After all, Eve, experience is the best teacher. And, Eve, you’re like a babe in the woods, Eve. Why, your eyes are not even open! You poor little old thing! Try it; you might like it.” And so, do you see the appeal here? The appeal is to know good and to know evil through experience rather than by revelation and by faith.

Now, friend, we say that experience is the best teacher. But when it comes to sin, experience is the worst teacher. And those that are deepest into sin are those who know the least about sin. There’s something about sin that blinds and short-circuits the

mind and the reason and so forth. But Eve listened to the devil. And she partook and Adam partook. And there did come a knowledge of good and evil, but it was not the kind of a knowledge that a person wants. How did they know good? They knew good as to its absence. And they knew evil as to its presence and as to its powers: death-dealing powers, destructive power, the sin, the anguish, the heartache, the ruin, the moan, the groan, the woe. All of these things that came through sin they knew, not because they could take God's word for it, but because they themselves had to experiment.

You know, we live in a generation today that wants to experiment. This is the activated generation. It's the generation who wants to do, experience, taste, feel, see, thrill to everything.

One young lady, who had kept herself a virgin—and everybody ought to keep themselves a virgin until they're married; everybody ought to do that. God's Word commands it; the Bible says, "Flee fornication"—one young lady, who had kept herself a virgin and was pure, was being tempted by another girl to sacrifice her purity. And this other girl had been living fast and loose and just had become the dirty plaything of even dirtier boys, and she was trying to get this girl to be like she was. You know, there's something about sin that makes people want to spread it. People generally are evangelists for sin. And so she was trying to get this other girl to do as she was doing. This other girl was pure and clean, kept herself chaste, and was saving herself for that man that she was going to marry. But this girl, who was of the experience orientation, was saying to this young lady, "Well now, look. You've never done this before. How do you know it's wrong? How do you know you won't like it? How do you know? At least you can try it. Try it." You know what the young lady who was pure said to this other one who had sacrificed her purity on someone's altar of lust? She said, "Let me tell you something. Anytime I wish to become like you, I can. But anytime you would ever again like to be like me, you never can." Now that's a thought, isn't it?

But, you see, there is this pull, this attraction, of sin as to where you experiment. You try it. You have for yourself that knowledge of good and evil, and you're the one who says, "This is good and this is evil," rather than letting God say, "This is good and this is evil." Now that first tree was called, therefore, the tree of the knowledge of good and of evil.

But I want to say that this second tree, Calvary's tree, was in a very real sense a tree of the knowledge of good and of evil. And let's start with the evil first. Friend, you will never understand evil, you will never know evil, you will never see evil, you will never perceive evil as you can when you behold the cross of Jesus Christ. You might tend to say that humanity is all right. You might tend to say that sin is not really sin; it's just sort of an error, a malfunction. It's sort of a stumble upward. It's sort of a malfunction of our glands or something. But when you see the darling Son of God nailed on that cross by

human men, you see the hellishness, the hurtfulness, the hatefulness, the sinfulness of sin, that men nailed the Lord Jesus Christ there. And on that second tree is the knowledge of evil. We see sin for what it is. We see the presence of sin, and we see the power of sin. Sin has power: awful power, hellish power, death-dealing power. It was sin that murdered the Lord Jesus Christ. Sin is so powerful that the only way that God could deal with it was the cross of Jesus Christ.

Have you ever heard that scripture that says, “I’m not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation”? (Romans 1:16) Do you know what that means? It means that even God is powerless to do anything with sin apart from the cross. It is so powerful—sin is so hurtful—that Jesus Christ Himself had to die to deal with sin. What I’m saying is, you have a knowledge of evil, when you behold the cross, that you can have no other way. You see the presence of wickedness. You see the power of wickedness. You see the penalty of wickedness. You see, what was Jesus doing when Jesus died upon that cross? Jesus was paying the sin debt for the human race. The Bible describes Jesus in these words: “Him who knew no sin,” (2 Corinthians 5:21) because He was absolutely sinless. He was the paragon of virtue. He was the crystal Christ. He was absolutely, totally without one scintilla of a sin. And yet the Bible says, “Him who knew no sin God hath made to be sin for us.” (2 Corinthians 5:21) Now that doesn’t mean that He became a sinner, that He practiced sin, but it means that your sin, my sin, our sin, their sin, everybody’s sin, was laid upon the Lord Jesus Christ. And the sins of this entire world were placed upon the Lord Jesus Christ because He became our sin-bearer. And then Jesus carried those sins to Calvary.

And now you’re going to find something very interesting. In Romans chapter 8, the Bible says that God “spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up freely for us all.” (Romans 8:32) Who was it that delivered Jesus up to be crucified? God the Father. That’s what that verse says, that God “*spared not his own Son, but delivered him up.*” (Romans 8:32) God the Father delivered up God the Son. Or you read in Isaiah chapter 53—you read, “*It pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief.*” (Isaiah 53:10) Who? God the Father.

Now, listen to me very carefully and very reverently, because you’ll misunderstand what I say if you don’t, and there are some people who will be prone to disagree with me. Who crucified the Lord Jesus Christ? You say, “Well, the Jews crucified the Lord Jesus.” Oh, no. They, as a part of humanity, helped to crucify the Lord Jesus, but they are no more guilty than the Gentiles. You say, “Well, the Romans.” Well, they nailed Him to the cross. You say, “Well, Pilate.” Yes, Pilate gave the order. You say, “Well, we all crucified Him.” Were you there when they crucified my Lord? I was there; you were there. Yes, in a sense, He died for our sins, and had it not been for our sins, He would not have been crucified. But when you get right down to the matter—listen—God the

Father crucified God the Son.

“Now,” you say, “wait a minute. Why?” Why did Jesus take the sin of the world? To bear the punishment of the world. And who is it that gives that punishment? God the Father. It is God the Father who is the judge. It is God the Father that has sworn in His holiness that sin must be punished. And when Jesus Christ said, “I will take the sin of the world,” God the Father said, “My darling Son, do you know that when you take the sin of the world, you must also take the punishment they would have taken? Do you realize with that sin comes that punishment? Do you realize that the vials of God’s wrath have to be poured out upon you? Do you realize that I’ll have to deal with you as I would have dealt with them?” “Yes, Father”—“*Not my will, but thine, be done.*” (Luke 22:42) And Jesus took my sin, your sin, our sin, their sin to the cross, and there God poured out His wrath. God spared Him not.

Now if there were ever a time when God the Father would have been tempted to have been lenient with sin, it would have been then, when His own Son was facing the punishment. If there were ever a time when God would have been tempted to say, “That’s all right; I’ll not punish sin this time. It’s all right; I’ll let it go. I will not do it”; it would have been when Jesus Christ, His beloved Son, who was not really guilty, was the One who was paying the sin debt. But now I want you to understand this, friend: The Bible says that God “*spared not his own Son.*” (Romans 8:32) And the point I want to make with all the function and unction and emphasis of my soul is this, that if God spared not the Lord Jesus Christ when He was bearing your sin, He certainly cannot spare you if you bear your sin. You see, if God would have ever overlooked sin, it would have been then. So put it down and put it down big, put it down plain, get it in your heart and never get it out: *Your sin will be pardoned in Christ, or it will be punished in hell, but it will never be overlooked.* God never has, God never will, God never has—cannot spare sin. “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered Him up freely for us all.” (Romans 8:32)

Now, what am I saying in all of this? I’m saying that sometimes, friends, we are prone to excuse sin; we’re prone to think lightly of sin. But when you see the cross, and when you see what it did to Jesus, and when you see the wrath of God being poured out, there you have a knowledge of evil. That tree, Calvary’s tree, was a tree of the knowledge of evil, but it was also a tree of the knowledge of good. Friend, when you see the cross, when you see Calvary’s cross, there and there alone you behold the goodness of God, the glory of God, the grace of God, the righteousness of God, the majesty of God—the glory of God—as you’ve never beheld it before, by beholding the cross. “*The heavens declare the glory of God,*” (Psalms 19:1) but the cross declares the grace of God. You see Jesus upon that cross. There you see the goodness of God. Oh, that God would love us so much! Oh, the grace of God! The goodness of God! What a

tree of the knowledge of good and of evil!

My friend Pat Zondervan came into my office, and he came bearing gifts. And he came with three of Zondervan's wonderful new titles, beautiful books. He said, "Adrian, these are for you." I think he was giving them to me. He hasn't given me a bill yet. I believe they were a gift. And he came to me, and he gave them to me. And he's not asking me to pay for them. You say, "Well, that's grace then, because he gave them to you." No, that wasn't grace. It was a gift, but it wasn't grace, because he gave them to a friend. But, friend, grace is where God shows His love to His enemies.

That's grace—that's grace. "*While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*" (Romans 5:8) "*God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*" (Romans 5:8) That is the marvelous, matchless, wonderful, glorious, indescribable grace of God! And this second tree is a tree of the knowledge of good and of evil. Oh, the goodness of God that you see at the cross! Oh, the evil of man that you see at the cross, the cross of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

III. The Power of the Trees

One last thing: Not only do I want you to see the place of the trees, and not only do I want you to see the purpose of these trees, but I want you to see the power of these two trees. Both of these trees have, therefore, a tremendous power wrapped up in them. This first tree had the power of spiritual death and expulsion on behalf of Adam. When Adam partook of this first tree, he became a thief. You see, that fruit was not his to eat. All of the rest of it belonged to Adam, for God had given it to Adam, and God said, "Of all of this fruit you may freely eat." (Genesis 2:16) But this one tree did not belong to Adam; it belonged to God. And he was forbidden to take it. And when he did—at the moment he did—Adam became a thief. And before he ever ate, he had stolen; he had taken that which did not belong to him. He became a sinner in the sight of a righteous God; and because of that, he was banished from paradise.

I want you to see here in Genesis chapter 3—look in verse 23: "*Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.*" (Genesis 3:23–24) Out of the garden goes Adam. Adam became a thief, and as a thief, he was expelled from paradise.

Now I want you to turn with me to the book of Luke, if you will—the Gospel of Luke—and I want you to see something here that's been a blessing to my heart. Look, if you will, in Luke chapter 23, and let's begin reading in verse 39, because it's the story of another thief at this other tree, Calvary's tree, the tree of life. I'm reading here in Luke chapter 23, beginning in verse 39: "*And one of the malefactors...*"—the word *malefactor*

means “an evildoer, a thief.” The Bible tells us in another place that he was a thief—*“And one of the [thieves] which were hanged railed on him...”*—the “him” is Christ. And when He was “hanged,” it means “was crucified, nailed on the cross”—*“And one of the [thieves] which were [nailed on the cross] railed [at Jesus], saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly;”*—in other words, we are being condemned, but we’re being condemned because we deserve it; we’re receiving the just reward of our sin—*“for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man”*—that is, Jesus—*“hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus,”*—listen to this now—*“Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.”* (Luke 23:39–43)

I want you to see something. The first Adam ate of the first tree, became a thief, and was driven from paradise. A thief ate of the second tree and was invited into paradise. I want you to see it. I want you to see here that a thief, a man who didn’t deserve it, a man who was literally shut out, even as Adam was shut out; yet he sees Jesus Christ there upon that cross, and by the revelation of the Holy Spirit he understands that Jesus is the sinless Son of God. He says, *“This man hath done nothing amiss.”* (Luke 23:41) He realizes that He is Lord, for he says, *“Lord, remember me.”* (Luke 23:42) He knows that He was a King, for he said, *“Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.”* (Luke 23:42) That is, he placed his faith in Jesus Christ, and the doors of paradise swung open again through that second tree. And Jesus said, *“Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.”* (Luke 23:43) That’s the power of both of these trees. One tree had the power to put a thief out of paradise; the other tree had the power to bring a thief into paradise. And the difference is in the grace of God, for this man was saved by grace, and grace alone.

Everybody’s trying to find out how to get out of the dilemma that we’re in. The industrialist says, “Work your way out.” The financier says, “Buy your way out.” The philosopher says, “Think your way out.” The boozier says, “Drink your way out.” The pugilist says, “Fight your way out.” The deceiver says, “Bluff your way out.” Jesus says, “I am the way. Come to me”—“Come to me.” Just a moment of faith.

You see, this man couldn’t give. He had nothing to give. He’s hanging naked on a cross. This man could not work for the Lord Jesus. His hands are nailed to the cross. This man could not be baptized. He’s dying upon a cross. *Baptism, whether a spoonful or a tankful, can’t take away your sins.* But he could say, *“Lord, remember me.”* (Luke 23:42) Friend, you can too today. I want to tell you, friend, that it is the grace of God that you need. Oh, the marvelous, matchless grace of God!

You know, today, people are still sitting under the shade of the first tree of the

knowledge of good and evil. They don't like this idea. They believe in culture rather than Calvary. They believe in education rather than regeneration. They believe that they are still their own little god, deciding what is good and what is evil. But I want to tell you that the God of this world is the Lord Jesus Christ who hung upon a tree. And through tasting the fruit of that tree you can have life everlasting.

There was an astronomer, a Polish astronomer, whose name was Copernicus. And Copernicus, through his writings and through his education, changed the concepts of what men think about the universe and how the universe runs. He was a brilliant man. But when Copernicus came to die, this is what Copernicus wrote—he wrote a letter to the Lord, and he said, “Lord, I do not ask the kindness that thou didst show to Peter. I do not ask the grace that thou didst grant to Paul. But, Lord, the mercy that you showed to that dying thief, that mercy show to me; that mercy I earnestly crave.”

Do you want that today? Do you want the mercy that God showed to that dying thief? Well, He'll show it to you, and He'll save you today. I'm so proud of the gospel that I preach. I'm not ashamed of the gospel.

When I was a teenage boy, I went to Ridgecrest, North Carolina. I'd not been saved very long. I went to Ridgecrest, North Carolina, and there at Ridgecrest, North Carolina, a man was preaching on soul winning. And this man there gave an invitation, and the invitation was like this: “How many of you will covenant with me that you will lead a soul to Jesus this coming year?” Well, I lifted my hand. I'd never done that before. I'd not been a Christian very long. I didn't really understand how to be a soul winner. I was untrained, but I thought, surely, if Jesus died for me, I ought to tell someone else about Him, and I lifted my hand.

I went back home to West Palm Beach, Florida, where I was born and raised. It was in the summertime. I was just a schoolboy. And I had gone down to the street corner at Fortieth and Broadway to buy some kerosene to wash off some bicycle parts. And I didn't have on any shoes. I didn't have on any shirt. That's the way we dressed to show off our muscles, and I was just a kid. And an old man came up to me, and he had an extension cord in his hand. He said, “Son, do you want to buy this extension cord?” I said, “No sir, I don't. Thank you.”

And I turned and started to walk away, and I was curious. I said, “Why are you trying to sell it?” “Well,” he said, “I've been an old fool.” He said, “I live on a pension check.” And he said, “When my check came this time,” he said, “I cashed it, and a friend of mine and myself spent all of the money on whiskey.” And he said, “It's gone.” He said, “Now I'm having to sell my tools in order to make it through until I get another check.” I said, “Mister, if I had some money, I'd give it to you, but I don't. I'm sorry.” And I turned and started to walk away.

And God the Holy Spirit said to me, “Adrian, speak to him about his soul.” And I

argued with the Lord. I said, “Lord, I can’t do that. I don’t even have a shirt and shoes on. I can’t talk about you like this.” I started to go off again, and the Lord said, “Adrian, you said you wanted to be a soul winner. Speak to him.” I said, “Lord, I can’t. He’s a grown man, and I’m just a boy. And besides that, Lord, I’ve been in a lot of trouble on this street corner.” And I had. I’d gotten into some street fights there at the corner of Fortieth Street and Broadway, and some of my old, tough buddies were still hanging around there. I said to the Lord, to myself, “You know, they might see me talking about you out loud. I couldn’t do that.” I started to walk away again, and the Lord said, “Adrian, you promised. Speak to him.” Now it wasn’t an audible voice. It was louder than that. God said, “Adrian, speak to him.” I was frightened to death. I thought I’d die if I did. I knew I’d die if I didn’t. I just turned around. I said, “All right, Lord, here I go.”

I didn’t know how to make an approach. I didn’t know anything. I hadn’t been trained—just barefooted, no shirt, nothing, blue jeans. I said, “Mister, I don’t have any money, but I may have something better than money. I want to ask you a question. Are you a Christian?” And when I said that, his chin started to quiver like this, and his eyes filled with tears, and those tears ran down those canyons in his cheeks and dripped off of that white beard. He said, “No, son, I’m not a Christian, but I ought to be.” I said, “Do you want to be?” He said, “More than anything in this world, if I knew how to be.” “Oh,” I said, “I wish I had a Bible.” He said, “I have one.” And, Brother Zondervan, he reached down into his coat, into the lining of that coat, and brought out a Gideon Testament, one of those brown Gideon Testaments.

I couldn’t believe it. There it was, the Bible. He didn’t know how to read it, didn’t understand it. And I was dumb. Listen. I didn’t know theology. I didn’t know anything. If I had taken a course in ignorance, I’d have flunked it. I did not know anything, except that I knew that Jesus had saved me. And I didn’t know what verses to use. I didn’t know the Roman Road. I didn’t know the Four Laws, the seventeen ways, or forty keys, or anything, but I found John 3:16. You know that one, don’t you? That’s the only thing I could find: John 3:16. I said, “Let me read you this,” and I read to him this scripture: *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”* And I told him (John 3:16)—I said, “Mister, when God loved, He loved the world. And when God gave, He gave His Son. And His Son came to die for our sins. And when I realized that, I prayed and invited Him into my heart. And He forgave my sin and saved me.” And I said, “Sir, if you will believe on Him, according to this verse, He will save you.” He said, “What should I do?” I said, “Well, I’m going to pray, and then I want you to pray.” And I prayed for him, and then I said, “Now I want you to pray.” And he prayed. And he started to cry, and I started to cry. I was amazed that I started to cry. There we were: two men just blubbing, standing there.

And then I wiped the tears from my eyes, and I looked up at him after he prayed and said, “Jesus, come into my heart and save me.” I said, “Did He do it?” He said, “I believe He did.” I said, “Wonderful! Wonderful! That’s fine. Good-bye. I’ll see you.” I didn’t know anything about follow-up. I just started to back away, and he said, “Young man, come back here.” And I went back. He said, “Young man,” he said, “I’m an old man almost ready to die.” And he said, “I’ve been in almost every one of the forty-eight states, but,” he said, “you’re the first man to ever speak with me about my soul. Thank you, young man. Thank you.”

I walked home that high off the sidewalk, leaping and dancing and praising God that He let me share the gospel of Jesus Christ. And I thought about it: Isn’t it wonderful that a man could just stand on a street corner like that, and on the basis of the Word of God say, “Lord Jesus, come into my heart,” and God would save him?

You say, “Well, do I have to cry like that?” No, you may cry. You may not cry. You may shout. You may not shout. You may laugh. You may not laugh. You may be frightened. You may not be frightened. Friend, all of those things are external. But the Bible says, “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.*” (Acts 16:31)

Conclusion

Now, listen to me, and I’m finished. God forbade man to eat of that first tree, and the devil did everything he could do to get man to eat of it. God invites you to eat of the second tree, and the devil is doing everything he can do to keep you from doing it. Do you realize that? Even when I give this invitation today, the devil is going to put thoughts and excuses and alibis in your mind, and he’ll try to get you to put it off. The devil does not want you to receive the Lord Jesus Christ and say yes to Him. But I want to tell you there are not enough devils in hell or out of hell to keep you from coming if you want to come, for the Bible says, “Whosoever will may come.” (Revelation 22:17) “*Taste and see that the LORD is good.*” (Psalms 34:8) And I want you, men and women, boys and girls, today, to turn to Jesus, to trust Him, and leave this place today a child of God with Christ in your heart, your sins forgiven, and heaven your sure destination.

How to Put Meaning in Your Marriage

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: May 13, 1990

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 2:18–24

*“And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh:
she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.”*

GENESIS 2:23

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Purpose of Marriage
 - II. The Partnership of Marriage
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 - D. Risks and Security
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Introduction

Would you take your Bibles and turn to the first book of the Bible, the book of Genesis chapter 2, and in a few moments we are going to begin reading in verse 18. We are in a series of Bible messages entitled, “A Future for the Family,” and today I want to talk to you about “How to Put Meaning in Your Marriage.” I want to move your marriage from monotony to the momentous. I don’t want you to have a ho-hum marriage.

This is really the story of the first family. And when I say “first family,” I don’t mean George and Barbara, but I’m talking about Adam and Eve. In many ways they were different from any other family. I mean, they were different. For example, they didn’t have any in-laws. Have you ever thought about that? He couldn’t compare her cooking with his mother’s. Not only did they not have any in-laws, but also they didn’t have any competition. I mean, Eve could not tell Adam of all of the other men she could have married. One time, I understand that Eve said to Adam, “Adam, do you really love me?”

He said, “Who else?” Yet there are some things in this story that are eternally and perpetually the same. There are eternal truths that will help you to put meaning in your marriage. And how we need the truth that we are about to study today!

Divorce is a national epidemic. As a matter of fact, a magazine has been printed with this title—can you believe it?—*Marriage and Divorce*. In the March issue, 1980, this magazine said that in America, so-called God-blessed America, one out of three marriages is ending in divorce, but—pay attention—in marriages that began in a church wedding, just a church wedding, one out of fifty ended in divorce. Now, listen to this. According to this national magazine, where both husband and wife were married in a church where they attend regularly and have some kind of family devotions, one in 1,005 ends in divorce. So when all else fails, let’s go back and read the instructions. Somebody has written a book, *Try Marriage Before Divorce*.

Now, let’s see what marriage really is, okay? Beginning in verse 18, and I read here: *“And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet”—or “a fitting helper”—“for him. And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet”—or “a fitting helper”—“for him. And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.”* And now notice the conclusion, the therefore, verses 24 and 25: *“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.”* (Genesis 2:18–25)

Now, my dear friend, here we have God’s purpose and God’s pattern for marriage. Now I want you to pay attention. Now you look so holy this morning, but the real test of your faith is not how you act at church, but how you behave at home. Now if you’ve been arguing around the breakfast table, it doesn’t make any difference how pious you are around the Lord’s table. Now, let’s see what the Bible has to say about a home.

Why did God institute marriage? What is the purpose of marriage? God gave marriage and the home to meet the deepest emotional, physical, psychological, and spiritual needs of mankind. Marriage did not originate in the swamps of evolution and immorality, but marriage is the first institution that God created there in the Garden of Eden. Three things I want you to see:

I. The Purpose of Marriage

First of all, the purpose of marriage. Look in verse 18—God says *“It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make [a fitting helper] for him.”* (Genesis 2:18) Adam needed a companion. He needed somebody that he could fellowship with. And he could not fellowship with any of the animals. Look, if you will, in verses 19 and 20: *“And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.”* But now, watch this: *“And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but...”*—do you see the word *but*—*“but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him.”* (Genesis 2:19–20)

Now what God did when God gave Adam the job of naming the animals, God was doing some psychology on Adam. God was creating a desire in the heart of Adam. Now Adam is to name the animals. God creates animals and brings them to Adam. Here comes an animal with a great big long neck, Adam strokes his chin and says, “Yep, that’s a giraffe”—named him a giraffe. I mean, what else would you name something that looked like that? And then here’s the hippopotamus. Adam says, “That’s a hippopotamus.” Well, that’s easy. Anybody can tell a hippopotamus when they see him. And then a skunk: What else would you call a skunk but a skunk? So Adam is naming the animals. One by one the animals come. But not only do they come one by one; they come two by two. And Adam notices for Mr. Giraffe there’s Mrs. Giraffe; and for Mr. Hippo there’s Mrs. Hippo, only she doesn’t want to be called that. And then for Mr. Skunk there’s Mrs. Skunk. But Adam notices for Mr. Adam there is no Mrs. Adam. There was not found a fitting helper for him.

And so now God, therefore, having created the desire in Adam, creates woman. In verse 21: *“And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.”* (Genesis 2:21–22) Now, notice, in verse 23: *“And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh.”* (Genesis 2:23) Now I don’t understand the Hebrew language very well, but I read after those who do, and they tell us that what Adam said there is the counterpart of an expletive. I don’t mean dirty language, but something more like, “Wow!” I mean, when he sees Eve, I mean he’s been looking, folks, at giraffes and lizards, and then he sees Eve, and he just explodes in a joyous expression of great joy.

Now, think of it. Adam has been in the garden face-to-face, one-on-one, with Almighty God. He has been walking with God, and yet there is in his heart still an unmet need and a desire. And God gave to Adam a wife, and God gave to Eve a husband.

God did not give to Eve a father, first, to rule over her, not a brother to play with, not a son to watch over, but God gave to Eve a husband. And that husband was there that God gave to Eve to meet that deep need that he had and she would have for companionship and partnership.

May I tell you that marriage, therefore, is the highest, the deepest, and the most insoluble of all human relationships. Look, if you will, in verses 23 and 24: Adam says, *“This is now bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh.”* (Genesis 2:23) Verse 24: *“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.”* (Genesis 2:24) Leave father and mother: The relationship between husband and wife is a closer bonding than between parent and child.

Now when the Bible says to leave father and mother, that doesn't mean geographically. It doesn't mean that you've got to move out of town, or they have to move. You can live next door to your father and mother and fulfill this command. Or your father and mother can be a thousand miles across the country, and you can still be emotionally bound and tied to them. So the cause of many marriages going down, very frankly, is that people have failed to cut the emotional umbilical cord of leaving father and mother.

And surveys tell us that in-laws are a great problem in modern marriages. One man went into the veterinary hospital and said, “I want you to cut this dog's tail off.” And the vet said, “Well, how far do you want it cut off?” He said, “I want it all cut off.” He said, “Well, we don't normally do that.” He said, “I know, but,” he said, “my mother-in-law is coming to visit,” and he said, “I don't want any sign whatsoever of welcome. I just want it all gone. Just cut it off right on down to the end.”

Well, you know, many times it's really not the mother of the bride; it's the mother of the groom that causes the problems. Two women are vying for the affection of the same man. Sometimes a woman has not found the love that she ought to get from her husband, and so she gets, not a normal, but an unnatural attachment to her son. And so you have the two women who are vying for the affection of the same man.

One woman said, “My mother-in-law has an inferiority complex: She's always interfering.”

You're going to find there are two times when in-laws are a real problem in marriage: when husband and wife first get married and they're trying to establish their independence in the first part of their marriage; and then in the last part of their marriage, when their parents are becoming more and more dependent upon them. Those are the times when you really need to pray.

Now when I say that you are to leave your father and mother, that doesn't mean you are not to honor your father and mother. As a matter of fact, this is a day that we've set aside to honor our mothers. And the Bible tells us, in Exodus chapter 20 and verse 12,

that we are to “honour thy father and thy mother.” (Exodus 20:12) And yet at the same time we are to leave because, you see, God made man and woman for one another in a very special way.

And so you see there, first of all, what I want to call the purpose of marriage. “*It is not good that the man should be alone.*” (Genesis 2:18) God made marriage that man might have a companion that would meet his deepest emotional, spiritual, physical, psychological needs; and vice versa for the woman, that the same would be true for the woman.

II. The Partnership of Marriage

Now the second thing, I want you to see coming out of the purpose of marriage the partnership of marriage. (Genesis 2:18) Now God says also in verse 18, “I will make for man a fitting helper.” Now that means, really, a helper like himself. We will sometimes laughingly call our husbands or our wives “the other half,” but that’s quite apt. Adam without Eve was like a violin without a bow.

And so God gave Eve to Adam to make up that part of Adam that was lacking. She was to be his completer, not his competitor—his completer. A problem today is that we try, through the battle of the sexes, to get men and women in competition with one another rather than in cooperation with one another.

Now the Hebrew word for “woman” here is *ishah*—*i-s-h-a-h*—if you’re going to write it down and transliterate it. And the word for “man” is *ish*. *Ish*: “man.” *Ishah*: “woman.” Now *ishah*, the word for “woman,” comes from an Arabic root, which means “to be soft.” You see, God built femininity into a woman. Now the word *ish*, the word for “man,” comes from an Arabic root, which simply means “to exercise power.” God put masculinity in men and femininity into women. And the Bible teaches that God made them different that He might make them one.

Now I want us to think a little bit about that difference, and after this message you’re going to understand two hundred percent more about women if you’re a man. But may I tell you that two hundred times zero is still zero. You’ll think about that later on. But, my dear friend, let’s learn something about the nature of man and woman. You see, there is not only the companionship, but there is the partnership. And by the way, there are those who are moving heaven and earth to remove this difference between men and women.

Did you hear last week—it was just last week—some city—I forget the name of the city—is having a contest to rename the manhole covers in their city? Did you know that? Really, because the feminists today say, “We don’t want to call them manhole covers anymore.” So somebody suggested they have a contest. Somebody said, “We’ll name them person-hole covers.” But that won’t do: person, the word *son* is in there. What are

you going to do about that? As a matter of fact, these women who want to change the name of everything, what are you going to do about *woman*? You're just going to have to call her a *wo-person*. But you can't call her a *wo-person*, because the name *son* is there. So just call her a *wo-per*. All right, we've got all these *wo-pers* out here. You know, one of the names that they're suggesting for the manhole covers? *Sewer-viewer*. That's pretty apt, if you ask me.

Dear friend, listen. God made men to be men, and God made women to be women. And the difference in the sexes is right here in the Word of God.

A. **Provider and Encourager**

You see, it's obvious that man is to be the provider and woman is to be the encourager. Now in Genesis chapter 2, verse 15, the Bible says, "*And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.*" (Genesis 2:15) Now God said to Adam, "Adam, you are going to be the provider. You're to dress the garden and keep it." Then God made the woman, and God said to the woman, "You are to be a fitting helper to him. You are to encourage him and to stand by his side." Man is the provider, and woman is to be the encourager, in God's original plan.

B. **Protector and Nurturer**

Man is to be the protector, and woman is to be the nurturer. Look, if you will, in Genesis chapter 3 and verse 16: "*Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.*" (Genesis 3:16) That is, the husband is to be the one in charge, and the man is the protector, and the woman is the nurturer.

The man is to lead, to guide, to protect, and therefore God made the man physically strong, because that's the realm that he lives in. But God made the woman to be soft, to be gentle, to be tender, because she's the life-giver. And you just see that in the nature of women.

Have you ever watched a man change a diaper? *Pft, bang! Pft, pft, pft, pft.* Watch how a woman changes a diaper. They are just different—just different—the way God made them.

C. **Logic and Emotion**

Therefore—listen—men tend to think logically, with their heads. Women think—you think I'm going to say illogically, but I'm not; I've got better sense than that—women think emotionally, with their hearts. Now I didn't say that what they think is not logical or not right, but they just think differently.

A man, by nature, as the breadwinner and the protector, he is goal oriented. A man will see the goal, and he'll see the steps in order to get there in his mind, and that's the way he works. He doesn't necessarily consider how people will feel. If he does, it's a

secondary issue. But not the woman. The woman, not only will she see the goal, but beyond the goal, and overriding she thinks, “How are people going to feel about this? You know, if he does that, somebody might get their feelings hurt. Somebody might be hurt.” You see, women, they just think with their hearts. Men think with their heads. Who is right? Who is wrong? Neither is right. Neither is wrong. The point is they both need one another. A woman has what we often call intuition. A woman knows what’s going on without knowing what’s going on. It’s incredible. It’s a gift from God. You see, they are to be partners.

D. Risks and Security

God built something into the man where the man wants to take risks. Why does he take risks? Because that’s the way to achieve in life—to take risks. So the man says, “Let’s try it! Let’s go for it! Let’s do it!” But the woman, being the homemaker that God made her to be, being the nurturer that God made her to be, she’s not nearly so interested in taking risks as she is in creating beauty, gentleness, and security. And most women had rather have security than to have even greater success because God has given her a nesting instinct. But God has given him a productive instinct. So men takes risks; women want security.

E. Big Picture and Details

Men have a propensity to see the big picture, while women see the details.

Let me show you how that works. Here’s a guy, somebody presents to him a new product and says, “You can buy the franchise for this product, and you can do thus and such.” He says, “Boy, I think that’s what I’ve been waiting for.” And so he takes their savings without consulting his wife, buys the franchise, resigns his job, and comes home and tells his wife. He says, “Look. We’re going into a new business. It’s going to be fantastic. We’re going to get all this money, and we’re moving to Cincinnati.” Boy, she begins to cry. He says, “What’s wrong with you? This is what we’ve been waiting for all of our lives.” She says, “We can’t move.” “Well, why?” “Because the kids are in school. What about the dental appointments? And also, we just redecorated the bathroom.”

She sees the thing from a completely different viewpoint than he sees it. Which one is right, and which one is wrong? Well, he certainly told her the wrong way. Had he, first of all, told her, “I’ve thought about this detail and this detail and this detail,” and had he told her how he was going to provide security for her and the children; it would have been somewhat better. And, of course, he should have consulted with her to begin with. But what I’m trying to say is that men tend to be goal oriented, and they see the big picture and take risks. Women are nurturing and soft and nest builders. They see the details, and they see the impediments in between.

F. Sensitive and Insensitive

Now a man, therefore, tends to be more insensitive. The woman tends to be more sensitive. Now, listen. Insensitivity, when it is taken to an extreme, is bad. But there's a sense in which God gave man a thick skin. You see, because we say, "It's a jungle out there." I mean, it's tough. And a man has to make decisions. He has to be able to take abuse. He has to do even physical jobs that hurt. I mean that his back carries loads. He has things that God puts on him. And so he has to have a sense of insensitivity. I'm not talking about being insensitive to the things that really matter.

But a woman, on the other hand, is very empathetic; she's very sensitive. And God made her that way because she is a fitting helper for man out there in that jungle who might get hardened a little bit. And he needs to learn how to be more sensitive.

You see, he's like a nuclear sub on the prowl, but she's like the sonar. And she'll say to him, "That guy that you're doing business with, he's a phony." Her sonar is just working. "He's a phony; don't trust him." "Ah, he's all right." "No, I'm telling you, don't trust him." Nine out of ten times, she'll be right. She's just the sonar to tell that sub, "Just turn right." God just gives her that special sensitivity.

G. Defensive and Trusting

Now the man, therefore, he tends to be more defensive, and he tends to be suspicious. Why is this? Because, you see, he's the protector. But the woman tends to be more trusting and to be more open. Why is this? Because she is the nurturer. She is the life-giver. And therefore, the woman, she knows how to forgive. She'll forgive the children over and over again. She'll even forgive her husband when he does her dirty. She will forgive. But the husband says, "Why do you trust that person? They've already hurt you once. That's stupid to trust them again." You see, he's defensive because he must protect his family.

Now you might as well face it, folks: Men and women are different. I think it's best summed up with a story I heard years ago about a boy and a girl who were sitting on the front porch of their old country home. Down in the valley was the country church, and they were having choir practice. There was a big yellow moon in the sky, and the air was fragrant- with the blossoming of the honeysuckle. And the choir was practicing, and the yellow light was streaming out of the windows of the little church, and the strains of the music of the choir were making their way over the valley to where this couple was sitting on the front porch in the old swing. Underneath the porch were some crickets that were chirping. Now she had her mind on the choir practice and listening to that music, and he's thinking about fishing, had his mind on the crickets. She said, "Isn't that beautiful?" He said, "It really is." She said, "I don't think I've ever heard anything quite as lovely." "Yeah," he said, "you know, they make that noise by rubbing their hind legs together." It's just the way men think and the way women think.

I mean, friend, I realize that everything I've said this morning is a generalization. And when I preach a sermon like this, I'll get letters from people out there, and boy, they'll say, "You said that women didn't have any brains," or "You said that men want..." No, no. Listen. All of these are generalizations, first of all, okay? Just generalizations. Okay? Okay, don't write me.

All right now, secondly, I'm not talking about strengths and weaknesses. In each of these qualities, male and female, there is a strength and a weakness. But what I'm trying to say is that we need to understand that God made men to be men, and God made women to be women. And God said, "It's not good that the man should be alone. I will make a fitting helper for him." There is to be a partnership.

III. The Permanence of Marriage

Now we've talked about the purpose of marriage, which is companionship. We've talked about the purpose of marriage, which is a partnership. And now, let's talk a little bit about the permanence of marriage, all right? The purpose, the partnership, and the permanence of marriage. Look with me in verse 24, if you will—Genesis chapter 2 and verse 24: "*Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife.*" (Genesis 2:24) Do you see the word *cleave*? Now the word *cleave* there is actually a Hebrew word which means "to weld," or "to glue," like you would glue two pieces of paper together. Now here God is talking about the future of the family. "A man will leave his father and his mother, he'll cleave unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh." (Genesis 2:24)

Here are God's principles to keep us from having broken homes. And God doesn't want broken homes, because broken homes produce broken humans, and broken humans produce broken homes, and broken homes produce broken humans, and on and on we go. Now if you are in a broken home or from a broken home, I don't want you to despair because, my dear friend, there is hope; we can break the cycle. And I thank God for it. And I'm going to be bringing a message before very long for those in broken homes and those who are singles trying to raise children without a spouse. We're going to be talking about that. But let me tell you something, friend, that God's plan is one man for one woman till death do them part.

Do you know what the cause of most divorces is? *Better Homes and Gardens* did a survey. They got back 300,000 responses—300,000. And of those 300,000, they said, "What is the number one problem in marriage, and what is the number two problem in marriage?" Number one: immaturity. Number two: selfishness. Number one and number two are immaturity and selfishness; men and women asking when they come to marriage, "What's in it for me?" rather than asking, "What is best for both of us?" You see, incompatibility and irreconcilable differences, let me just rename those. Do you

want me to tell you what they are? Immaturity and selfishness. That's all they are. Incompatibility and irreconcilable differences, just rename them, and name them by what they really are: immaturity and selfishness.

"Well," you say, "I don't love anymore." My friend, may I say this with all of the unction, function, and emotion of my soul: Love is a choice—love is a choice. You choose to love. Love is a commitment. The emotion may follow, but love is a commitment. And if you don't make that commitment, when a crisis comes, you're going to walk away. But the Bible says you are to cleave to your wife. You are to glue yourself to her, and she is glued to you.

Do you ever glue two pieces of paper together? When you try to separate them, you are going to damage both pieces of paper. There's no way that you can unglue something that has been welded and glued together like that.

The problem is that many who say, "I do," don't. And they stand at the marriage altar, and rather than saying, "So long as we both shall live," they translate that, "So long as we both shall love." And when it says, "Until death do us part," they translate that in their mind, "Until disagreement do us part." But, my dear friend, it is "So long as we both shall live," not love; and "Until death," not disagreement, "do us part."

There has to be a commitment. Now God's plan is that one plus one equals one. They become one flesh. And what *"God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."* (Matthew 19:6; Mark 10:9) The Bible says, *"And they were both naked...and were not ashamed"* (Genesis 2:25)—the last verse in this chapter. What does that mean? It means they were so much one that there was no shame, no intimidation. They were willing and able to share everything with their marriage partner. Therefore, no threat.

Conclusion

If I could leave you with one thought today, if you're married, let me give you this thought. Are you listening? There is no way possible that you can win in a war with your mate. Now I'm going to tell you why in just a moment, but you listen. There is no way possible that you can win in a war with your mate. Why? Because you and your mate are one. And if you damage her, you don't win; you lose, because you are damaging yourself. If you damage him, you don't win; you lose. You are one flesh! Any man at war with his wife is at war with himself. Any woman at war with her husband is at war with herself. And so, therefore, you cannot win.

That doesn't mean that you can't have discussions so as to help her, and that is to help you; and to help you, and that is to help her. But to damage her is to damage you. Be good to yourself, my dear friend, and love your wife.

Now our time is gone, but let me just say that Jesus Christ built this first home in the Garden of Eden. Are you listening? Jesus Christ builds the church home, because he

says, “The Church, I’ll build.” Jesus Christ builds the heavenly home. He has gone to prepare a place for us. And Jesus Christ builds the family home. Jesus, and Jesus alone, can build the kind of homes that we need. Jesus is the greatest home builder. Satan is the greatest home wrecker. And *Jesus intends that everybody have three homes: a family home, a church home, and a heavenly home. And He’s the key to all three.*

Millionaire Marriages

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: April 10, 1994

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 2:18–25

“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.”

GENESIS 2:24

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 - B. God Gave Eve to Adam for Cooperation
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 - D. God Gave Eve to Adam for Communication
 - E. God Gave Eve to Adam for Continuation
 - 1. Men Are More Left-Brained; Women, More Right-Brained
 - 2. Man Is to Be the Provider; Woman, the Helper
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 - 6. Men Are Goal Oriented; Women, Security Oriented
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- II. A Marriage Marred by Hell
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Conclusion

Introduction

Today, we're beginning a series on "Treasuring Family Values." And I think there are a lot of people who don't treasure family values. I heard of a man who got great joy out of running his wedding pictures backward so he could see himself walking out of the church a free man. There are some who have turned matrimony, holy matrimony, into something other than the joy that God has intended for it to be. And when we talk about family values, some people don't know what we mean when we say family, and they have no standard for establishing values.

Years and years ago, I read about an old prospector; they found him in the Yukon. They found his skeleton, that is. And not very far away, they found the carcass of his old

pack mule. It too had died. Perhaps he'd tied the old mule up before he died. And the old pack mule was loaded down with ore, but the saddlebags weighted the old mule down. But when they went through the ore, it wasn't gold ore at all; it was what the prospectors call fool's gold. That is, it glittered, but it wasn't true gold. You know they say, "All that glitters is not gold." And this glittered, but it wasn't gold. But the irony of the whole thing is the old prospector, knowing that he was dying, wrote a note and put it in the saddlebag. And the note said this: "I died rich!" There he was out there alone, dying in misery, his saddlebags loaded with dirt, and he said he died rich. His problem was that he was fooled. He didn't know what value really is.

As we're talking about "Treasuring Family Values," we have to know what a family is, and we have to be able to set a standard for value. Now, is this series needed? You'd better believe it is needed. I was reading in the *Commercial Appeal* recently about Shere Hite. She is an American feminist researcher. Here's what she said. Listen. In your paper, she said, "The traditional two-parent family is outdated, authoritarian, and the cradle of many of society's injustices." And she said, "The family is a structure not worth saving." And then she went on to say, "The holy family, the model of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, is essentially a repressive one, teaching authoritarian psychological patterns and a belief in the unchanging rightness of male power." That gives me a pain I can't locate. Sometimes I think I do.

Good ol' Hugh Downs, on 20/20, let me quote what he had to say recently. Now, listen to this. I quote: "During times of social stress, humanity usually regresses into the family." And then he explained what he meant. He said, "In the 1920s, the Ku Klux Klan urged the nation to adopt family values and return to old-time religion." Then he said, "Also, Adolf Hitler launched a family-values regiment." So far now he's identified family values with the Ku Klux Klan and Adolf Hitler. And then he said, "Hitler's methodology centered in his ideas of motherhood." And then he went on to say, "Fanatics in the Ku Klux Klan, the Nazi party, and the Hezbollah"—now those are the terrorists. And then he says—"or any other intolerant organization refer to themselves as religious warriors. As warriors, fanatics censor the thoughts of others and love to burn books. In the modern United States..."—now, listen to this and how subtle it is—"in the modern United States, new proponents of family values continue this tradition of fear and intolerance." Think about it: the Ku Klux Klan, the Nazis, the Hezbollah, and us—and us. When we're talking about family values, friend, that's frightening.

Our own surgeon general, Joycelyn Elders, boy, she said—and I quote: "We would like for the right-to-life and anti-choice groups to really get over their love affair with the fetus and start supporting the children." Give me a break! And then she said—and I quote; she's talking about us now: "I think the religious community could be very, very powerful and very influential. They have the prestige and the acceptance, and I feel that

if they would stop trying to moralize the issues and educate our children, then we could eradicate many of these problems.” “Moralize the issues.” She’s saying, “What do morals have to do with it? Forget morals; quit trying to moralize the issue.”

And then our surgeon general said, “We should start with sex education in kindergarten.” And she said, “It should be taught every day, every year.” She went on to say, “I see a time when every school will have school-based health services and will have a comprehensive health-education program, and condoms will be available to students who choose to use them.” That’s the surgeon general of the United States. They want to start in kindergarten. She says, “Don’t bring your morals into this thing.”

The condoms are in, and the commandments are out. You cannot post the Ten Commandments on the walls of American schools. Now, let me give you the irony of that. Do you know who the architect of the federal Constitution was? James Madison. Let me tell you what James Madison said in 1788. He was also the fourth president of the United States. He said, “We have staked the whole future of American civilization not upon the power of government, far from it. We have staked the future upon the capacity of each and all of us to govern ourselves and to sustain ourselves according to the Ten Commandments of God.” That’s what Madison said. And now you can’t even put those Ten Commandments on the classroom walls. This is not some six or seven guys saying this; this is the architect of the federal Constitution. We’ve come a long way, but we’ve come the wrong way.

William Bennett, former secretary of education, has done an index of leading cultural indicators, and he has shown since 1960 there has been a 560 percent increase in violent crime. I said, since 1960, 560 percent! There’s been more than a 400 percent increase in illegitimate births, a quadrupling in divorces, a tripling of the percentage of children living in single-parent homes, more than a 200 percent increase in the teenage suicide rate. William Bennett also said that the United States ranks near the top in the industrialized world in its rate of abortions, divorce, and unwed births. We lead the industrialized world in murder. We lead the industrialized world in rape and violent crime. And in elementary and secondary education we are at or very near the bottom in achievement scores. And yet they say, “Leave the Bible out of it; leave God out of it; leave Jesus out of it.”

I want to ask you a question: If you were driving your automobile through one of America’s inner cities at two in the morning, and your car stopped running, and you had to get out and walk for help through those darkened streets, and you saw a group of about eight teenage boys coming toward you, would you feel any better if you knew they were coming from a Bible study? I’ll guarantee you would. Friend, what are we going to do about the crime situation in America? Well, one of the things is, we need to get back to family values. We have been sold a bill of goods.

Now, go back to Genesis chapter 2 and verse 18: *“And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.”* (Genesis 2:18) God said, “It’s not good that Adam is by himself. I’m going to make a fitting helper for him.” Now here God is telling us what is good and what is not good. It is God who is saying where values are, and God’s values start with the family. *“God said, It is not good that the man should be alone.”* (Genesis 2:18) God is setting the standard for family values. And so today we’re going to look at the first family. I don’t mean Hillary and Bill. We’re going to look at the first family, Adam and Eve, and we’re going to learn what God intended from the very beginning.

Now in one sense, Adam and Eve did have a head start on us. I mean, after all, Eve couldn’t remind Adam of all the other men she could have married. And Adam couldn’t compare Eve’s cooking to his mother’s. You remember one night that Eve snuggled up to Adam and counted his ribs—you’ll get that later—she said, “Adam, do you really love me?” He said, “Who else?” You see, they had something that the rest of us didn’t have. I mean, they didn’t have any in-law problems. They didn’t have to talk about what this younger generation is coming to. But the best thing they had going for them is that God Himself taught them what it was all about. It was God that performed the first wedding in the Garden of Eden. And that’s what we’re going to look at today as we talk about “Millionaire Marriages,” because, you see, if you have a good marriage, you’re rich—no matter what other kind of earthly goods that you have—you are incredibly rich.

The three basic things this morning I want you to see as we look in this early, early part of the Word of God: I want you to see a marriage made in heaven, a marriage marred by hell, and a marriage marked by hope, okay?

I. A Marriage Made in Heaven

Now here was a marriage made in heaven. This was God’s plan. God said, “It’s not good that the man should be alone. I will make a fitting helper for him.” (Genesis 2:18)

Let me give you five reasons for marriage. Marriage did not evolve. It didn’t come up out of the swamps of immorality. It’s not a social convenience. It’s not something that men decided to do. Marriage is the basic fundamental plan of God. The home was established before the school, the church, or the government. God built marriage. God performed the first marriage there in the Garden of Eden. Let me give you the reasons why God gave Eve to Adam and why God said we can have a home like we are supposed to have.

A. God Gave Eve to Adam for Companionship

First of all, the first reason is companionship. He said, “It’s not good that man should be alone.” (Genesis 2:18) Man needs a companion. He needs somebody to share life’s sorrows and life’s joys with. Joyce and I were walking this past Friday, and it was such a

beautiful day, and the dogwoods and the azaleas were there and everything, and I was holding her hand, and I said, “Joyce, this is beautiful; it’s just beautiful.” And I said, “Sweetheart, it’s more beautiful because you’re here.”

Do you know how you can tell if you really love someone? Do you know how you can tell who you love the most? When you see something beautiful and you think of someone you wish was there to see it with you—the person that you want to be there to see it with you—that’s the person that you really love. And I said to her, I said, “Isn’t it true what they say that when you share a sorrow it is halved, and when you share a joy it’s doubled?” Isn’t that true? When you share a sorrow, it’s cut in half; and when you share a joy, it’s doubled. And God said, “It’s not good that man should be alone. I’ll make a companion.” Companionship—that’s the first reason.

B. God Gave Eve to Adam for Cooperation

The second reason is cooperation. God said, “I will make a helper, a helpmeet.” (Genesis 2:18) That means “a fitting helper.” That’s a noun, not a verb. God didn’t make Eve to help Adam pick fruit. Another man could have done that. But God gave her to encourage him, to cultivate the potential that was in him; and by doing that she cultivated the potential that was in herself for companionship, for cooperation.

C. God Gave Eve to Adam for Completion

The third reason: for completion. “I will make a helpmeet for him,” (Genesis 2:18) a fitting helper; that’s what that means. That is, something that completes him. It’s not by accident that we call our wives or our husbands “the other half.” You see, God made Adam out of the dust, but he made Eve out of Adam’s side. Why? Because there’s a part of him that’s gone, that needs to be brought back, so that they become, as it were, one flesh. *Lady, you are to be his completer, not his competitor.* You are to be together. There’s to be a synergism, a oneness, a great quality. Adam without Eve was like a violin without a bow.

D. God Gave Eve to Adam for Communication

Now here’s the fourth reason that God made marriage: not only for completion, but for communication; not simply that they could communicate with one another, but that they might communicate God to the world. Did you know the greatest testimony for the Lord Jesus Christ is not this pulpit, or any pulpit? It is your home—your home. A godly home is the greatest testimony in the world.

The Bible says that New Testament Christianity went from house to house. That doesn’t mean that somebody went down the street knocking on doors; it meant it went from my house to your house, and from that house to another house, as we have homes that model the Lord Jesus Christ. As a matter of fact, the Bible says that the Church is the bride of Christ, and being saved is like being married to the Lord Jesus.

And our Christian homes are to model that.

You know, one of the requirements for being a pastor is that he has a godly home, because, you know, if you're not doing it there, why try to export it? The whole thing is our homes communicate the love of God. God is trying to show Himself. He made them in His image. It's not your marriage; it's God's marriage. It's not your home; it's God's home. They are not your children; they are God's children. And God made a home to communicate Himself to this world.

E. God Gave Eve to Adam for Continuation

But then, not only for communication, but for continuation. How are we going to have more children if we don't have homes? How are we going to continue the human race? So God told them to be fruitful, to multiply, to replenish the earth. (Genesis 1:28) That, my friend, is why God made Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve. God made a male and a female for procreation, to continue the race. And because God wanted this, the Bible tells us, in chapter 1, verse 27, He made us male and female. (Genesis 1:27)

The differences between the sexes is God's idea. And the devil is doing everything he can do to blur the distinction between the sexes. But God made us different, why? That he might make us one. And God made those differences and put them into the very intrinsic nature of things as they are. The devil is doing all that he can do today to blur the distinction between the sexes. Big word for that: *androgyny*. That just simply means you can't tell whether it's a boy or a girl.

Sometimes I get uncomfortable going in the men's restroom when I see somebody in there, and I don't know who's who or what's what. I always look for the Adam's apple. Friend, men are supposed to be men. Women are supposed to be women. We live in a generation today that has tried to blur the distinction between the sexes.

1. Men Are More Left-Brained; Women, More Right-Brained

James Dobson, a Christian psychologist, has pointed out that even the way that boys and girls use their minds is different. Men, boys, think primarily out of the left hemisphere; women, out of the right. Men think more cognitively, and men are more given to mechanics; and women, to words. They are more verbal. Have you noticed? They are more verbal. And they ought to be. That's the way God made them.

You think about the differences between little boys and girls. You send a bunch of little boys to a birthday party; they'll rip and tear and smear the cake. And little girls will want to play games. Give a little girl a puzzle; she'll try and work it. Give a little boy a puzzle; he'll throw it across the room. Give a little girl a doll, and she'll comb its hair. Give a little boy a doll; he'll make a hammer out of it. That's true. I mean, have you ever noticed the way that girls and boys carry books? Go past a high school. You see the boys; they've got their books under their arm. They're carrying them *this way*, if they

carry them at all. The girl, she carries her books like *this*: just like she'd carry a baby. That's just a basic difference that God has made. There is a difference.

2. Man Is to Be the Provider; Woman, the Helper

Why is this? Because man is to be the provider, and woman is to be the helper. Look, if you will, in chapter 2, verse 15: *“And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and keep it.”* (Genesis 2:15) He didn't put Eve out there. He put the man out there. The man is to be the breadwinner. He is to be the supporter. He is to be the provider. Now the wife is to encourage him as he does that job. And the husband, if he's wise, will let his wife know that he appreciates that encouragement.

We live in a society now where both husband and wife often work. And as I've told you many times from this pulpit, my hat is off and my heart is out to the woman who has to work to keep bread on the table, a roof over their heads, clothes on the kids, the kids in school, and to meet the basic necessities. I understand that. And may God help you, and may God bless you, if that's the way it has to be done. But do you know the problem in America today? We have normalized that. That's not normal; that's abnormal. That is not God's plan. And your goal needs to be to get back to the normal where the husband is the breadwinner, and the mother, the wife, is the nurturer in the home.

You say, “But, Pastor Rogers, if we do that, we can't have what other people have.” Well, when you get what other people have, you'll have a lot of other things that you don't want. What I'm trying to say is this—a Greek philosopher said this, and it is so true. Listen to it. Listen to this, if you don't hear anything else. He said, “To whom little is not enough, nothing is enough.” (Epicurus) Think about that. “To whom little is not enough, nothing is enough.” (Epicurus)

3. Man Is to Be the Protector; Woman, the Nurturer

The man is to be the protector; the woman is to be the nurturer. Look, if you will, in chapter 2, verse 16: *“And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it:”* (Genesis 2:16–17) God gives the warning, not to Eve; God gives it to Adam. Why? Because Adam is to be the protector. Look in chapter 3 and verse 20: *“And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living.”* (Genesis 3:20) Man is the protector; the woman is the nurturer. She is the mother. It is the husband's job to protect the family. It is the husband's job to set limits. It is the husband's job to say, “This is right, and this is wrong, because God has said so.” He's to set limits for the children in the home. He is to have enough spiritual gumption to say *no*. And I don't mean a Tarzan *no*. But he needs to be able to say, “No, honey, this is wrong; this is right.” God made the man to do that.

The reason that Eve got in trouble in the Garden of Eden is that Adam failed. You see, how did Satan come in the Garden of Eden? Satan came in the form of a what? A snake, a serpent. Had not God given Adam dominion over all the beasts of the field? Of course he had! He gave him dominion. Adam could have been there to rebuke Satan, to drive Satan away. Adam had absolute dominion. But Adam fell down on the job. And the Bible teaches us, in Romans chapter 5 and verse 12, that God pointed the finger of blame, not at Eve, but at Adam. It was Eve that took the forbidden fruit and ate of it. But the Bible says, in Romans chapter 5, verse 12, *“By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin.”* (Romans 5:12) God didn’t look to Eve. Adam was the man that was held responsible.

4. Man Is to Be the Leader; Woman, the Responder

And then the man is to be a leader, and the woman is to be the enhancer and the responder. Men are made to lead. Look, if you will, in verse 16: *“And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat.”* (Genesis 2:16) Now he’s to take Eve out and say, “Eve, this is what God gave us. This is God’s plan for us.” It’s the man who is to take the initiative. He is to be the leader. And most women want a man that will lead. It is the man who is supposed to lead and protect and provide.

5. Men Are Physically Stronger; Women, Physically Weaker

And that’s the reason that the man is physically stronger than the woman. Now there is an equality of the sexes, so far as worth, but not an equality of physical strength. Now I know that I’m speaking in some generalities, and I know there are some women who can beat up some men. And I know that. But I’m talking, as a general rule, the man is stronger than the woman. The Bible says that. First Peter chapter 3, the Bible speaks of the woman as what? *“The weaker vessel.”* (1 Peter 3:7) And it tells husbands to give *“honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel.”* (1 Peter 3:7)

Now that doesn’t mean the inferior vessel. What’s more fragile, a porcelain dish or your pressure cooker? Which is more valuable? The porcelain dish. But the pressure cooker is made for that pressure, right? What’s more fragile: blue denim or silk? Silk is more fragile, but it’s more beautiful, more delicate. I’m not saying, because the man is physically stronger, that he’s superior; but he is physically stronger. Why? Because God made him to dig and to shovel and to hoe and to work and to protect. God gave that man that strong outer frame. Why did God make a woman delicate and fragile and beautiful? Because she’s made to nurture. She’s made to love. She’s made to cuddle. She’s made to kiss. She’s made to soothe. That’s what mamas are for.

And the devil is trying to obliterate all of that. The devil is trying to destroy all that. One of the dumbest things, most stupid things, most asinine things, is women in

combat. That's stupid: to put women in combat. There may be a few women who want to go to combat, but she's sinning against her God-given instincts if she does.

The Jews tried that; the Israeli army tried that back in 1948. They put women in combat when they were fighting for their independence. They took young women and put them in the front lines. After a few days, they said, "Get the women off the front lines as quickly as you can." Do you know why? Two reasons. Number one: The Israeli soldiers were taking chances they ought not to take, to protect the women. Number two: The Arabs were fighting stronger than ever because they made up their mind they weren't going to be defeated by women. And there was more carnage and bloodshed with the women there, on both sides, than there would have been without the women.

Did you know in the Bible when God speaks of His judgment on a nation, that one of the things He says about His judgment on a nation is, God said, "I'll make their soldiers like women"? That was the judgment of God. God says, "I'll make the soldiers like women." Women are not made for the battlefield. Men are made for the battlefield. That's the reason why God gives a man a harder outer shell.

6. Men Are Goal Oriented; Women, Security Oriented

Men are goal oriented. Women are security oriented.

A man may come home and tell his wife, "Guess what I did? I bought a franchise. We're moving in three weeks." She says, "You what?" "We're going to make a lot of money." She starts to cry. He thinks she didn't understand, so he explains it to her again. This time she doesn't cry; she chews him out. When he says that, her first thought was, "The kids have got to finish school. What about the dental appointments? What about the cheerleading contest?" I mean, "What about the flowers she just set out?" I mean, she thinks these things. Why? Because God gave her a nesting, a nurturing, instinct. That's the way she is. He's goal oriented. That's the way he is. And if he's smart, before he begins to talk to her about all that, he'll talk to her about the plans that he's made for her security and all of this, because her home is a part of her.

You see, a man's work is an extension of himself. A woman's home is an extension of herself. And so, many women think that the man is married to another woman just because he puts his job first, and she says, "That job is like another woman." But that's an extension of himself. And he wonders why she can't make these moves and why she can't understand all of this, because God gave her a nesting, nurturing instinct. And, mister, don't destroy that. She wants to create beauty.

Did you know how she can tell whether you love her or not? One of the ways is, will you just come home and fix something broken at the house? She'd rather see you fix it than pay to have it fixed. Why? Because that means you care. When her house is cluttered, her life is cluttered. The home—that's her—that's Mama.

7. Men Tend to Think More Logically; Women, More Emotionally

Now men tend to think more logically. Women tend to think more emotionally. Now I didn't say women were not logical. Don't jump me after this, lady, because, really, I'm bragging on you right now. But I am saying this, that God gave women something. We call it what? Women's intuition. Women know what's going on without knowing what's going on. And they can help you, mister.

If you're like a nuclear sub, she's like a sonar. She just says, "Hey, I'll tell you where these things are." And you'd be wise to listen to her if she picks up on things. But the problem is, she won't express it the way you want her to express it. You'll want her to give you reasons, and she may not be able to give you those reasons. And that will frustrate you. You see, she may express it emotionally, and you'll want her to give it to you logically. And so what you have to do is translate and pray, pray, pray that you can understand that. You know, Joyce has actually said to me, "Don't listen to what I say; listen to what I mean." I said, "I'm trying." And that's not to say that what she's saying is not right. As a matter of fact, that's a great gift that God gives. God puts us together. God made us different that He might make us one.

Therefore men are accused of being insensitive. Your wife ever accuse you of being insensitive? Ha! Have you ever accused your wife of being too sensitive? Of course! That's just the nature of the thing. I'm not saying that it's an asset to be too sensitive or insensitive. But man is made for the jungle. He's made for the farm. He's made for *out there*. She's made for *in here*.

8. Men Tend to Be Less Trusting; Women, More Trusting

Women tend to be more trusting. Why? Because they nurture, they love. They don't see the faults in their children. They don't see the faults in their husband. They overlook them. Men, because they are the defender, the protector, the provider, they don't trust as easily.

I may have told you this, but back during Desert Storm when Saddam Hussein was out there doing all of his stuff, boy, in every airport they said, "You cannot leave your cars parked. Cars parked over so much time will be towed away. Do not leave bags unattended. Bags unattended will be taken away. Do not deliver presents for anyone. Do not watch anyone's bag." Over and over again in the airport these announcements were being made.

Joyce and I were sitting in the Charlotte Airport. I was reading. After a while, she came over to me; she said, "Adrian, what should I do? There was a young man who left a suitcase for me to watch." And she said, "He's been gone such a long time. Adrian, what do you think I ought to do?" I said, "What?" She said, "Yeah, a young man." I said, "Well, who was he?" She said, "I don't know." I said, "Where'd he go?" "I don't know." "He what?" "Yeah, the suitcase, it's right there," she said. "He just left it, said, would I

watch it; he'd be back." I said, "Joyce, you've got to be kidding." I said, "Haven't you heard all of this that's being announced over and over again?" "Well," she said, "but he was such a nice-looking young man."

I went to the desk. The man said, "That's a no-no, mister." I said, "I know it. Tell her." They went and got that bag and got it out of there. Whatever happened to it, I don't know—maybe no harm. But I'm just saying that my wife is so sweet and so loving and so trusting. That's the reason I have to be so ornery. God made us that way. God built us that way.

Don't you ever let anybody blur the line between the sexes. Which is the most important? Which is the best? Neither—neither! God made Adam and Eve in His image, but He didn't make us alike. He made us different that He might make us one. She needs me and I need her, and together we are, therefore, companionship and completion and continuation. That's why God gave us the family, the basic unit of society.

II. A Marriage Marred by Hell

Now this first family—and I'm just going to tick off the last two points because, obviously, you haven't listened very fast—it was a marriage made in heaven. It was a marriage marred by hell. Satan came into the Garden of Eden. And I want to say this, that Satan has leveled the most fiery darts against your home. Satan knows if he can hurt you at home, he can hurt you all over. Isn't that true? And sorrow and suffering came in because they turned away from God's original plan.

III. A Marriage Marked by Hope

But I want to say one last word: Not only was it a marriage made in heaven, and not only was it a marriage marred by hell, but it was a marriage marked by hope. In Genesis chapter 3, verse 15, God gave the first prophecy of the Savior. God said, "There's a Savior coming. There's someone coming, a descendant of the woman, who will crush the serpent's head." (Genesis 3:15) That's the first prophecy in the Bible of Jesus. The theologians call that the *protevangelium*. That means "the first evangelistic message."

A Savior is coming, and His name is Jesus. And He's the glue that puts your home back together. Jesus is. Do you know where Jesus performed His first miracle? At a wedding—at a wedding. (John 2: 1–11) That's significant to me, because Jesus can take the water of your disappointment and turn it into the wine of His joy, if you'll let Him. Jesus is in the miracle business. A true marriage is a union of a man, a woman, and Jesus Christ. Oh, the joys, the wonders, the bliss of a godly home!

Conclusion

Do you want a Christian home? You can have one. But you can't have a Christian home without Christians any more than you could have a cherry pie without cherries. You want a Christian home? It begins with giving your heart to Jesus Christ.

Now, let me say another word. There are some of you here today who can't have a home like I've preached about. Maybe you're widowed—you say, "I just don't feel led to get married again." Or maybe at this point you're divorced and have a broken home. Or maybe one day you might have a home, but you're single right now. Or maybe you have a home, but you're away from home. Well, let me say something. God has another family, and that's your church family. Isn't that wonderful? That's the reason we call this church "A Family of Friends."

And so if you need a family, and you can't have the kind of family I've been preaching about this morning—and not everybody will have; but thank God, we can have a church family, a family of friends—and so if you need that, what we call that nuclear family, Jesus is the key to that. Or if you need a church family, oh, you're so welcome here! That's the reason we've just expanded the ministry of our church. That's the reason we've taken this slogan, "Bellevue: A Family of Friends." We will welcome you into this family, this bigger family, this family of friends.

Wedding Bells in Eden

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: February 22, 1981

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 2:18–25

“And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.”

GENESIS 2:23–24

Outline

Introduction

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Introduction

Take your Bibles, please, and turn to Genesis chapter 2, and let's begin reading in verse 18—Genesis chapter 2, verse 18. We're talking to you today about marriage and the miracle of marriage. And today, we're going to be studying about the first family—and not Ronald and Nancy. We're going to be talking about Adam and Eve. And how exciting it's going to be as we look at “Wedding Bells in Eden”!

“And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the

field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him. And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he”—that is, God—“took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.” (Genesis 2:18–25)

Now theirs was a very wonderful home, and in some ways they may have had some advantages over us, besides the beautiful garden in which they lived. For example, Adam never did have to listen to Eve say, “You were not the only man I could have married.” Not only that, Eve never had to listen to Adam say, “Now when I was a boy.” Not only that, Adam never had to complain about, “What is this younger generation coming to?” At least not yet, he’s not had to complain. Nor did Eve have to worry about Adam saying, “Why don’t you cook like my mother used to?”

As a matter of fact, I heard about one young couple—he was complaining, and he said to her, “Why don’t you make biscuits like my mother used to?” She said, “Why don’t you bring home dough like my daddy used to?”

Well, it must have been wonderful there in the Garden of Eden, the first family, Adam and Eve, there as they were enjoying all of the wonderful things that God had put there in the garden. But I want us to look at this passage of Scripture that I’ve just read to you from Genesis chapter 2, beginning in verse 18, and I want us to study it, basically, under three headings. I want you to see, first of all, a marriage made by heaven; secondly, I’d like for you to see a marriage marred by hell; and thirdly, a marriage marked by hope. I believe we see all of those things here in this passage.

I. A Marriage Made by Heaven

First of all, I want you to see a marriage made by heaven. Now, you see, up until this time we’ve been studying about the creation. And God has been making all of the wonderful, glorious things that He’s made. And after God makes these things, God says, “And it was good”—“And it was good.” And it was very good. But now we read something very strange here. We read in verse 18, “*And the LORD God said, It is not good*”—what is not good?—“*it is not good that the man should be alone.*” (Genesis 2:18)

A. God Planned a Bride for Adam

And so, first of all, I want you to see that God planned a bride for Adam—God planned a bride for Adam. “*It is not good that...man should be alone*”—and so God said, “*I will make him an help meet for him.*” (Genesis 2:18) Now, let me give you several reasons

why God planned this bride for Adam:

1. For Companionship

First of all, he planned a bride for Adam for companionship. *“It is not good that the man should be alone.”* (Genesis 2:18) And Adam needed a companion. He needed someone like him, someone he could share with, someone he could enjoy all of the bountiful blessings of God with. And I want to say as a testimony, there is no greater fellowship and no greater companionship than that of a husband and wife loving one another, and loving God, and enjoying the things of God together. I believe that a Christian home is the nearest thing to heaven. And I’m so grateful for my Christian home and for my darling Christian wife that God has given to me for a companion.

2. For Cooperation

God planned a bride for Adam, number one: for companionship. But number two: He planned a bride for Adam for cooperation, for He says, *“It is not good that...man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.”* (Genesis 2:18) But actually the word *help* is a noun: “I will make a helper for him.” Now, what kind of a helper was she to be? What kind of a helper did he need? Now God didn’t make someone to help him pick fruit.

If God had wanted that kind of a helper, he could have gotten another man who perhaps would have done a better job than she. He wanted someone who could help Adam to maximize his strengths and gifts, someone who would help him to be all that he could be, to reach his full potential, to strengthen him. And that’s the kind of a helper she was to be to him.

Somebody told me in my early ministry: “You ought to thank God for your wife, because a wife is to a husband and to a preacher what a wind is to a fire: She can fan it up or blow it out.” And that is so true, but it’s not just true about the ministry; it’s true about all of us. Our wives can give us strength and help, or else they can drag us down. The wife is to be a helper, not a hinderer.

3. For Completion

But not only was Eve given to Adam for companionship, and not only was she given to him for cooperation, but she was also given to him for completion. Now this word—“I will make for him an help meet”(Genesis 2:18)—that is, a fitting help, someone that will meet a specific need. Now God says that Eve was taken out of the side of Adam. That is, there was a part of him that was missing that he wanted to get back. Have you ever heard a man say about his wife, “She just completes me,” or “I’m not myself without her”? That’s the way it ought to be because that’s the way God intended.

You see, a husband without his wife would be like a violin without a bow. But together, they can make beautiful music.

And that's the way God has intended; that's the way God wants it. We talk about our wives as the "better half" or the "other half." Sometimes they talk about us as the "bitter half." And we are incomplete. And we do that sometimes whimsically, talking about the "better half" or the "other half." But actually there's a lot of truth in that, for God made the woman to complete the man. And so, *lady, you are to be his completer, not his competer.* You are to complete him, but you're not to finish him off.

4. For Communication

And so God gave the woman to the man for companionship. God gave the woman to the man for cooperation. God gave the woman to the man for completion. I believe there's another reason that God gave the woman to the man, and it is for communication. I believe—and we're going to see here—not that they just might communicate with one another—I'm not talking about that; that would come under the heading of companionship—but that they might communicate to all creation a principle. I believe that this home, this first home, in the Garden of Eden is meant to picture Christ and the Church—Christ and the Church. And the Bible tells us that in Ephesians chapter 5. And I don't believe there's anything that brings a better message to this world of the love of God, or what God really intended, than a Christian home that communicates those wonderful values.

You see, God had a purpose here, and He used Adam and Eve as a figure, as we're going to see later on, of Christ and the Church. And so that tells us something, that it is God's marriage in God's home, not your marriage in your home. Sometimes we get the idea that it's our home, and we're going to ask God to help us a little bit. You know, if your marriage is not running smoothly, you can just add a little God, like God's a little heavenly STP that you put in the crankcase to make your marriage run a little more smoothly. No, that's not the idea at all. Listen, dear friend. It is His home, His marriage, His children. It belongs to Him. And it is to communicate to the world what God is like and to reflect to the world what God's plan for the world is. And so God here planned a bride for Adam.

B. God Provided a Bride for Adam

But not only did God plan a bride for Adam, in verse 18, but God provided a bride for Adam, beginning in verse 19. Look at this: *"And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet"*(Genesis 2:18–20)—that is, "a help suitable for him."

Now, why, in the middle of this desire for Adam to have a bride in God's heart, do we

have the naming of the animals? Because God wanted to inculcate the desire in Adam's heart. God knew exactly what He was doing. So He said to Adam, "Adam, I've got a job for you. I want you to name all of these creatures." Well, I'm sure that was a very exciting thing. And so Adam had a great, tremendous mind. And so he starts to name the creatures. And here the Lord parades them along, and here comes some tall creature with a great long neck and spots all over him nibbling the leaves. Adam looked at him, stroked his chin, and said, "Hmm, that looks like a giraffe to me. Giraffe, you're a giraffe." And so that was a giraffe. And then, you know, Jack Taylor said some of them were easy to name. For example, a hippopotamus—what else would you call a hippopotamus but a hippopotamus? He just looks like a hippopotamus. And so obviously that's a hippopotamus. And a skunk—my goodness, that's easy. Anybody can tell that's a skunk. Oh, skunk. And so he named a skunk a skunk, and he named the giraffe a giraffe. And he named the hippopotamus a hippopotamus, and he gave names to all of the animals there in the Garden of Eden.

But then Adam got to doing a little thinking. He says, "You know, that giraffe is interesting, but I wouldn't like to live with a giraffe all of my life. He's got too long a neck, and somehow he just doesn't, you know..." "A hippopotamus, he..." "I just don't think I would enjoy fellowship with a hippopotamus or a skunk. No, that's not for me." And Adam is not finding someone suitable for him. And he notices something else as he names all of these creatures. He notices that for Mr. Giraffe there's Mrs. Giraffe; and he notices for Mr. Hippopotamus there's Mrs. Hippopotamus, although she doesn't like to be called by that name. And then for Mr. Skunk there is Mrs. Skunk. But he gets to thinking, "You know, there is no Mrs. Adam." And God is working on Adam. And first thing you know Adam has this longing, this desire in his heart, and so now God is ready. And God performs the first surgical operation. The Bible tells us that God caused a deep sleep to come upon Adam.

Incidentally, the man who discovered chloroform, Sir James Simpson, got his inspiration for chloroform from this verse. It used to be when they'd operate on people, they'd just give them a bullet to bite on, a stick or something, a slug of some whiskey or narcotic to dull them, and then they'd start to carve away. And can you imagine that? But that's what they did. Sir James Simpson said there ought to be a more humanitarian way to do that, and he read this passage of Scripture where God caused a deep sleep to come upon Adam, and Simpson said, "That's the way to do it." And he was able to develop chloroform, which, of course, later on, they developed other things that are even better than that. But that's very interesting. And here God is performing this surgery, and He makes an incision in the side of Adam. And He takes out a rib, and from that rib He fashions a woman and presents her to Adam. Now God provided this bride for Adam, and He made this woman.

Now, let me say that God made a man to be a man, and God made a woman to be a woman. And in the chapter that we just studied prior, the Bible says He “made them in the beginning male and female.” (Matthew 19:4; Genesis 1:27) And that’s the way God wants it. Now we’ve got some people today who are trying to obliterate the line between male and female. They’re wanting to have she-men and he-women, but that’s not God’s plan. God “made them in the beginning male and female.” (Matthew 19:4; Genesis 1:27) And there is a difference, friend, between a man and a woman.

Now some people try to tell you that there is not a difference. There’s a difference biologically. Women were fashioned for having babies, not for fighting wars. I don’t mean that’s the only thing they can do, but I’m saying their body is physiologically adapted for certain things and not physiologically adapted for others. And there’s a difference psychologically.

And now there are those today who tell us that boys are only different from girls because boys are given little trucks and tractors to play with as children, and little girls are given little baby dolls to play with and so forth. But if you just give the dolls to the boys and the tractors to the girls, everything would be all right. But some of those people were chagrined the other day when a psychologist found out that actually there is an innate difference—there is psychological difference—in the mind of the male and the female. I’m not saying one is superior, one is inferior. I’m just saying they are different. And, dear friend, men and women are equal, but men and women are not the same. And sameness and equality are not the same. That didn’t make sense, did it? All right, there’s a difference between men and women, and I am glad there’s a difference.

I tell you, if Joyce was just like me, I wouldn’t be at all interested in her. It’s the difference. You know, if I had to run my hairy cheek up against her hairy cheek, I’d say, “Forget it.” I’d say, “Vive la difference.” Now there is a difference. Thank God for the difference. You see, a woman is different psychologically. They just think different.

Somebody said that a man will pay two dollars for a one-dollar item that he needs; a woman will pay one dollar for a two-dollar item she doesn’t need—just the difference.

Someone said concerning a woman,

*Oh, the shrewdness of their shrewdness, when they’re shrewd,
And the rudeness of their rudeness when they’re rude;
But the shrewdness of their shrewdness, and the rudeness of their rudeness,
Are as nothing to their goodness when they’re good.*

And then he went on to say,

*Oh, the gladness of their gladness when they’re glad,
And the sadness of their sadness when they’re sad;
But the gladness of their gladness, and the sadness of their sadness,
Are as nothing to their badness when they’re bad.*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

And that's a woman. And a man—we could say many things about a man:

*As a rule, man's a fool.
When it's hot, he wants it cool.
When it's cool, he wants it hot,
Always wanting what is not.
As a rule, man's a fool.*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

But God just took man and woman there in the Garden of Eden, and God made them different. And the reason that God made them different is that God wanted to make them one. And it is the difference that makes the difference. God brought them together there in the Garden of Eden. And so out of Adam's side God fashioned a woman.

C. **God Presented a Bride to Adam**

So God planned a bride for Adam. God provided a bride for Adam. And then God presented a bride to Adam, for the Bible says that He brought her to the man. Look, if you will, here—and the Bible says in verse 22: *“And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman,”*—now, notice this next phrase because later on it's going to be a blessing to you—*“and brought her unto the man.”* (Genesis 2:22) Now the Lord made this woman, and He just fashioned her. Actually, the Bible says He built her. And then when she's complete, when He's finished—off in His workshop somewhere, and God had finished—then He said, “Adam, I've got a surprise for you.” And He brought her to Adam. And this was the first wedding.

You talk about a wedding! Wedding bells in Eden! What kind of a wedding must this have been! I don't know exactly all that took place. I can just imagine the cathedral of the skies, and the canopy of the trees, and all of the flower-strewn hillsides that decorated that wedding chapel of eternity as God the Father presented the bride. Can't you see God the Father with Eve on His arm as He's walking toward Adam? And Adam sees them coming, and Adam sees Eve for the very first time. I don't know everything that went through Adam's mind, but I do know whether or not he liked it, for I want you to notice in verse 23, *“And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and [she is] flesh of my flesh.”*(Genesis 2:23)

Now that doesn't sound very romantic, and that doesn't sound like he's really excited. It sounds like he's thinking about anatomy. But, you see, you miss it a little bit. This is a Hebrew expletive. And I'm glad it's not deleted. What he said—this now, roughly translated, is “Hot diggity dog!” That's really what he said. He really says, “Wow!” when he saw her. It's an expression of excitement and joy. “This is it!” is what he really said. “That's what I've been looking for! I was looking all over for her. Lord,

that's the one! She is for me! Thank you, Lord. And she is so much like me. She is bone of my bone. She is flesh of my flesh. She's not like all of these other creatures. That's the one I wanted."

And the Lord planned a bride for Adam. The Lord provided a bride for Adam. And the Lord presented a bride to Adam. And God Himself performed that first wedding ceremony there in the Garden of Eden. And how wonderful it was! And He gave her to Adam to nourish her and to cherish her, the Bible tells us in Ephesians chapter 5. To nourish means to "build up," and to "give strength to," and to "take care of." And to cherish means to "tenderly watch over" and to "love."

What does all of this tell us? All of this tells us, dear friend, that marriage is a divine institution. And Moses, who wrote this, said, "*Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.*" (Genesis 2:24) This is the interpretation of what is happening. What he is saying is that marriage is a divinely ordained, a divinely planned, institution. Marriage came before the church. Marriage came before the government. It is the basic unit and institution of society. And it is not something that was developed over the ages as man came up from the slime of the swamp and evolved, as some think. We don't believe in that. We believe there was one man and one woman placed in the Garden of Eden, and God performed the marriage. And marriage is not some evolution from the swamp of immorality. It is a God-given, God-planned, God-ordained institution. And thank God for that!

And the Bible says, in Matthew chapter 19 and verse 6, "*Wherefore they are no more [two], but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.*" (Matthew 19:6) The Bible says that God hates divorce—God hates divorce. Divorce is a crime against God. God hates it. And you say, "Brother Rogers, you better be careful. You're preaching to some folks who have been divorced." I know it—I know it. And those people would stand by my side and say, "Preacher, preach it! And tell them—tell them—the heartache. Tell them the anguish. Tell them, Preacher." I'm not here to condemn. I'm not here to point a finger at those who have failed. But I am here to tell you that God has a plan, and God's plan is one man for one woman till death do them part! And "*what therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.*" (Matthew 19:6; Mark 10:9) Marriage is a divine institution. It was ordained of God in the Garden of Eden. And, oh, how careful we ought to be!

Surely God forgives, and He will forgive you no matter what has happened to your home. God is a merciful God. And *I know that some of you can't put things back together like perhaps you'd like, because you can't unscramble eggs.* I understand that. You just take your life as it is right now and give it to Him, and say, "Lord, I've put the past beneath your blood, and I want to go from here." But I'm speaking for some of you who are not yet married. You'd better pray. You'd better seek the will of God and find

the will of God. God, who prepared a bride for Adam, God has prepared a bride for you, if He wants you to be married. And you'd better take the one that God prepares and the one that God presents to you. And the way that God will do it is you walk in the stream of the Spirit by prayer. I believe, if we had a lot more prayer, we'd have a whole lot fewer divorces, and there'd be some marriages we wouldn't have, if people were praying—I mean, on the front end, if they'd pray ahead of time.

Now, remember also that God doesn't intend for everybody to get married. The Bible says that celibacy is a gift that God gives to some people—a gift. And there's a single life, a life of purity and chastity, that God has ordained and God has planned. And there are a whole lot of worse things than not being married. Number one on the list is being married to the wrong person. You find God's will for your life and walk in the stream of God's will. Here was a marriage made by heaven! Marriage is ordained of God.

II. A Marriage Marred by Hell

The second thing I want you to see that we learn today: Not only was this a marriage made by heaven, but it was a marriage marred by hell. For the devil has done all he can do to wreck our homes. For the devil knows that if he can wreck our homes, he can wreck our churches. The devil knows that if he can wreck our homes, he can wreck our nation. And the devil knows that the basic unit of society, as I've already said, is the home. And so he's leveled his fieriest darts, he has put all of the artillery of hell, against the home. We would expect him to do so, because when you are hurt at home, you are really hurt. So the devil started to mar this home that God had made. And I want you to see what he did.

Now I'm not going to preach at length on chapter 3, because we're going to save that, and we're going to talk about this. But I want you to just begin here in chapter 3, and let's read the first six verses: *“Now the serpent”—that is, the one who is literally the devil—“was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as [God], knowing [what is] good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.”* (Genesis 3:1–6)

A. Selfishness

Now, what did the devil do? Here I want you to see what happened to this home. The

first step is selfishness. Here Eve sees something that tantalizes her, something that was pleasant to look upon—something that satisfied the aesthetic senses that she had—and something that was good to taste—something that satisfied the sensual senses that she had, something that satisfied her viscera. And it was desired to make one wise—something that titillated and tickled her intellect. And she said, “I’d like that; I want that.” And she took it, not thinking of God, not thinking of Adam, but thinking of self. First of all, there was selfishness.

I have counseled and counseled and counseled with hundreds of people whose homes have gone on the rocks, and I would dare say, in at least ninety percent of the cases, the root cause is selfishness. And another word for selfishness is immaturity—big babies. Do you know what the mark of a baby is? “Me.” “Mine.” Give a little baby some candy and try to get a piece. “Mine.” “Mine.” “Me first.” Selfishness, immaturity. Here’s what happened to Eve here: She was overcome with selfishness. How many homes in Memphis, Tennessee, have been ruined by selfishness as those people have taken the forbidden fruit of immorality, or drugs, or alcohol, or pride, or whatever it is—that me-first attitude!

B. Shame

Then after selfishness comes shame. Look, if you will, please, in verse 7—chapter 3, verse 7: *“And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.”* (Genesis 3:7) Well, up until this time they weren’t ashamed. Go back to chapter 2 and look at verse 25: *“And they were both naked, the man and [the woman], and were not ashamed.”* (Genesis 2:25) Why were they not ashamed? Well, because they had a particular kind of covering. They were clothed with glory, and they were clothed with holiness, and they were clothed with light. I want to give you a scripture here for your margin—Psalm 104, verse 2. It speaks of God, and it speaks of God in these terms: *“Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment.”* (Psalms 104:2) God wears a robe of light like a garment.

Do you remember when the Lord Jesus Christ was transfigured, and Jesus was clothed and bathed with light? And there was not the physical clothes that they saw, but the Shekinah glory of God that enshrined the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe that in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve—and that companionship and that innocence that they had—walked there in robes of glory and robes of light that they lost by sin. And instead of this glory, they had a shame, because shame follows sin just like night follows day.

C. Separation

First of all, there was selfishness. Then there was shame. And then there was separation—separation from God. And because of separation from God, there was separation one from the other. Notice in verse 12 now. God is remonstrating with Adam

about his sin, but notice what Adam says in verse 12—chapter 3, verse 12: *“And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.”* (Genesis 3:12) Can you imagine him speaking of his wife that way: “the woman thou gavest me”? I can see him as he points the finger of blame and the finger of accusation. It’s almost as if he said, “I wish I’d never met her. She caused me all this trouble”—the one that he’s supposed to cherish, the one that he’s supposed to nourish, the one he’s supposed to love.

D. **Sorrow**

Now because selfishness has come, then separation, and sin has come to separate a man and his wife—selfishness, shame, separation, and then sorrow—it always follows that way. Continue to read here in the third chapter, and look, if you will, in verses 16 and 17: *“Unto the woman [God] said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.”* (Genesis 3:16) Look, if you will, in verse 17: *“And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life.”* (Genesis 3:17) And the gladness and the felicity and the joy of Eden has turned to sorrow!

And before long, with salty, bitter tears, they are going to look down upon the grave of their son Abel, who was slain by Cain. Sin has come. Yes, their eyes are open. They know the knowledge of good and evil, but they know it in a strange way. They know good by its absence; they know evil by its presence and its power. They know things that they wish they had never learned. And the devil did his best to wreck that first home. And I want to tell you, the devil is doing his best to wreck your home. Oh, if we could only understand it! *Jesus is the greatest home builder, and the devil is the greatest home wrecker.*

III. **A Marriage Marked by Hope**

Here was a marriage made by heaven. Here was a marriage marred by hell. But one last thing: Here was a marriage marked by hope. And I’m glad I can tell you that. I can tell you, dear friend, that our God is a God of hope and grace and forgiveness. Now there are many places we find it here in the early chapters of Genesis, but I just want to go back to some ground that we’ve already covered. Look back in chapter 2 again and see how God made the woman. Now, notice the Bible says, in verse 21, *“And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.”* (Genesis 2:21–22) Now, friend, there’s often more in the Bible than we see on the surface. This is literal history,

but it is also what we call a type or a figure of something even more wonderful. It is a picture, whether you can see it or not right now, of Christ and the Church.

Now the Bible tells us that Adam was a type of the Lord Jesus Christ, or a figure, or an Old Testament picture, of the Lord Jesus Christ. In Romans chapter 5, verse 14, the Bible says that Adam was a “*figure of him that was to come*”—of Jesus. That’s the reason we call Jesus the “second Adam from above” in that Christmas carol: “Second Adam from above, Reinstate us in thy love.” Adam in the Garden of Eden—the first Adam; the Lord Jesus Christ—the last Adam, the second man—the Lord Jesus Christ. The first man was a picture, an Old Testament revelation, of what the last One was going to be like in some ways.

And Eve, the Bible teaches us, is a picture, a symbol, of the Church because the Church is the bride of Christ. And just as Eve was a bride to Adam, the Church is a bride to the Lord Jesus Christ. And how did Adam receive his bride? Adam was put into a deep sleep, and from his wounded side, with bloodshed, was a bride brought forth.

That’s a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, who died upon the cross. And they put that spear into His side, and out came water and blood. But from the wounded side of the Lord Jesus Christ, His Church has come—His Church has come.

And there’s a very interesting thing: The Bible says that God made the woman. (Genesis 2:22) The Hebrew word there literally is that God *built* the woman. Now you say, “What’s the difference?” Well, the Bible says that He’s now building His Church. Do you see the similarity? Do you see the figure? Do you see the type? Do you know what God is doing right now? Do you know what God is about right now? Even as I am preaching this message, do you know what God is doing? God, from the wounded side of the Lord Jesus Christ, is building for the Savior a bride.

And that’s what I’m about today: I am helping the Father as He in me is building the bride, trying to bring you to Jesus, because, you see, one of these days, that last person is going to be saved. One of these days, that last boy, that last girl, that last man, that last woman, is going to walk the aisle of this church, or some church somewhere, or somehow, somewhere, someplace; he or she is going to say an everlasting yes to Jesus Christ, and God will say, “That’s it. The bride is complete. I have built a bride for my Son!”

And then, do you know what’s going to happen? Just as Adam had the bride presented to him, Jesus is going to have the bride presented to Him. That’s when God says, “That last soul has been saved. It is done!” And God the Father is going to present to God the Son, the bride.

I wonder if the last soul will be saved this morning. I wonder—I wonder—if the last person will come down that aisle this morning, and God will say, “That’s it! Gabriel, sound your trumpet! I’m going to present to my Son a bride taken from His wounded

side.”

You say, “Well, that sounds good, but you seem to me like you made all that up.” Oh, no, I didn’t. Turn to Ephesians 5, and we’ll be finished. Look, if you will, please, for just a moment—I want you to see the wonderful, wonderful truth. Ephesians 5:25: *“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church,”*—you see, the Church is the bride of Christ—*“and gave himself for it;”*—that is, Jesus slept the deeper sleep of death than Adam. Jesus literally died. He gave Himself for it—*“that he might sanctify it and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church,”*—that’s when the Church is going to be presented to the Lord Jesus—*“not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church.”* (Ephesians 5:25–29)—the Lord is nourishing you and cherishing you.

Now, notice verse 30: *“For we are members of his body,”*—we Christians are members of Jesus’ Body—*“of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”* (Ephesians 5:30–32) What happened to Adam and Eve there in the Garden of Eden is a picture of Christ and the Church.

Conclusion

And what does all of this mean? Bottom line, friend: There is a Redeemer; there is a Savior who died in agony and blood. And whatever condition you find yourself in, I want to tell you, He loves you and He died for your sins. You may have failed at home. You may not have failed home; you may have failed somewhere else. But I want to tell you, our God is a God of love. And I want to tell you, dear friend, that your marriage and your life can be marked by hope. And that hope is that Jesus died for you and that He forgives our sins. And *“though [our] sins be as scarlet, they [may] be as white as snow.”* (Isaiah 1:18)

Do you know the first miracle that Jesus ever performed? Do you want me to tell you where it was? The first miracle that Jesus ever performed was at a wedding, when He turned water into wine. (John 2:1–11) And I want to tell you, dear friend, that Jesus can perform a miracle in your home. And Jesus can turn disunity into harmony and give you, rather than the water of disappointment, the joy of the wine of His presence.

Celebrate the Difference

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: April 21, 1996

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 2:19–25

*“And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh:
she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.”*

GENESIS 2:23

Outline

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Conclusion

Introduction

Would you be finding in God’s Word, please, the book of Genesis chapter 2, and in a moment I am going to begin reading in verse 19—Genesis chapter 2 and verse 19. We’re under this heading: “One Lord, One Love: Building Intimate Marriages.”

I am told that an angel came to Adam before Eve was ever created and said to Adam, “Adam, I have a proposition for you. We’re going to craft for you an individual.” He said, “What?” “An individual: someone like you, but different.” “Oh? What will it be like?” “Well, it’s going to be a *she*.” “A *she*. Well, what will she do?” “Well, when you come in from tending the garden, she’ll be there at the door, beautifully adorned. She’ll smell so sweet; she’ll open her arms, give you a big hug, and bring you in. She’ll kiss you, and she’ll bring your newspaper to you. She’ll bring some slippers for you, and she’ll massage your shoulders. Then she’ll have a wonderful meal there. Afterwards, she’ll do the dishes, and then she’ll just come and sit at your feet, look up at you, and be ready to do anything you want her to do.” He said, “Well, that sounds wonderful! What’s that going to cost me?” And the angel said, “That’s going to cost you a right arm and a leg.” “Oh, what do you think I could get for just a rib?”

I want to ask you a question. Who is better: the man or the woman? The answer to

that question is yes. A man is infinitely superior to a woman at being a man, and a woman is infinitely superior to a man at being a woman. God made us different that He might make us one. Never forget it. Neither is superior to the other, but we are very, very different.

Begin to read with me in the Word of God here, chapter 2 and verse 19: *“And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him. And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.”* (Genesis 2:19–25)

Now Adam has named the animals, but he’s looking for a mate, evidently. He has a certain loneliness about him, and none of the animals seemed to fit. And then God makes for Adam this woman that he called Eve. When Adam saw her, what did he say? Really, it loses something in translation. He says, “This is bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh.” (Genesis 2:23) Now, what did he mean by that: “This is bone of my bone; this is flesh of my flesh”? What he is saying is, she is not another animal; she has a skeletal structure like me. This is bone of my bone. She doesn’t have the kind of protoplasm that the animals have. This is flesh of my flesh. What he was saying—he’s been looking at all of the animals and they are so different, and then he looks at her—he says, “I like that. This is bone of my bone. This is flesh of my flesh. She is like me.”

And by the way, the book of Genesis is the seedbed of so much great truth. If you want to know what God’s pattern for the home is, right here you are going to see it. God made someone like Adam. He was not supposed to cohabit with the beasts, and that tells us that bestiality is a sin against Almighty God. God made a woman, not a man, for Adam. That tells us that homosexuality is a sin against God. We heard it well said, “It’s Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve.” God made a woman. Homosexuality is not God’s plan, and I don’t believe that Adam would have been very excited if another man showed up there. He’d just as soon hug a barrel of pickles. This was a woman and only one woman. He didn’t give Adam two. That tells us that polygamy is a sin against God. God’s plan is one man and one woman together till death do them part. So God presented this woman to Adam, and when Adam saw her, he said, “I like her! She is like

me. This is bone of my bone. This is flesh of my flesh.” (Genesis 2:23)

But not only did he like her because she was like him; he liked her because she was not like him. There was a difference, and a very real difference, and it’s that difference that we’re going to talk about. You know that Joyce and I are a lot alike, but Joyce and I are very different. As a matter of fact, they say the more people live together, the more they become alike. They even begin to look alike. And Joyce is getting very concerned.

Friend, we are different as well as alike. And I want to talk to you about the wonderful differences between male and female. It’s these differences, believe it or not, that don’t divide us. It’s these differences that unite us. God made us different that He might make us one. I’m going to give you some differences between men and women today, and these are more than mere psychological proclivities. These are there by divine design.

Now some of you are going to come up and say, “Well, my husband”—or “my wife”—“we’re not different.” “My wife”—or “my husband”—“we’re not different in that particular area.” Well, you may not be. What I’m going to give you today are generalities. For example, let me give you a generality. Automobiles have fenders. But not every automobile has fenders, okay? You say, “Well, my car doesn’t have fenders.” Well, that doesn’t mean I’m wrong when I say that most automobiles have fenders.

Most men are stronger than most women. Would you agree? Yet there are some women who can beat up a lot of men, right? I mean, I watched this thing on television one night, *American Gladiators*. Hey, folks, there are some gals there I wouldn’t want to meet in a dark alley. I mean, I’m talking here about generalities—generalities. As a generality, most men are stronger than most women. We would agree with that. So when I’m talking to you about the differences in the sexes, I want you to know that I am talking to you about generalities.

Now a hammer and a screwdriver are different, but they’re both tools, and they’re designed for different jobs. Is the hammer better than the screwdriver? No. Is a screwdriver better than a hammer? Of course not! Can you use a screwdriver as a hammer? A little bit. You could turn it upside down, and with the handle you could drive a nail, but it won’t work quite as well as a hammer will. Men and women are different; they are designed different. And sometimes a man can do a woman’s work, and vice versa, but that doesn’t mean they were designed for that.

I. The Beauty and the Beast

All right now, let me give you some differences, and I’m going to name these differences so that perhaps you can remember them a little better. The first difference is the difference between beauty and the beast—the difference between beauty and the beast. And I’ve already alluded to this: Women are physically weaker than men. Men

are physically stronger than women. Doesn't the Bible tell us what we already know, in 1 Peter chapter 3 and verse 7? "*Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as*"—what?—"as unto the weaker vessel." (1 Peter 3:7)

Now God made Adam stronger than He made Eve. He had a physical frame that was stronger. His bones were stronger, and his shoulders were broader. Why? What was the job that God gave to Adam? The job that God gave to Adam was what? Twofold: to dress the garden and to keep the garden, right? So he was to be the provider and the protector. He was the provider and the protector. He had a physical frame that could protect Eve. He had the muscles to dig and chop and work in the garden. He was that way by divine design.

Now, what did God make Eve to be? Well, the word *Eve* means "life-giver." She is the nurturer, and so God made her physical body to nurture, to love, to be gentle, to be soft, to be cuddly. That's what God made her to do.

Now because she is weaker than Adam, that doesn't mean she's inferior to Adam. Silk is weaker than canvas, but it is not inferior to canvas. Porcelain is weaker than steel; it's not inferior to steel. You can make a teacup out of porcelain; you can make a sledgehammer out of steel. But you can drink tea out of a teacup, not out of a sledgehammer. God made the woman more fragile. He did that on purpose.

Now I really can't understand, in some ways, why they call them the weaker sex, because, guys, they're going to outlive us. Did you know that women control most of the money in this world? You didn't know that? They do, because they get it from their husbands. Once their husbands die, then that's when they take that vacation trip they've always wanted to take. It's an incredible thing. They outlive us. As a matter of fact, I think *the strength of the weaker sex is the weakness of the stronger sex for the weaker sex*. You'll figure that out later on. But forty percent of a man's body is muscle. I'm talking, on average. Only twenty-four percent of the woman's body is muscle. What about the other sixteen percent? Women have a thin layer of cellulite—that's a polite way of calling it something else—underneath the layer of their skin, and that is to keep them warm, because, we're going to see later on, they don't have as much blood in their bodies as men have. So they have this thin layer of cellulite there that gives them sort of an insulation against the cold. For that reason, it's easier for a woman to gain weight. It's harder for her to lose weight.

Man has about one-and-one-half gallons of blood; a woman has about four-fifths of a gallon of blood. A man has almost fifty percent more blood flowing in his body, and the woman, therefore, doesn't have as many capillaries to deliver that blood to her skin's surface. That's the reason your wife constantly has cold feet. Has she ever put those feet on you at nighttime? Her feet are cold. She gets cold more easily. That's the reason

women will always complain, “You guys have this place too cold.” And we say, “No, it’s really not all that cold.” But it’s cold to them. If you were to put a thermometer on the surface of her skin, it would register different. Your skin is warmer than hers. You have more blood. You have more capillaries.

Sometimes when Joyce and I will go out for a walk in the morning, she’ll say, “Is it all right today? Do I need a jacket?” I said, “No, you don’t need a jacket. Let’s go.” She gets to the front gate, she gives me a dirty look, and she goes back in the house and gets a jacket. Men and women are just simply different. And don’t scold her because she gets cold; give her your coat if you’re a good husband, as you ought to.

Men have a larger lung capacity. That’s the reason in athletics men can many times outlast a woman. But women have a better immune system. That’s probably why they outlive us. A lot of you ladies will not be surprised to learn that men have thicker skulls. Women have more brittle bones. And that’s the reason why it’s almost always a woman in the ad that says, “I’ve fallen, and I can’t get up.” Women, their bones are just more brittle than men. That’s just the way God designed it.

Every cell in a woman’s body is different from the cell in a man’s body. Women have the double X chromosome, men have the X-Y chromosome; every cell is different. That’s the reason that Peter says that we are to live “*with them according to knowledge.*” (1 Peter 3:7)

Man, understand that God made you, not to compete with this woman, but to protect her, to care for her, to nurture her, to provide for her.

Joyce saw in a store one time something that she thought was very beautiful, and I thought it was beautiful, too. It was a piece of porcelain; it was a hummingbird sipping nectar from a flower. And I went down there to price that thing, and folks, I would have had to sell the car in order to get it. It wasn’t all that expensive, but it wasn’t cheap. I was surprised how much it cost, but I knew she wanted it, and I bought it. And it’s sitting on the piano. And when the grandkids come, I go get that thing, and I put it up on a high shelf. Now I don’t go in the kitchen and take all the stainless steel pots and pans and put them on a high shelf. They’re tough, but this thing, it’s delicate.

You see, there ought to be that same kind of protective instinct for your wife. She’s delicate. She’s not inferior. In many ways it’s her delicacy that makes her so wonderful, but God has given you as the stronger person, the stronger vessel, “to give honor to the wife as unto the weaker vessel.” Men are made for fighting wars; women are made for having babies. And it is absolute, sheer stupidity to talk about women in the fighting forces. Don’t you agree? Sir, protect your wife, watch over her, and take care of her.

Now the man is stronger; the woman is weaker, physically. Which is superior? Neither one, neither is better, just different. Got it? Neither is better, just different.

II. The Tortoise and the Hare

All right now, here's the second thing: not only beauty and the beast, but the tortoise and the hare. Do you remember the story where the hare—the rabbit—and the tortoise got in a race? And the rabbit, boy, he just takes off like a big ninety, and the tortoise is just plodding along. But you remember the old rabbit? He's so sure of himself that he sits around and rests and dawdles and all of this other stuff, and ultimately the tortoise wins the race. Now, what is the difference?

Men, you are like the rabbit; your wife is like the tortoise. You have a lot more energy, but she has a lot more durability. It's an amazing thing, as she has more *stick-to-it-iveness*; therefore, she's going to outlast you. I say you have more energy, except in one area—and that's in shopping. Now it's encoded in her DNA that she has more for shopping. As a matter of fact, some of the women in this congregation have a black belt in shopping. But you need to learn about your wife that she's going to get tired when you don't get tired. You have more red blood corpuscles to deliver energy to your cells. You have a bigger lung capacity that's going to give more oxygen. But she has a better immune system. You are built to provide and to protect; she is not. So for you, you might win the hundred-yard dash in life, but she's going to win the marathon. She's going to outlast you. I can outwork Joyce, but Joyce is probably going to outlive me.

Now I ought not to criticize Joyce if she gets tired and doesn't have the energy. I could outwork her, but I ought not to criticize her for that. As a matter of fact, we ought to have an agreement: "Honey, I won't criticize you for getting tired if you don't criticize me for dying early." I mean we're just different. Which is better? Neither is better. At age twenty, a woman's body begins to deteriorate at about two percent per year. At age twenty, a man's body begins to deteriorate at about ten percent a year. And after age forty, it's even faster than that. So just don't demand that your wife keep up with you. Don't criticize her. Don't call her lazy. And understand, lady, the drive and the energy that your husband sometimes has. Which is better? Neither is better, just different.

III. The Romantic and the Mechanic

Now beauty and the beast, the tortoise and the hare—here's a third difference: the romantic and the mechanic. I mean, men have a job. What is their job? To dress the garden and to keep the garden. What do they need for that? A hard outer shell. Women: What is their responsibility? They are the homemakers. They are to love. They are to nurture. They are to be soft. They are to raise the children.

Lady, you need to understand that he will never have the romantic heart that you want him to have. He's just not wired that way. Oh, I know he had it before you were married—I understand that—but as soon as you got married, he had a brain transplant, and that was a part of his skill in landing you.

You just go and see the books that women read and see the books that men read, and you are going to understand. What kind of books do women read? Well, women read books that deal with relationships. Most of them are written by women, for women. Pick up the women's magazines. Here are the articles: "How Do You Develop Closeness with Your Husband?" "Harmony in Marriage," "Five Ways to Achieve Intimacy." What are men reading? "How to Remodel Your Garage," "How to Double Your Gas Mileage," "How to Be a Champion Bass Fisherman." That's what men are reading. Hey, folks, it comes with the territory. Women are just different from men.

You can go to any high school and watch the way the girls carry their books and watch the way the guys carry their books. How do girls carry books? Watch them. They carry them just like *this*, like carrying a baby. They just hug them up like *this*, hug their books. Men carry their books like *this*, if they carry them at all. Give a little boy a doll, he'll use it for a hammer: *ta-ta-ta*. That's just the difference.

Now there are some people that try to tell us that these differences are learned. They are not, friend. They are encoded. I'm going to show you that in a moment. As a matter of fact, if you were to read the Song of Solomon, it's a love song. It's highly spiritual, but it's very plain about the relationship between the sexes, and it's talking about Solomon and the one that he loves. And don't turn to it, but let me just read you two passages out of the Song of Solomon.

A. **Women Are Romantic; Men Are Visual**

First of all, here is Solomon's lover, his sweetheart, and she's talking about Solomon, in chapter 3, verses 1 to 4, and it says, "*By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not. I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth:*"—now that's the second time she's said, "He's my lover, the one I love"—"*I sought him, but I found him not. The watchmen that go about the city found me: to whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?*" She's so romantic. She's talking about him and how much she loves him. And she goes on to say, "*It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him, and would not let him go.*" (Song of Solomon 3:1–4) Now this woman, she's so romantic. "My soul loves him. I love him. I love him. I love him. I love him."

Now, let's see how he talks about her. In chapter 4, verses 1 to 5, he's talking about her now: "*Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair;*"—that means beautiful—"*thou hast doves' eyes [between] thy locks: thy hair is as a flock of goats, that appear from mount Gilead.*" In this day, that was good: "*a flock of goats.*" "*Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep that are even shorn, which came up from the washing; whereof every one bear twins, and none is barren among them.*" She had all of her teeth. "*Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet, and thy speech is comely: thy temples are like a piece of a*

pomegranate within thy locks. Thy neck is like the tower of David builded for an armoury, whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men.” She must have had a beautiful, gorgeous necklace on. *“Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins, which feed among the lilies.”* (Song of Solomon 4:1–5)

Now, what’s he doing? He’s describing her. Now she is calling him: “My love, my lover, my sweetheart, my lover.” But he is saying, “Boy, she is a knockout.” I mean, what’s he turned on by? Ladies, you’d better learn this. He is not turned on by romance. He is turned on visually; he is turned on by her beauty. He is a creature that is attracted by what he sees. That’s the difference between the sexes.

This sometimes causes such misunderstanding. You know, women are romantic, and they long for more than anything else to have a romantic husband. So what they think is, “We’re going to have a very romantic evening,” and so she fixes this beautiful candlelight dinner. And then she lights candles and sprays incense around and does all these kinds of things and gets real soft music playing. She says, “This is going to turn him on.” Do you know what happens? He goes to sleep. It puts him to sleep. I mean, she’s thinking, “Boy, we’re going to be so romantic.” She ought to learn what turns him on is her physical beauty; he is attracted to her physically. Now, be smart, men, and learn to be romantic. Be smart, ladies, and learn how to be beautiful and to keep yourself, as much as possible, physically attractive for the husband. Which is better? Neither is better, folks; they are just different. God made us different.

B. Women Are Like Radar; Men Are Like a Computer

Let me tell you another way men and women are different. It’s the radar versus the computer. Now the woman is the radar, and the man is the computer. Men and women process information differently. I clipped this out of *USA Today*. It’s a big article. I wish I could read it all. It shows on the front page here, “Of Two Minds,” and it talks about gender and areas of activity: “A sophisticated form of magnetic resonance imaging on living brains shows women use both hemispheres to solve a certain language problem; men use only one.” Ladies, you’ve always suspected that men had half a mind. Now, scientifically, they are showing what we have known for a long time.

You know, there are two hemispheres in your brain, and the left hemisphere deals primarily with logic, reasoning, calculation, and so forth. The right hemisphere deals with feeling, emotion, sympathy, love, and intuition. Now men use primarily the left side of their brain; women use both sides of their brain. They have proven it scientifically now, and here I’m going to read a part of this: “We know from brain autopsies that the corpus callosum, the mass of fibers connecting the brain’s right and left hemispheres, is larger in proportion to brain weight in women than men. More information is being exchanged between the two hemispheres in women, and that could account for women’s greater verbal skills and even explain women’s intuition. The female brain has emotional

capabilities on both sides; a man's is centered on the right. That, plus a woman's greater connections between hemispheres, may make it easier for her to express emotions, but that may also mean she is less able to separate emotion from reason."

Now, guys, I'm plowing close to the corn here, but let me tell you something. There is a difference—there is a real difference—between the way women look at things and the way men look at things, and this is the source of so many of our arguments. And by the way, next week we're going to talk on this subject: "Communicate or Disintegrate," and we're going to tell you how husbands and wives can communicate. But you've got to learn that there is a difference. Men tend to be more logical and analytical and factual in their thinking. This is not to say that a woman cannot be, but at the same time she is thinking logically and analytically and factually, she is mixing in emotion at the same time.

Now women are detail oriented, and they do what I call spider-web thinking. Men don't do spider-web thinking. Men think like *this*: *ca-chomp, ca-chomp, ca-chomp, ca-chomp*. And women go like *this*. And so, folks, you are trying to say, "Let's clear this thing out, and then we'll do that; and then we'll clear this out, and we'll do this." She's not doing that; she's doing this. And you're going to have all kinds of misunderstandings if you don't understand that.

For example, she wants all of the little details; they're all in her computer. She's using both sides of her brain at the same time. And really, in many ways, she's superior to you because she has the ability to do this. And she wants all the details. She can put them in there, and she can deal with them all at one time. She's using both sides. You've just got half a brain, mister. And so you come home, and she says, "How was your day today?" Well, you're going to tell her elaborately how your day was, so you say, "It's fine." "What happened?" "Well, we had a meeting. We did some things. We revamped a program down at the church." She wants to know who was there, what did you talk about, did you go out to eat, where did you eat, what happened, what did you wear. And you say, "Well, that doesn't have anything to do with it. I mean, that's what we did."

Now you make a mistake and ask her how her day was, and you're going to get more information than you wanted. It's just the way we are. She thinks that you are being evasive and shutting her out. You think she's going on and on and on. Astronaut Michael Collins said that a man speaks in a day, an average day, about 25,000 words; a woman about 30,000 words in an average day. He said, "The problem is, when I come home at night, I've used up my 25,000, and she hasn't even started on hers." So, generally speaking, women are generally speaking.

The left side is logical, rational, objective, precise; the right side is the affective domain: feeling, subjectivity, sensitivity. That's the reason men cry less, because

they've got a disconnect up there. Women cry more easily. That's the reason you and your husband can be having a big argument that will just destroy you, and he'll just go on out to his job, or go watch a television, or go play golf. You say, "How can he do that?" He just shuts off the right side. I mean, there's a disconnect in there that women don't have. Which is better? God made us different that He might make us one.

You see, your brain's left side works like a computer; her right side works like a radar. She has a great big reception disk, and it's just sweeping; it's just taking in everything, just like *this*. And they see things; they feel things. They can tell when feelings are hurt. Joyce will tell me, "You hurt that person's feelings." I say, "Oh, no." She said, "You did." "How could...?" "You did." And she's right. See, they can just sweep the room; they can walk in a room and pick up things.

Women get these details that men don't get. I can get dressed, walk out, and I think I look all right, and Joyce will see that piece of lint. She'll say, "Your tie is not straight"—whatever. They are detail oriented. They get all of these details. That's the reason that she can tell you, when you want to get in some business deal, she'll say, "I just don't like that guy." "Well, why? What's wrong with him?" "I don't know." But she's processing so many little bits of information; she can just say there's something bad about that. And here's the aggravating thing about it: She's right—she is right. Now, how does she know this? It's what we call women's intuition. Women are just different.

Hey, have you ever watched women? I've watched them. We had four thousand of them in this auditorium yesterday. They are creatures. They are different. Watch them when they sit at a table and have a lunch. They're all talking at the same time around the table, but every one of them knows what each of the other is saying, all at the same time. One will be talking to a woman here, and then she'll turn around and say, "No, that's not right," and then go right back. It's an incredible thing! That radar's just going round and round. Mister, all you've got is a pair of rabbit ears. They're just different. Which is better? Neither is better.

Have you ever noticed in a restaurant when a woman wants to go to the restroom, she says, "I want to go to the restroom. Do y'all want to go with me?" And they all go together. Hey, that's incredible! I've never seen a man say, "How many of you want to go to the restroom?" I don't understand it. Which is better: the computer or the radar? Neither is better; they are just different. Thank God for the difference.

C. Women Are Code Speakers; Men Are Reporters

A woman is a code speaker; a man is a reporter. A woman uses language to express emotion; a man uses language primarily to dispense facts. Women share; men report. And that's the difference in the way that men and women talk. And you'd better learn this. I mean, don't listen to what a woman says; listen to what she means. That's hard. If you listen, if you sense, for example, that she seems nervous and tense and upset, and

you come home, and you say to her, “Hey, is something wrong?” and she says, “Nothing is wrong.” Hey, guys, that means that everything is wrong. You’ve got to listen. If she says, “Nothing is wrong,” don’t say, “Well, good. I thought something was wrong.” No, when she says, “Nothing is wrong,” that means everything is wrong. When she says, “Do I look all right?” that means “Tell me I’m beautiful.” Don’t listen to what she says; listen to what she means. They speak in code—in code. Women share; men report. There’s just a difference.

D. Women Are Lovers; Men Are Achievers

Now I wish I had the time, but I’ve got to quit. Here’s one more thing. There’s the difference between the lover and the achiever—the lover and the achiever. Women are lovers. Men are achievers. The Bible says, in Ephesians chapter 5, verse 33, *“Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence”—or “respect”—“her husband.”* (Ephesians 5:33)

Now, what does God tell the man to do? He tells the man to love his wife. What does God tell the wife to do? He tells the wife to reverence, or respect, her husband. Why? Because what is the deepest need of a woman? Polls have been taken, and women have been asked, “What is your deepest need?” Do you know what it is? Romance. They want to be loved, they want to be cherished, they want to be prized, they want to be held, they want to be adored, and they want to be put on a pedestal. They want to be number one in your parade. They want to be loved!

Now, what is man’s greatest need? He wants to be admired; he wants to be respected. She is a lover, but he is an achiever. God gave her a nurturing instinct, but God told him to dress the garden and keep the garden. God equipped him mentally to do that. God gave him that hard exterior. He wants to be admired by her. I want Joyce to admire me. I get more blessing when Joyce admires me and says, “Adrian, you are wonderful.” She gets a blessing when I am romantic and loving and tender toward her. When they gave the men the same poll, romance rated number twenty-eight to men.

Now, when a woman tells a man a problem, you know what the average man will do? He’ll try to fix it. She doesn’t want you to fix it. Joyce was in the airport here a while back. She was over in Knoxville. She missed a plane. She called me. She said, “I just missed the plane.” I said, “Well, go to another counter.” She said, “I did that.” I said, “Is there another plane?” She said, “I just missed the plane.” I said, “Well, what time is the next one?” She said, “I just missed the plane.” “Well,” I said, “Joyce!”—that was a mistake. She did not want me to fix it. Trying to fix it, I acted like I didn’t want to hear her. She wanted sympathy. She wanted me to understand and be caring.

Men, they don’t always want you to fix it; they just want you to hug them and to love them. They want love. But what does a man want? A man wants admiration. He gets his joy out of being successful.

Conclusion

I wish I had more time. But men, show your wives more tenderness. Show them more love. Be more patient. “Give more honor as unto the weaker vessel.” (1 Peter 3:7)
Ladies, when you’re having a conversation, and your husband want the facts, cut to the chase, will you? I mean, just tell us up front what you’re talking about. Then you can embellish it later on. Then we’ll have at least some idea how to process the information. Would you do that, please? And, hey, keep yourself beautiful for us. And, guys, try to be a little more romantic. As a matter of fact, both of us need to learn. Which is better? Neither is better. We are just different.

When they built the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, the engineers designed it so all of the parts inter-fit, but they all sway. In the middle of that suspension bridge, that one-mile span, it will sway as much as twenty feet. It’s concrete and steel; it’s all bolted and welded together. But there’s flexibility; there’s elasticity there. But there are two incredible towers that go down, down, down to bedrock. And all of those cables connect everything to those two great towers. Got it? Now, what keeps that bridge up? Two things. Number one: the foundation. Number two: the flexibility. Okay now, what are two great towers for your home? Love for God, and love for one another. That’s the bedrock. The rest of it is the flexibility that keeps your bridge from falling down.

Aren’t you glad that God made us different? Isn’t it great living with a man, or living with a woman? Thank God for it—thank God. Let’s celebrate the difference.

A Super Glue Marriage

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: January 7, 1998

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 2:21–25

*“And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh:
she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.”*

GENESIS 2:23

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Conclusion

Introduction

Now we live in a tragic and a dangerous day. It's a day of throwaway marriages, disposable marriages, discardable marriages. And what a tragedy it is! I was recently reading in *Newsweek* magazine an article on marriage, and I want you to listen to it: “The landscape is littered with victims of the divorce epidemic: ex-wives raising their children alone; former husbands trying to start new lives and still be good fathers to kids

they see only on specified days; and the children themselves, often torn between two warring parents. In a recently completed ten-year study of sixty divorced, middle-class families in Northern California, psychologist Judy Wallerstein found that only ten percent of the ex-spouses said they had both succeeded in improving their own lives. That is, for ninety percent of these, they said, 'It was a disaster.' 'Divorce,' Wallerstein said, 'has been a wrenching experience for every family I have ever seen.' ” Now that's in a secular article. “Divorce...a wrenching experience for every family I have ever seen.”

Now I am not here to make divorced people feel worse. If you've been divorced, thank God for the grace of God that cleanses. But I am here to lay out a warning to those who are not yet married and to help those who are married to have what I want to call today, “A Super Glue Marriage.” I want to show you today how to make up and not to break up, because, dear friend, if you do break up, I can tell you with all of the emphasis, function, and emotion in my soul: There's going to be heartache; there's going to be difficulty. There are no whole eggs in a broken nest.

Now, thank God, God has given us a book that tells us how to stay married and to be what God wants us to be. I'm reading here in Genesis chapter 2 and verse 21: “*And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he—took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.*” (Genesis 2:21–25)

Now what happens is this, dear friend, that the enemy, the devil, comes in and breaks up homes. And what happens is that people who come from broken homes have broken lives. People with broken lives tend to build broken homes, which tend to produce broken lives, which tend to produce broken homes—and there's a vicious cycle.

Psychologists tell us that girls tend to marry men like their fathers. Now you can see why mothers cry at weddings. Somehow we've got to get in and break that cycle. *You can't do anything about your ancestors, but folks, you can do something about your descendants.*

Let me tell you a verse that's been a life verse for me. You might want to make it a life verse for you. I claim this verse—Psalm 112, verses 1 and 2: “*Praise ye the LORD. Blessed is the man that feareth the LORD, that delighteth greatly in his commandments.*” I want to be that man. “*Blessed is the man that feareth the LORD, that delighteth greatly in his commandments. His seed*”—his children, his grandchildren—“*shall be mighty upon earth: the generation of the upright shall be blessed.*” (Psalms 112:1–2) Isn't that a

wonderful promise? While we cannot deal, dear friend, with our ancestors, we *can* deal with our descendants.

Now, look, if you will, in verse 24 of the scripture: “*Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother,*”—underscore the word *leave*—“*and shall cleave unto his wife:*”—underscore the word *cleave*—“*and they shall be one flesh*” (Genesis 2:24)—underscore the word *be* or *become*. Three action words, three verbs—*leave*, *cleave*, and *become*—and there God gives us in a nutshell what marriage is all about. You see, when God says that “*a man shall leave his father and mother,*” that speaks of the priority of marriage. Marriage is the highest of all earthly human relationships. When God says that a man “*shall cleave unto his wife,*” that speaks of the permanence of marriage. Actually, the word here, *cleave*, means “to weld” or “to glue.” That’s the reason I’m talking to you about “A Super Glue Marriage.” All right, that’s the permanence of marriage. And then, “*they shall [become] one flesh.*” That’s the purpose of marriage, that a man and a woman come together and become—in the closest bond and communion—one flesh.

I. A Lifetime Commitment

Now, I want us to look at simply the cleaving: the welding, the bonding. How do we stay together? Because, my dear friend, it is not easy. The three things I want to talk to you about this morning: Number one is a lifetime commitment or, if you will, a lasting commitment. That’s the first step. You must make a lasting commitment. There must be such a total commitment to marriage if you want your marriage to last. Now, folks, you show me a boy and a girl who come to the marriage altar who say in the back of their minds, “Well, if this doesn’t work out, we can get a divorce,” and I’ll show you a boy and a girl who have a great potentiality for getting a divorce. But you show me a boy and a girl who come to the marriage altar and say, “There’s no such word as *divorce* in our vocabulary; we are making a lifetime—a lasting—commitment; we’ve thrown away the parachute; there is no other way for us; no matter what happens, thick or thin, we’re going to stick it out”; I’ll show you a marriage that has a great potentiality for staying together.

“Well,” you say, “some boys and girls have more difficulty than other boys and girls.” All married couples have essentially the same problems. The difference is in commitment. All married couples have essentially the same problems. Now, thank God for love. It takes love to build a home. If you don’t have love, don’t get married. But you listen to your pastor. *It is not primarily your love that holds your marriage together; it is your marriage that holds your love together.* It is that commitment that enables your love to go on and on and on. And without that commitment, your love is going to disintegrate. Don’t get the idea that your home is held together by love. Your home is

held together by a commitment. It is your commitment that sustains your marriage and sustains your love, not vice versa.

You see, the Bible says that a husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the Church. (Ephesians 5:25) I want to ask you a question. Is Jesus Christ committed to the Church? Or, when I fail, does Jesus say, "Well, so long, Adrian. I want a divorce from you, Adrian. I no longer want to be your Lord, your Savior. I'm finished with you"? No. My Lord stays with me, and He has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." (Hebrews 13:5) Praise God for that. I've told Joyce, "If you ever leave me, I'm going with you." Friend, listen. There must be a commitment!

You say, "But what about the faults of my mate? What about the flaws of my mate? What about the foibles of my mate?" Accept them. She has to accept yours. You want me to tell you what a perfect husband is? A perfect husband is a man who does not demand a perfect wife. You want me to tell you what a perfect wife is? Vice versa: one who does not demand a perfect husband. Have you ever thought that your wife's faults or flaws or foibles or idiosyncrasies may be God's gift to you to help you to develop some character on the other side? Opposites attract. Her lateness may be God's gift to help develop your patience. God knows what He's doing. God has got a great sense of humor. But we need to accept the other person. None of us are perfect.

What a shame to let ninety percent of a good marriage go down the tubes because of some ten percent problem or whatever. There needs to be total commitment, a lifetime commitment. "For this reason shall a man leave his father and his mother and cleave unto his wife." (Mark 10:7) Be glued to her, welded together to her. Your children are bits of yourself. Your wife is yourself. You are one flesh.

II. A Loving Communication

Second thing: Not only must there be a lasting commitment, but number two, there must be a loving communication. Now most marriages get in difficulty because the husband and the wife don't learn how to communicate. Again, let's go back to the analogy of Christ and the Church. Does Jesus Christ communicate with the Church? Yes, He does. He's given us His Word. He speaks to us. He has sent His Spirit into our hearts. He whispers to our being that we belong to Him. We have the most intimate relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ who said, "I don't call you servants anymore; I call you friends. The servant knoweth not what his master doeth." (John 15:15) That is, Jesus said, "I have given my Spirit to you to share my heart, to share my life with you." Most husbands and most wives fail in their marriage because they have not learned to communicate at the five basic levels of communication.

A. The Shallowest Level

Some never get past the shallowest level. The shallowest level of communication is just

clichés: small talk, weather, sports, and so forth. “Hi! How you doing?” “It’s cold!” “Yeah... so long!” We all deal that way with people that we see. That’s shallow communication. It’s all right, nothing wrong with it. But that won’t pass in a marriage.

B. The Factual Level

Then the next level is the factual level. We deal with facts. We just share facts with people. We do that in a business meeting, in a business enclave, or whatever. Very much like a newscaster delivers the news, no real involvement: “I’m just laying some facts on you, and you’re laying some facts on me.”

C. The Intellectual Level

But there’s a third level, and this level deals with ideas and opinions. Now you have to take a risk to get to this level because your ideas and your opinions may be rejected: That person may not like how you think about this. This is the intellectual level. Sometimes people are afraid to venture in this level because they’re afraid that their ideas will be shot down in flames, and so they kind of retreat. Some marriages never reach this level, where a husband and wife can sit down and actually share ideas and opinions.

D. The Emotional Level

There’s a deeper level. It goes past the intellectual level. It is the emotional level. Not only do I share facts, and not only do I share opinions and dreams and goals and aspirations, but I share how I feel about those things—my joys, my sadness, my fears, my hopes—where I can actually share my feelings. How many of us dwell with our mates on that level?

E. The Deepest Level

Then there is the absolute deepest level of communication: absolute openness and oneness. Look, if you will, at the last verse here of our text: “*And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.*” (Genesis 2:25) Now, truly, that deals with the physical part of marriage. There was no shame there in the physical sense. But you have to see, dear friend, that what the verse is saying is that there was no mental barrier there. There was absolute oneness. They were absolutely one flesh, uninhibited! Oh, listen. Men do not desire this as much as women, to have that intimacy without which the physical act of marriage loses its meaning—that oneness, that sharing—that’s hard for men.

You see, women are more verbal than men. It is a known psychological fact that little girls have greater linguistic and verbal ability than boys have. The little girls, they begin to bloom first. They begin to talk more in school. And the little boys, they don’t talk. And the little girls raise their hands to answer the questions and get in the spelling bees. The

little boys are behind them at ages six, seven, eight, nine. About fourteen or fifteen, they're neck and neck. These girls, they bloom faster, and in this verbal ability, they keep this verbal ability all the way through life.

I was listening to James Dobson on a tape and he said something that I thought was interesting. He said, "For instance, let's say that God gives a man 25,000 words a day, and God gives a woman 50,000 words a day. Now the man goes off to work, and he spent his 25,000 words. He's got about 250 words left, and he comes home, and *Monday Night Football* is on. Now his wife has spent 25,000 words, but she's got 25,000 words left, and she wants to spend them. And he needs to understand that." "Well," we say, "women ought not to defraud a man physically." A man ought not to defraud a woman emotionally, psychologically. There needs to be that intimacy; there needs to be that communication!

III. A Loyal Confrontation

Now, watch. Number one: There needs to be a lifetime commitment. Number two: There needs to be a loving communication. Number three: There needs to be a loyal confrontation—a loyal confrontation. If you think that being in a home is just smiling and making out like everything is fine, and there are no problems, you are wrong. Does our Lord have problems with His Church, His bride? Certainly He does. Does He confront His Church? Indeed He does. "*As many as I love,*" He says, "*I rebuke and chasten.*" (Revelation 3:19) But notice He confronts us in love: "*As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.*" (Revelation 3:19)

A. Conflicts in Marriage

There are going to be some conflicts in your marriage. I tried to analyze in my marriage counseling, and from study I have done: Where are the major conflicts are in marriage? Let me just give you some conflicts that are going to need a loyal confrontation.

1. Selfishness

Number one: selfishness. Did you know that most of the marriage problems that I deal with, at their root, is nothing but selfishness? Now another word for selfishness is *immaturity*—big babies. And most of the time, but not always—most of the time—these big babies are the men. They think that God gave them a built-in servant when they got married. And she's to wait on him hand and foot, for somehow he's the head of the house, and he's Little Lord Fauntleroy. And she's his servant, and she's to wait on him all the time.

A recent survey on marriage taken in America has some shocking statistics. Did you know that fifty percent of the women who were married said, "If I had it to do it over again, I would not marry the same man"? That's shocking: fifty percent of the women.

One out of every two women said, “If I could do it again, I would not marry that guy.” They surveyed the men. Seventy percent of the men said, “I would marry the same woman again.” Now, guys, what does that say about us? Let me tell you something else. They put a new ingredient in the survey, and they asked this question: “Does your husband help you at home?” Of the wives who said yes to that question, eighty-two percent of them said, “I’d marry the same man again”—eighty-two percent. Selfishness is one of the major problems. It comes across in so many ways.

2. Financial Problems

I’ll tell you another area is financial—money problems. “Oh,” you say, “that’s right. Not enough money will ruin a marriage.” No, I’m not talking to you about not enough money; I’m talking about the mishandling of money. Poverty doesn’t break up a home. Many times it brings you together. You can have plenty of money and get a divorce. Ask Johnny Carson. No, it’s how you handle your money, what you do with your money. It’s your attitude toward money. The problem in marriages is not so much a lack of money as it is a mismanagement of money. For the Bible says, “*Godliness with contentment is great gain.*” (1 Timothy 6:6) Contentment—that’s what people need—“*godliness with contentment.*” *I believe that charge accounts are the devil’s plan to ruin marriages, and most people need a little plastic surgery: Take those cards and just cut them up, and learn that you can do without anything except one another.*

3. Sexual Problems

All right, let me tell you another problem, of course, is sexual. All of the things, the bitter fruit of the sexual revolution, we’re reaping it; and indeed, that’s one of the causes for divorce. Sex is a gift of God; it is a form of communication. The Bible says, when a husband and wife would have sexual relations, that thus-and-such a person “knew his wife.” The sexual union of a husband and wife is a form of communication. He “knew” her. It’s a way of saying, “I love you,” that cannot be put into words. When all of that is fine, it seems like it’s not such a big deal. But when it’s out of whack, when it’s skewed somehow, it takes on immense proportions. How we need to learn what the Bible says about this matter! And we’ll talk more about that in our series.

4. Nagging Problems

Another problem, believe it or not—and it’s a real problem—is just the problem of nagging: just nagging, faultfinding over trivial things. “You didn’t put the top back on the toothpaste.” “You squeezed it in the middle.” Or, “You hung your stockings again on the shower rail.” Or, “You never pick up your clothes.” Did you know the word *nag* and the word *gnaw* are related? You ever have anybody gnaw on you? It ain’t funny.

Here’s what the Bible says. Now in these verses you can tell old Solomon knew what he was talking about. Proverbs 21, verse 19: “*It is better to dwell in the wilderness,*

than with a contentious and an angry woman.” (Proverbs 21:19) Proverbs 27, verse 15: *“A continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike.”* (Proverbs 27:15) *Drip, drip, drip.* But it’s not only the women who nag; men nag. You need to confess it, not as a weakness, but as a sin, and break the habit.

5. In-law Problems

In-laws, they’re another part of the problem, and nine out of ten complaints about in-laws are women complaining about the mother-in-law. Why is this? Often it is the case of two women in love with the same man. The mother can’t give her boy up, and so she begins to find fault with the daughter-in-law, and vice versa. In-laws need to be wise. Let me just give you some rules for being good in-laws—they’re just so simple: *hands off, prayers on, mouths closed, and hearts open.* God will help you to be good in-laws.

6. Substance Abuse Problems

And then, of course, there is substance abuse: drugs, alcohol, or other forms of vice, like gambling and all of these things.

B. Five Principles for Loyal Confrontation

You will face one or more of these things in your marriage, and they are going to call for a loving confrontation, a loyal confrontation. Our Lord says, *“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.”* (Revelation 3:19) So let me give you some rules for having a good fight, okay? Let me tell you how to confront. And all of these things I can back up with Scripture. I mean, you’re going to have to confront your mate—you are.

I want to give you five principles here. Very quickly, I’m just going to name them off. And if you’ll do this, you’ll learn how to make up and not break up. You’ll learn really to have that super glue marriage, and you’ll not be able to do these unless you have the first two already, which is that lifetime commitment and that loving communication. Then you can have that loyal confrontation.

1. Isolate the Problem

First of all, isolate the problem; pinpoint the problem. Know what it is that you’re truly arguing about, because many times we’re hurting in one place and we’re grunting in another. For example, your wife, she may be scolding you and fussing at you, but maybe she’s tired, maybe she’s sick, maybe she’s afraid. Maybe you hurt her feelings over here with something else that you said or didn’t say, and you have no idea that you did it. What you’re really arguing about is not the point at all. Or maybe you come home and you find yourself in an argument with your wife, and you’re not really mad at her. You’re mad at what happened to you on the freeway coming home, or what your boss said to you.

Zig Ziglar, who is a great communicator, tells a story about a Mr. Sparks who was

going to the health club one day, and he was a business executive. He was stopped for speeding. It made him so angry that when he got back to the office, he chewed out the sales manager because the sales were down. He wasn't mad at the sales manager; he was mad at the highway patrolman. He got all over the sales manager. The sales manager took it, couldn't say anything back, but he talked to his secretary and said, "Where are those five letters I gave you? How come they're not in yet? Get those letters out!" The secretary began to burn to a slow burn. She went over to the switchboard operator: "Oh, you sit there every day and just answer the telephone. You don't do anything else. Why don't you help me? Why don't you do something to help me get these letters out?" She chewed out the switchboard operator. The switchboard operator went home that day, and her twelve-year-old son was sitting there watching television, had a little nick in his blue jeans. She said, "Look! You've torn your pants. You go upstairs. No more television for you, and no more dinner for you." About that time, the cat crossed this little boy's path. That was a mistake for that cat to come past right then. And he kicks the cat. Now Zig asks this question: "Wouldn't it have been a lot simpler if Mr. Sparks, the business executive, had gone over to the switchboard operator's house and kicked the cat himself, and not disturbed so many people along the way?"

So many times we're hurting in one place and grunting in another. Happy is the couple that can say, "What is the problem?"—"What is the problem?" Pinpoint the problem—pinpoint the problem.

2. Attack the Problem

Number two, dear friend: Learn to attack the problem and not one another. Oh, if we could only do this! Most arguments are ego against ego—right?—trying to prove we're right rather than attacking the problem. I've said it before; I'll say it again: *There are no problems too big to solve, just people too small to solve them.* If we would learn that the mate may have done something wrong, and that is the problem. But the mate is not the problem; it's what the mate did. You say, "I can't slice it that thin." Oh yes, you can.

Listen. If you have a child, for example, and you need to confront your child—your child comes in with bad grades or stayed out too late—don't say to that child, "You're no good; you're a bad child. You have no respect; you have no integrity." Don't talk to that child that way! You've attacked him! Don't do that. Attack the problem. Say, "Son, grades are important, and here's why. Here's what you did that's wrong, and here's how we're going to fix it." But, you see, dear friend, so many times it's ego against ego, and our rotten pride wants to be right.

3. Deal with One Problem at a Time

I'll tell you a third thing that we need to do if we're going to have a successful argument: We need to deal with one problem at a time and deal with problems as they come up.

Now the Bible says, “Don’t let the sun go down upon your wrath.” (Ephesians 4:26)

Many of us collect trading stamps. You know, you go to the store, and they give you these stamps; you put them in a little book, and then one day you go down and redeem them for some lawn furniture. What you do is you just put them in the book. Now that’s the way a lot of marriages do it. Your husband hurts you? You put it in the book. Late for dinner? You put it in the book. Forgot your anniversary? Put it in the book. You don’t deal with those things as they come up, and then one of these days, there’s an explosion. She comes in to cash all her stamps—I mean, all at one time—or he comes in, and you wonder why. Where did all of this happen? How did all of this happen? You have failed to do what the Bible says to do, and that is to deal with these things as they come up, when they’re small, when they can be dealt with. One trading stamp is not so big. It can be dealt with.

“Don’t let the sun go down upon your wrath.” (Ephesians 4:26) Stick to the subject. Know what it is. Don’t attack one another! Attack the problem! Deal with these things as they come up.

4. Learn to Negotiate

Next of all, learn to negotiate. Don’t get in a win-lose situation. Rather than having a war where both husband and wife lose, have a negotiation where both husband and wife win. Let both save face. Give in. Adjust. Compromise. Be gentle. Jesus does that. Jesus said, “I have many things to tell you; you’re not able to bear them.” (John 16:12) He knows what we’re able to do. Learn not to force your point all the way down to the bitter end.

5. Pray

And then, last of all, know how important this is: pray, pray, pray, pray, and pray some more! It’s amazing how prayer will help you through these things. Sometimes Joyce and I will be in a disagreement. We’ll be sitting there at the kitchen table. It will get tense, and she’ll say to me, “Adrian, you’re wrong.” “Not me.” “Yes, you’re wrong.” “No, I’m not wrong.” She says, “You are wrong, but I can’t prove you’re wrong, because you can talk better than I can. But I know you’re wrong.” I say, “No, I’m not wrong.” “You’re wrong.” It gets tense. I say, “Well, let’s just stop for a while.” I go in my study and try to prepare a sermon, try to read, try to do something else. I can’t do it. So I say, “Lord, did you see what went on in there?” He says, “Yeah, you were wrong.” “Me?” “Yeah, you. You were wrong!” “Okay, Lord.” I have to go back: “Honey, I was wrong. Forgive me.” She says, “I forgive you.” We hug and kiss and make up.

Prayer will do that, friend. You be honest with God—honest with God—just honest, and let God speak to you. And, friend, if you’ll do these things—and they’re so simple, but so real—your marriage can be a marriage that will stay together, as you have that

commitment, that communion, that confrontation, all sheltered over with His great love.

Conclusion

Would you pray for your home right now? Say, “Lord, help our home to be all you would have it to be.” Father, give us better homes and make good homes better. Heal broken homes and broken hearts. In Jesus’ holy name. Amen.

Four Lies That Ruined the World

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: January 25, 2004

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 3:1–5

“Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?”

GENESIS 3:1

Outline

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Introduction

Find God's Word, Genesis chapter 3. We're continuing our series on "Challenges to the Cross," things that we meet in today's world that we need to have Bible answers for.

The title of the message today: "Four Lies That Ruined the World."

Last night I was talking to Janice, my baby daughter. She said, "Daddy, what are you going to preach tomorrow morning?" I said, "On four lies that ruined the world." She said, "Well, let me see. What are they? Would that be communism, humanism, New Ageism?" I said, "No, no, none of these. Bigger lies than all of those and the lies beyond those lies."

These are Satan's four biggest lies. Satan's whole system is built on a lie. Jesus said, in John chapter 8 and verse 44, to the unsaved Pharisees, "*Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning,*

and abode not in the truth...[and] when he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it." (John 8:44) That is, every lie that's ever been told has been spawned by the daddy liar, the liar of all liars, the father of all liars, who is the devil himself. Satan is a liar. Jesus said he was a *"murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth."* (John 8:44)

Now, listen. His motive is murder. His method is the lie. Never forget that: his motive and his method, there in John chapter 8 and verse 44. Satan wants to bring death to life, to joy, to peace, to happiness, to fruitfulness. He wants to bring physical death. He wants to bring spiritual death. He wants to bring eternal death. And he does it through deception. He is a dirty liar. And we're going to find four of Satan's biggest lies. These are foundational lies, and they are lies out of which all other lies come.

Remember that Satan is the master liar. And because he's the master liar, his lies are very good. Satan knows how to tell lies. His lies are very clever. Let's look here in Genesis chapter 3, verse 1: *"Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field."* (Genesis 3:1) Just underscore that word *subtil*. Now Satan's lies are not lies that are obvious lies, on the surface. You have to look beneath the surface to see his lies, because he's very clever.

Let me tell you something. The best lies sound the most like the truth, and so there is some truth in most lies. A clock that doesn't even run is right twice a day, isn't that right? But now, wait a minute. If a clock is only right twice a day, you look at it and you say, "That's wrong." It may be right twice a day, but it's still wrong. What is more dangerous: a clock five hours wrong or a clock five minutes wrong? A clock five minutes wrong is far more dangerous than a clock five hours wrong. When you look at a clock that's five hours wrong, you say, "That's wrong. Somebody tell me what time it is." A clock five minutes wrong, you miss your airplane. Now there's a difference. Now Satan's lies are very close to the truth, and yet so very far from the truth.

Again, Satan had rather you think a wrong thing, believe a lie, than to do a wrong thing. Why? Because the thought is the father of the deed. It is more dangerous to believe a wrong thing than to do a wrong thing. You can do a wrong thing by mistake, and the next time do the right thing. But if you believe a wrong thing, you'll keep doing the wrong thing over and over again, for the Bible says, "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." (Proverbs 23:7) And so the devil is the original liar. The devil is the master liar. And the best lies sound the most like the truth, and those that are nearest to the truth, and still a lie, are the most dangerous.

Now Satan, being a very clever liar, Satan, being the master liar, Satan, wanting to do his work through a lie, which is murder, will tell a lie about the biggest subject. Now he's not interested in telling lies about little things. He wants you to believe lies about the biggest subject. What is the biggest subject? God. God is the biggest subject. Now if

Satan can get your mind twisted about who God is, and what God does, and what God is like; then he's got you, because the thought is the father of the deed. A. W. Tozer, a great leader in the Christian and Missionary Alliance church, said—and I want you to listen to this quote: “No religion can rise higher than its concept of God.” That is so true. “No religion can rise higher than its concept of God.”

Satan, in the very first book in the Bible, the very first pages of history, is going to tell four big lies. And all of them are going to deal with the character of God. Satan does not want you to understand who God is. Now it may surprise you to learn that Satan is an evangelist. What Satan wants is not casualties; he wants converts over to his own ideas. And so Satan comes as an evangelist to Eve to evangelize her for the devil's religion. Eve was his first convert. And rather than four spiritual laws, there are four spiritual flaws—four lies that he wants Eve to believe. And Eve takes the bait. And these lies are not just what Satan has done eons ago. These are the four lies that you'll meet today and tomorrow. They are very fresh. They are very up-to-date.

Now Satan, really, he may be double-faced, but he's not double-minded. He wants to do the same thing today that he has done always. So are you ready for these four big lies?

I. Lie #1: God Is Not Loving

All right, lie number one: God is not loving. That's the first lie. Now notice again in chapter 3 and verse 1: “*Now the serpent*”—that's the devil—“*was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?*” (Genesis 3:1) Now, what's he trying to do? He's trying to get Eve to think negatively about God—to get the idea that God is withholding goodness from her—therefore, God Himself is not good, that God is severe; God is cruel. Here's the beautiful Garden of Eden, and God made it, and then God said, “You can't touch it; you can't eat of it.” Of course, God had not said that they could not eat of the fruit of every tree of the garden. That was a lie.

What had God said? Look in Genesis 2, verse 16. You're in the Bible, just turn backward one chapter: “*And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat.*” (Genesis 2:16) Do you see it? “*Of every tree...thou mayest freely eat.*” Now, what did Satan say? “*Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field... And he said unto the woman... hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?*” (Genesis 3:1) God said, “Help yourself.” Satan said, “God says you can't have it.”

Now, what is Satan trying to do? He's trying to get Eve to think negatively about God—that God is cruel, God is harsh, God is unloving. “He wants to deny you, Eve, of any ultimate joy. Anything that brings pleasure is a no-no. Anytime God sees anybody

having a good time and joy,”—like Art just sang about—“God moves in to break up the game.” The truth of the matter is that God had said a resounding yes—yes—to their joy and to their pleasure. When God created Eden in all of its luxury, all of its beauty, all of its bounty; God said to Adam and Eve, “There, children, that is for you. Help yourself.”

Now there are a lot of people today who have the idea that God is some sort of a cruel God, a vengeful deity, sitting up there on His big throne, hurling down laws to make us squirm, like a worm in hot ashes, trying to keep them; and that God is a cosmic killjoy, that God is trying to keep things from us. That is not true. God loves us. Let me give you some verses. I’ve given you these before, but jot them down. Psalm 37 and verse 4: *“Delight thyself...in the LORD: and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.”* (Psalms 37:4) Isn’t that great? What your heart yearns for, you’ll find in Him. Psalm 84, verse 11: *“The LORD thy God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory:”—now, listen to this—“no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly”* (Psalms 84:11)—*“no good thing.” If it will make you healthy, happy, holy, or wholesome, God says, “Help yourself.” Every time He says, “Thou shalt not,” He’s saying, “Don’t hurt yourself.” Every time He says, “Thou shalt,” He’s saying, “Help yourself to happiness.”* God loves you. Listen to this one—1 Timothy chapter 6, verse 17: *“Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us...”*—now, listen to this phrase—*“who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.”* (1 Timothy 6:17) Isn’t that great?

Now if the devil can get you thinking negatively about God, he’s already got you. That’s the very first thing he did when he crawled his slimy, corroding path into history: to get Eve to think negatively about God. Lie number one: God is not good. All right, I want you to say it out loud: “God is good.” Don’t you ever let the devil tell you anything else. God is good all the time.

II. Lie #2: God Is Not Truthful

All right, lie number two. First lie: God is not good. Lie number two: God is not truthful—God is not truthful. Now, notice the serpent said in verse 1, *“Hath God said?”* (Genesis 3:1) Now that’s a doubt. The doubt leads to a denial. Now, notice in verses 2 through 4: *“And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden:”—she knew better—“but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die.”* (Genesis 3:2–4) Verse one: doubt. Now in verse 4: denial. “You’ll not die. You don’t have to worry about God.”

Now you see what Satan did, first of all, was to get Eve to think negatively about God. Then the next step is easy: to get Eve to think skeptically about God. Lie number one: God is not good. Lie number two: God is not truthful.

Now what Satan had done in verse 1 (Genesis 3:1) is to put a question mark after the Word of God. *I want to say clearly and plainly that anyone who causes skepticism concerning the authority, the accuracy, the acceptability, the impeccability, the infallibility, or the authenticity of the Word of God is doing the work of the devil.* That's the work of the devil. I don't care what seminary he's in. I don't care what degrees he has. He may be Reverend Doctor DD, which stands for *diggle dooter*. Man, listen. If he puts a doubt, a question mark, or a denial after the Word of God, he is of the devil—the devil. The devil is out to destroy the truthfulness of God.

Now, in today's society, we have substituted many things for God's Word, and all of them are based on the devil's lies. Let me mention some of these.

A. **Relativism**

First of all, relativism. What is relativism? Relativism is the idea that there's no fixed truth.

A professor in the university stood up and said, "Students, I want to tell you, there is nothing that you can say is absolutely true; there's nothing that you can be absolutely sure of." A student lifted his hand and said, "Professor, are you sure of that?" He said, "Absolutely."

Relativism: Everything is relative. That roots back to a philosopher whose name was Hegel. And he had sort of a dialectic. What Hegel said was, "Over here is a thesis, a belief; and over here is an antithesis, or an *anti-thesis*, that says, 'I argue with that.' And these two get in a big argument. And then they come together to a synthesis—thesis, antithesis, synthesis." And so maybe the thesis over here is capitalism, the antithesis is communism, and then the synthesis is socialism. And then that synthesis in the minds of many becomes the new thesis. Now *this* is true. And then over here you get another antithesis. And then after a while, you get another synthesis.

Do you see what is happening? Everything is relative. There is nothing fixed. There's no anchor. There's no standard. Man's mind just keeps on working.

Plato, in his *Republic*, talked about some sailors who, having lost their chart and compass, put a light on the bow of the ship and steered by that. That's what we're doing in today's society.

B. **Subjectivism**

Number one: relativism. Number two: subjectivism. What is subjectivism? "Well, I feel this," or "I feel that. Let me tell you about my experience." *There used to be a time when preachers would stand in the pulpit and say, "The Bible says." Then they started saying, "The church says." And now they just say, "Well, it seems to me," or "I feel," as they kind of scratch their head.* Subjectivism.

C. Rationalism

Or another substitute for the Word of God is rationalism—rationalism. That is, we bring logic. We bring our computers. We worship at the shrine of our intellect. And rather than saying, “Thus saith the Word of God,” we say, “Thus saith the mind of man.” We try to put God on our scales, put God in our test tubes, put God in our cyclotrons, put God in our computers, but God will not fit there.

“Well,” you say, “Pastor, I think we ought to be reasonable.” Sure, you ought to be. But, friend, *where reason cannot wade, faith must swim*. What we believe is not contrary to reason. Listen. It is not contrary to reason; it is beyond reason—beyond reason. God is not an unreasonable God. But can a man, by reason, find out God? Absolutely not! And so we try relativism and subjectivism and rationalism.

D. Pragmatism

And if that doesn't work, what most Americans like is pragmatism. What is pragmatism? Pragmatism doesn't even bother to ask, “Is it true?” We just ask, “Does it work?” We're very pragmatic about it.

E. Postmodernism

But the most dangerous of all—and this is the thing that is happening in the society we live in—is something called postmodernism—postmodernism. Now modernism would argue with conservatism about what is right or what is wrong. The postmodernist doesn't even bother to argue. The postmodernist doesn't even believe there is anything called truth. Or he might believe that truth is everywhere, but no one truth is over against another truth. So somebody might say, “Look. You're into Buddha; I'm into Jesus. What is true for you is fine. That's your truth. What is true for me is fine. That's my truth.” And this is called postmodernism. And it's a big word for a lot of silliness and foolishness. But the devil doesn't want you to believe that God is the God of truth.

Now if you have children, and you're raising those children, your children have been infected by these other forms, substitutes for the truth of God, and the big daddy liar is behind it all. And you're going to have difficulty raising your children unless you get them to believe that the Bible is the inerrant, inspired, infallible Word of God. And when you talk to them and say, “You should not commit fornication; you should not commit adultery,” you don't say, “It's because it's bad for you, or because society says so.” You say, “Because God says so.” You don't tell a lie. Why? Because God says so. It's wrong to steal, because God says so. You worship only one God, because the Bible teaches that. The devil does not want a society to have a fixed standard of truth.

God is good. Say *amen*. God is truth. Say *amen*. Now if you don't believe that, the devil's got you going his way.

III. Lie #3: God Is Not Righteous

He wants you to think negatively about God. Then he wants you to think skeptically about God. Lie number three: God is not righteous—God is not righteous. Look, if you will now, in Genesis 3, verse 4: *“And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die.”* (Genesis 3:4) That is, “God is not really going to punish sin. There is no God of judgment. You don’t have to worry about facing a judgment.”

Now I want to tell you, friend, God is good but God is also righteous. God is loving—yes, God is loving—but God is righteous. And now *if you preach the love of God to the exclusion of the holiness and the righteousness of God, you’ve only preached half of the truth. And when you take half of the truth and try to make half of the truth all of the truth, that half of the truth becomes an untruth.* Now Satan is moving them along.

“Now since you don’t believe that there is the God of the Bible who’s good and loving; and since you don’t believe that the God of the Bible is truthful, or the Bible, the Word, is true; then you don’t have to worry anymore about judgment.” Now when God gave the Ten Commandments, God was not giving advice; He was giving law. And law without penalty is only advice.

Now there are a lot of people today who take these things of pragmatism, rationalism, subjectivism, and they do away with the idea of eternal punishment. I would be unfair to you as a preacher if I did not tell you there is an eternal hell. If you die without Jesus Christ, you’re going to die and go to hell. You say, “Oh, Pastor, not on Sunday morning. You wouldn’t say...?” Yes. Yes, there is a fiery burning hell for those who reject Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord. You say, “Well, that’s un-American.” It may be. *I have an idea that if the Supreme Court of the United States of America could vote on it, they would outlaw hell as cruel and unusual punishment*—that God has no right, God has no authority, to do that. But God is a righteous God, and God will not let one-half of one sin go unpunished.

New Ageism comes out of the idea that you will not surely die. Do you know what the New Age is? It’s just a blend of Eastern religions that has come into America today. Satan knows that man fears death. That’s the reason some believe in reincarnation. You’d be surprised how many people in evangelical churches say they believe in reincarnation, that you just keep going around and around and you get as many chances as you need. The New Age has no personal God who’s going to judge.

Who is the high priestess of New Ageism in our day? It’s Shirley MacLaine. And she said in her writing, “We can eliminate all fear of death,” because she believes in reincarnation. You just keep coming back again and again. She said one time she was a princess in Atlantis. Another time she was an Inca in Peru. Another time she was a child raised by elephants. She believes this stuff; at least, she says she does.

You see, these people believe that men and animals, we’re all interrelated, and

we're all transmigrating. And if your karma is good, you keep moving up higher, and if your karma is bad, you move down. So in your next life you might be a worm. That's right. Or you might be a cow or a spider. That's the reason many of them are vegetarians. They won't go to McDonald's, afraid they might be eating their grandmother. They believe this stuff because, as Shirley MacLaine says, "It's like show business. You keep doing it until you get it right." And finally, one day, if your karma is good enough, you reach nirvana. But they reject the idea of a righteous God, a God of judgment. Their little imaginary god says that God is too good to punish sin.

Friend, God is too good not to punish sin. God is righteous. Say, "Righteous." God is righteous. The devil would have you to have the idea that you can sin with impunity. Friend, God is good. God is truthful. God is righteous. But these truths are being taken away from our society. These are big lies on which the other lies are built.

IV. Lie #4: God Is Not Gracious

Lie number four: God is not gracious—God is not gracious. Look, if you will now, in verses 4 and 5: "*And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day that ye eat thereof, then your eyes will be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.*" (Genesis 3:4–5) Now what he was saying, in effect, is, "Since God is not good, since God is not truthful, and since God is not righteous; you need not to fear Him. You need to be your own god," or "You need to experiment a little bit. You need to work your way up until you are like God. Now, Eve, you can never be capable of being all that you ought to be until you become autonomous. You don't need to depend upon God. This idea of God is cramping your style. Eve, you need to be liberated." *Satan's fib. Adam's rib. Women's lib.* God came to set every woman free and every man free, every boy and girl free, because He is a God of grace.

But notice I said the best lie sounds so much like the truth. Think of it. He said, "*God doth know that in the day ye eat...then your eyes will be opened, and ye shall be as [God].*" (Genesis 3:5) That's what Satan wanted to do, to begin with. He wanted to be "as God." But, you see, the Bible teaches we're to be *like* God, not as God. Small little difference. Satan says, "You be your own god, your own little autonomous god. You have your own way." Well, what does God's grace want us to be? God's grace wants us to be like Him. God created us in His image so He could have fellowship with us, as talked about in Revelation chapter 22 and verse 4: "*And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.*" (Revelation 22:4) What does that mean "His name in our foreheads"? That means godlikeness. What has God prepared for us? First Corinthians chapter 2, verse 9: "*As it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them*

that love him.” (1 Corinthians 2:9)

But what Satan was saying, “Oh, you don’t have to believe in God as a God of graciousness, that God has a great eternal destiny for you. Why, God has a monopoly on this thing of being God, and God doesn’t want you to get in on it. God is heading you off at the pass. You can never ever be fulfilled until you do your own thing. Eve, what you need to do is experiment. Try it; you might like it. How do you know it’s wrong? Because He said so? Because He said so? How do you know? After all, experience is the best teacher.” Friend, when it comes to sin, experience is not the best teacher. It’s the worst teacher. Sin deceives. Those who know the least about sin are those who are the deepest into it.

The Bible speaks of the deceitfulness of sin. (Hebrews 3:13) But what Satan is saying to Eve is, “Eve, you create your own little god. You will be like God.” And again, that’s New Ageism. All the New Agers believe that they are God. They believe, however, that everything is God. And you know, in India, they would say love is God. Now God is love, but love is not God. Listen very carefully. God is over all things, and God is in all things, but God is not all things, and all things are not God. People today have the idea that they are all a part of God in some way. This New Ageism has pervaded and perverted our ways.

Let me illustrate how it goes. Today, in our schools in the springtime, we dare not mention Easter and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. But I’ll tell you what we can mention is Earth Day. We can’t mention Father God, but we can mention Mother Earth. Why? Because they believe everything is God.

The birds are God. The trees are God. The sky is God. The air is God. I’m God. You’re God. They’re God. We’re God. Dirt is God. We are dirt. Wait a minute. If God is dirt and I’m God, it makes me dirt. And the animals are God. This New Ageism, it doesn’t elevate men. Humanism really animalizes man. But, you see, Satan is behind all of this.

Now you say, “Pastor, why are you saying all this?” Friend, it’s in the air like a fungus. “Every *ism*,” as Dr. Lee used to say, “ought to be a *was*.” They all go back to these four big lies. They deny (a) the goodness of God, (b) the truthfulness of God, (c) the righteousness of God, and (d) the graciousness of God. God is gracious. Say, “Gracious.” God loves you. God wants you to be like Him. God wants you to enjoy eternal fellowship with Him.

Conclusion

Now, let’s come to a conclusion. How are we going to deal with these lies? How are we going to overcome them? You say, “Pastor, glad to see you take off your watch and lay it out there.” A man went to a Baptist church for the first time, and the choir director

stood up. He said, “What does that mean?” His friend said, “The choir’s going to sing.” The ushers came forward. He said, “What does that mean?” “They’re going to take an offering.” The pastor took off his watch, and he said, “What does that mean?” “It doesn’t mean a thing in the world.”

How are we going to come to a conclusion of this thing? Just leave Genesis and go to Revelation. May I tell you there are two books the devil hates: One is Genesis and the other is Revelation, because in Genesis the devil’s doom is pronounced. In Revelation, it’s carried out. Look, if you will, in Revelation 12, verses 9 to 11: “*And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent...*”—now we’ve already seen him—“*that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world:*”—those are his four big lies—“*he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.*” And that’s the reason we have such mayhem here on earth. “*And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ:*”—listen to me, friend. Here’s how we’re going to overcome these lies—“*for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him*”—here’s verse 11—“*by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.*” (Revelation 12:9–11)

A. **Calvary’s Conquest**

Now, how are you going to overcome these lies? How? First of all, by Calvary’s conquest—by Calvary’s conquest: “*by the blood of the Lamb.*” (Revelation 12:11) On the cross, Satan’s back was broken. His lies are exposed. He’s shown to be what he is: a fake, a fraud, an imposter. And you’re never going to overcome Satan and his lies until you come to Jesus. Have you been to Calvary? Has the blood of the Lamb, the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, become a covering for your sins? I know again, it’s politically incorrect to talk about the blood today. We’re supposed to talk about feel-good religion. The Bible says, “*Without shedding of blood is no remission [of sin].*” (Hebrews 9:22)

Billy Graham, when he first started preaching, had a professor from Cornell University come to him and say, “Young man, you’re gifted. You’re a great speaker. You are very persuasive. But if you want to go places, you’re going to have to leave out that *blood* stuff.” Billy said, “I determined to preach on the blood of Jesus more than ever.”

B. **Courageous Confession**

“*They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb.*” (Revelation 12:11) Have you been saved? Number two: “*by the word of their testimony.*” (Revelation 12:11) What is the word of our testimony? Not just standing up and saying, “I want to tell you what Jesus has done for me.” This is the word of our testimony: the Word of God. Bring the Word of

God against these lies. Make certain that you're saved. Know the Bible, the Word of God, that pulls the veil of darkness away and exposes Satan's lies, like we're doing this morning.

C. Complete Commitment

"And they loved not their lives unto the death." (Revelation 12:11) What does that mean? Not only Calvary's conquest, not only courageous confession, but complete commitment. *"They loved not their lives unto the death."* They said, "I'm going for God. Every ounce, every inch, every nerve, every fiber, even if I die serving Jesus, I love not my life unto the death." *Until a man is no longer afraid to die, he's not yet ready to live.*

Friend, do you know Jesus? Are you saved? Listen to me. Look up. Look right here. See if you've got any of these ideas in your head. Have you been thinking that God is not good, running from God? You ought to be running to Him. God is good. Have you been thinking that God is not truthful, that the Bible, perhaps, has errors, and somehow you can do it some other way? It's a lie from hell. God is truthful. Have you been thinking that somehow you can just skate on through and that you will never come to judgment? Look up here and let me tell you: God is righteous. Have you been thinking that, perhaps, God doesn't have a wonderful plan for you? He does. God is gracious. *"For by grace are ye saved through faith."* (Ephesians 2:8) I want you to know Him, and you can know Him.

Four Lies That Ruined the Word

By Adrian Rogers

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Main Scripture Text: Genesis 3:1–5

“Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?”

GENESIS 3:1

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Introduction

Find Genesis chapter 3. And, when you’ve found it, look up here. The title of the message, today, is: “Four Lies that Ruined the World.”

My daughter Janice and I were talking on the phone last night—and she’s my baby daughter—and, she said, “Daddy, what are you going to preach, Sunday morning?” I said, “On four lies that ruined the world.” She said, “Let me guess: communism, humanism, new-ageism?” I said, “No, those are all lies. But, the lies that I’m going to be talking about are bigger than those lies and the root of all of those lies. And, we’re going to find those, right back here, in the Book of Genesis.

May I say, by way of introduction, that Satan’s entire system is built on lies. Now, if you don’t understand that, you’ll not understand the way that Satan works. Jesus, when

He was speaking to the Pharisees who were unsaved, said, in John chapter 8, and verse 44: *“Ye are of your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it”* (John 8:44). That is, he’s the big daddy liar. He’s the liar that every other liar is acting like, when they tell a lie. He is the one that spawned every other lie.

Jesus said: *“He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth”* (John 8:44). Now, learn something, right there: Satan’s motive is murder. He was a murderer. A *murderer* is somebody who takes life. He wants to bring death to you, to happiness, to joy, to purity. He wants to bring physical death. He wants to bring spiritual death. He wants to bring eternal death. He is a murderer. His motive is murder; his method is the lie. *“He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth”* (John 8:44). So, he is the father of all lies. And, being the father of all lies, he is the master liar.

Now, the master lies sound the most like the truth. Look here, if you will, in Genesis chapter 3 and verse 1: *“Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field”*—just underscore the word *subtle*—*“The serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field”* (Genesis 3:1). Now, Satan’s lies are very good. The cleverest lies have a lot of truth in them and are very close to the truth, even when they are so far away from the truth.

You see, some things are obviously wrong. But, even something obviously wrong may have some truth in it. A clock that doesn’t even run is right twice a day, right? When it doesn’t even run. But, a clock that doesn’t run is not all that dangerous. Because, you look at a clock that doesn’t run, and you say, “If it’s twelve hours wrong, that is wrong. Somebody tell me what time it is.” Because, it’s obviously wrong. What is more dangerous: a clock twelve hours wrong, or a clock five minutes wrong? A clock five minutes wrong, because a clock five minutes wrong could cause you to miss your airplane.

Now, the best lie is the lie that is closest to the truth and sounds most like the truth. And, that’s what you would expect from Satan, as he is more subtle than any beast of the field (Genesis 3:1).

Now, something else I want you to learn: Satan not only is the master liar, Satan is not only the father of lies and the cleverest lies, but Satan, as a liar, tells a lie about the biggest truth. Now, Satan is not interested in telling lies about small things, necessarily. He doesn’t care if you believe small things that are right. He wants you to misbelieve big things. You see, as the greatest liar, the father of lies, the cleverest of liars, his lies are about the biggest subjects. And, what is the biggest subject? God. God.

Now, if Satan can get you to believe a wrong thing about God, he has you. Why?

Because, the *thought* is the father of the *deed*. The devil is a pusher of lies more than a pusher of narcotics. The devil had rather get you to believe a wrong thing than to do a wrong thing. If he can get you to believe a wrong thing, you'll keep doing a wrong thing, over and over again. If you believe the right thing, you may do a wrong thing in error, but you'll come back to the truth. So, the devil wants you to believe a wrong thing. And, he wants you to believe a wrong thing about God, because, if you don't understand God, you're eternally lost. *"He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed"* (John 3:18). So, Satan wants to destroy your belief system. He is a pusher of lies. He is the master liar. He is the father of all lies.

I. **Satan's Lies**

Now, what we're going to do—we're going to look here, in the Book of Genesis, and see four of Satan's lies that have ruined the world. And, by the way, these lies are part of Satan's system to evangelize the world. Now, the devil is an evangelist. He's not merely looking for casualties; he's also looking for converts. He wants to get people into his way, to believe his way. And so, he gives these four lie lies. They're not the four spiritual laws. They're the four spiritual flaws.

His first convert was Eve. She believed the devil's gospel, and he converted her over to his way. And, he did it through deception. Are you ready for these four lies? Let me tell you what they are, so you can beware of them.

A. **God Is Not Loving**

Lie number one is this: God is not loving. Look, if you will, in chapter 3, verse 1: *"Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made"*—Satan had taken upon him the form of a serpent—*"And he said"*—that is, Satan said—*"unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?"* (Genesis 3:1). Now, what he's giving here is a negative statement about God. He says to Eve, "Did God say that you could not eat of the fruit of every tree of the garden?"

Well, first of all, if you know your Bible, you know that God did not say that. Contrariwise, God said just the opposite. Go backward in your Bible to the chapter just before that. Look in chapter 2 and verse 16: *"And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat"* (Genesis 2:16). Do you see it? Satan said, "God said you should not eat of every of the fruit of every tree in the garden." God said just the opposite. *"Of every tree ... thou mayest freely eat"* (Genesis 2:16).

What is the devil trying to do? He's trying to get Eve to think negatively about God,

to get across the idea that God is not good, that God is some sort of a *cosmic killjoy*, that every time He sees anybody having any fun, He moves in to break up the game, that God doesn't want man to have any pleasure. Do you have the idea that if you gave your heart to Jesus Christ, your pleasure would end, your joy would end? Do you think negatively about God? You see, the devil wants you to think that God is so straight-laced, God is so cruel, God is so negative, that God says, "You can't do this, you can't do that; don't touch this, don't taste that, don't do that; don't, don't, don't."

That's the idea some people have of God. They think negatively of God, and, therefore, they run from God, because they think that God wants to deny them pleasure. The truth of the matter is this—listen carefully—God has said a resounding yes to your pleasure. Now, that may even sound heretical. We're supposed to think that when we come to God, we're supposed to be miserable. But, if the devil can get you thinking negatively about God, you're going to run from God. That's the reason why many kids run from God. They think, "You know, if I give my heart to Christ, my life is over. It's up. I've had it. No more joy, no more happiness." Listen to these verses that put the truth to the devil's lie:

Psalm 37, and verse 4. Listen to it: *"Delight thyself also in the LORD, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart"* (Psalm 37:4). I am satisfied with Jesus; I really am. *"Delight thyself in the LORD, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart"* (Psalm 37:4). Psalm 37 and verse 4. Put down "Psalm 84, and verse 11": *"The LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD will give grace and glory"*—listen to this, now—*"No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly"* (Psalm 84:11). Do you like that? That's Bible. *"No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly"* (Psalm 84:11).

God is not there to take away joy; He is there to give it. If it'll make you healthy, happy, wholesome, holy, God says, "Help yourself." Don't get the idea that God is up there, some vengeful deity, sitting upon some august throne, making horrendous laws, so we'll squirm like a worm in hot ashes trying to keep them. And then, we fail, and He's throwing down thunderbolts, because we failed to keep His law. No! *"The LORD 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). As I often tell our young people, *every time He says, "Thou shalt not," He's saying, "Don't hurt yourself." Every time He says, "Thou shalt," He's saying, "Help yourself to happiness. These laws are for your welfare. I made you. I love you."*

Why do you think God created the lavish beauties of Eden? He did it for Adam and Eve. Do you think God made all the good things in this world for the devil's kids? Think about it. God is a good God. Now, the devil wants you to think negatively about God. God is good. Say it: "Good." God is good. Say: "God is good." Say: "All the time." Now, don't ever forget that, because the devil, if he can get you to thinking negatively about

God, he's already got a hook in you. And, that's the devil's big lie: to get you to doubt the goodness of God.

B. **God Is Not Truthful**

Now, number two. Lie number two: Not only will the devil tell you that God is not good, but the devil will tell you that God is not truthful. Look now, in Genesis chapter 3, verses 2 through 4: *“And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden”—Eve knew better—“We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die”* (Genesis 3:2–4).

Now, God said, “In the day that you disobey me, and the day that you sin, you will surely die.” And now, the devil says, “You will not surely die.” Well, who's telling the truth: God, or the devil? You see, first of all, he started out with a doubt, in verse 1: *“Yea, hath God said?”* (Genesis 3:1). And then, in verse 4, he implies God hath not said (Genesis 3:4). First of all, the doubt; and then, the denial. Satan will move in on you, and get you to doubt the Word of God. And, once he gets you to doubting the Word of God, then he can get you to deny the Word of God. And, may I say this: that anybody anywhere who puts any doubt or denial to the Word of God—I don't care how many degrees he has, I don't care what seminary he teaches in, I don't care what pulpit he occupies—he's doing the work of the devil? He's doing the work of the devil. *Anybody who puts a question mark, or a negative mark, in front of the Word of God is doing the work of the devil.*

And, the devil's first lie is that God is not loving. The second lie is that God is not truthful: “You shall not surely die.” That you can, somehow, sin with impunity. And so, what he wants you to do is to think wrongly not only about God's goodness—to think negatively about Him—but to think wrongly about God's truthfulness, to think that God is not truthful. He wants you to think negatively about God, and then, he wants you to think with skepticism about God.

Now, the devil is quick. He knows that nature abhors a vacuum. So, when he removes the truth of God's Word, then he slips in other ideas, other bases for truth. And, what are they? What do we see in today's society? You see, this is not just what God has said; it's what God is saying. It's not just what the devil has done; it's what the devil is doing, also. What are the substitutes for truth that we face today?

1. **Relativism**

First of all is relativism. What is relativism? Relativism means there is no fixed standard of right or wrong. There was a philosopher named Hegel. And, Hegel brought this idea of relativism to the modern-day world. Hegel said that all philosophical thought, and

political action, and all of man's societal machinations are built on something called thesis, antithesis, and synthesis.

Let me explain that, kids. First of all, a thesis means "a truth, something that somebody at least postulates as a truth." They say, "This is truth." That is a thesis. Somebody says, "I don't believe that." They come over here with an anti-thesis. We call it an antithesis. Anti-thesis. So, there's a thesis, and an antithesis, and these get in a big argument. And, finally, each give a little, and they come to the middle with a synthesis, that we all get together. We merge these truths together.

Let's take, for example, and say that the thesis is capitalism, the antithesis is communism: the synthesis is socialism. Now, that, then, becomes the synthesis. Now, watch it: The synthesis, then, becomes the new thesis. And then, there is another antithesis, and then another synthesis. Do you see what is happening? Nothing is fixed. No standard. Everything is relative. That's the reason the kids go to school, and they learn relativism.

The professor stood up and said, "Young people, listen to me. You cannot say with absoluteness anything. Everything is relative. You cannot say that you're sure of anything." A student said, "Professor, are you sure of that?" He said, "Absolutely." Relativism.

2. Subjectivism

And then, not only do we have relativism, but another substitute is subjectivism. Now, what is subjectivism? It's based on feelings, what you feel—that we all have some sort of an inner light in us, and so, we are motivated and moved by our feelings. And, when you talk to them, and take the Word of God, they'll say, "Well, I just don't feel that's right. I just don't feel that is right." That is subjectivism. It's all very subjective.

There used to be a time when preachers would stand in the pulpit and say, "The Bible says..." Then, they started saying, "The Church says..." Now, they just scratch their head and say, "Well, it seems to me..." People are not interested in that. Or, sadly, some people are interested in that. And, all we do is mesh and mold our ideas of subjectivism together, and it is religion based on feeling and experience.

3. Rationalism

And then, again, there's rationalism. Now, I don't know which is worse in the area of spiritual truth—whether it's relativism, subjectivism, or rationalism. But, rationalism just brings the human mind into it. And, we say, "Well, if I can prove it, if I can weigh it, if I can measure it, if I can put it in a computer, if I can put it on a slide rule, if I can put it in a test tube, if I can put it on scales, then maybe I will believe it. If I can touch it, taste it, smell it, then maybe it's real."

"Well," you say, "Pastor, you don't believe in rationalism?" Of course I do. I'm not

saying that what we believe is irrational, but what we believe goes beyond reason. It goes on to revelation. The Bible says, “Can a man by reasoning find out God?” (Job 11:7). Of course not. God is the great, eternal *I AM*, and you’ll never know Him apart from revelation. But, *the devil says, “Substitute ‘Thus saith the mind of man’ for ‘Thus saith the Word of God.’”*

4. Pragmatism

Another belief system that we have in America today is pragmatism. What is pragmatism? Pragmatism doesn’t even bother to ask what is right and what is wrong. They just say, “Does it work?” If it works, fine. Somebody says, “I’m into yoga. It gives me peace.” It works. You see, they don’t ask whether it’s based in truth. The devil doesn’t care what you believe, as long as you don’t believe the Word of God.

5. Postmodernism

And then, last of all—and this one, maybe, is a new one to you—is postmodernism. What is postmodernism? You’ll hear that word more and more. Postmodernism just has given up the struggle to prove anything right or wrong in the area of philosophy. They still believe two and two is four, when they go to the bank. But, in what we’re talking about, the most important subject of all, they just say, “Well, look. There are different kinds of truths, and truth may be contradictory.”

So, for example, here’s a person who believes in Buddha. Here’s a person who says he believes in Jesus. And, this person who has been affected by postmodernism, in order to be politically correct, says, “Look. You are into Buddha; I’m into Jesus. Isn’t that wonderful? You have your truth, and I have my truth.” And, they believe that. They believe that what he believes is true, and what I believe is true. Those things that are different are not the same. But, they don’t have enough “whatever it is” to understand that.

So, what the devil has done—listen—what the devil has done, first of all, is to deny the goodness of God. To get you to believe the first lie: that God is not good; and, the second lie: that God is not truthful. And, you can think not only negatively about God, but, therefore, you can think skeptically about God.

C. God Is Not Righteous

Lie number three: Not only does he want you to think that God is not good, or God is not loving; and, number two, that God is not truthful; but, number three, that God is not righteous. That God is not righteous. For example, he says here, in verse 4: “*Ye shall not surely die*” (Genesis 3:4). Now, God said, “You’re going to die, if you sin against me.” “*The wages of sin is death*” (Romans 6:23). “*The soul that sinneth, it shall die*” (Ezekiel 18:20).

Why is that? Well, we’ve said, in the first point, that God is loving. And, God is

loving. And, we said that God is truthful. And, God *is* truthful. But, God is also righteous. He is holy. And, God will punish sin. Now, the devil wants us to believe that, somehow, God will not punish sin—that we can sin with impunity. The Ten Commandments are not advice; they're law. Law without penalty is only advice. God has said, "Thou shalt not." And, God is a righteous and a holy God. God is just as righteous and just as holy as He is loving.

Now, sometimes we have, today, a saccharin form of religiosity that speaks about the love of God, the love of God, the love of God, and speaks nothing about the justice, and the judgment, and the righteousness of God. God is love. God is infinite love. But, if you take the love of God and preach the love of God to the exclusion of the righteousness of God and the holiness of God, you've only got half a truth. That half of the truth may be true as half of the truth, but it's not all of the truth. And, *when you take half of the truth and try to make half of the truth all of the truth, that half of the truth becomes an untruth.* God is a God of justice and judgment.

Now, we live in a world, today, that doesn't like the idea of justice and judgment. That's the reason the New Age is here, today. Shirley MacLaine says that we, through New Age religion, can remove all fear of death and judgment. What is *New Age religion*, anyway? You're going to find out how some of these so-called new things are the mustiest things around. They go all the way back to the Garden of Eden; yet we call it the New Age. Well, Shirley MacLaine, a movie actress or something, the *high priestess of New Ageism*, believes in Hinduism, and these eastern religions that have come over here that believe in reincarnation.

Now, they believe in *reincarnation*. That is, that you keep getting born over and over again. You keep getting a second chance. And, they believe that men and animals are basically the same, so there's *transmigration*. You may leave this life, one time, and come back the next time as a cow. Or, if your *karma* is good, you may come back as something better.

Shirley MacLaine believes that, one time, she was raised by elephants. Another time, she was a priestess in Atlantis. Another time, she was an Inca. And, good night! She believes all this crazy stuff—that she keeps getting recycled and coming back. Now, if your karma is good, you keep getting recycled up to a higher level, but if your karma is bad, you may come back as a worm, or a spider, or maybe a cow. That's the reason so many of them are vegetarians. They won't go to McDonalds—afraid they might be eating Grandmamma. But, the idea in biblical truth is that you are moving in a straight line on to judgment. But, in this kind of phony-baloney, you keep going 'round, and 'round, and 'round. And, she says it's like being in a play. You keep on doing it until you get it right. And then, you float off into some place called nirvana.

Well, you say, "Nobody believes that." You don't know what you're talking about.

You go to the bookstores, today, and look in the sections on religion, and see what is happening in America. And, these things go all the way back to the Garden of Eden. These are the old, old lies of the devil: a) that God is not good; b) that God is not truthful; c) that God is not righteous—that, somehow, you can sin with impunity. There is no judgment where we will stand before the judgment bar of God and face judgment.

If you think that you can live without Jesus Christ, and die, and be recycled, friend, you're wrong. There's a life to live, a death to die, a judgment to face, and the devil doesn't want you to believe that. He does not want you to believe that God is a righteous and a holy God, and that the Bible says: *"As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So, then, every one of us shall give account of himself to God"* (Romans 14:11–12). But, these old lies keep coming back.

D. **God is Not Gracious**

Now, the fourth lie is this: Not only does the devil tell you that God is not good, and God is not truthful, and God is not righteous, but he'll tell you that God is not gracious. God is not gracious. You see, look at what he says here to Eve, in verses 4 through 5: *"And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die; For God doth know that in the day that ye eat thereof"*—that is, when you disobey God and eat the forbidden fruit—*"then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil"* (Genesis 3:4–5).

"Look, Eve, you can be a god." And, that's what New Ageism is all about—that man becomes a god, because they believe that God is in everything, and everything is in God. And, God is in the air, and God is in the trees, and God is in the earth, and God is in the plants, and God is in the animals, and God is in us, and I'm God; you're God; we're God; the earth is God; the sky is God; the trees are God; dirt is God; God is dirt; I am God; and I am dirt. I mean, that's what it is. That, rather than being in the image of God and the likeness of God, you become as God. What a difference! What a difference! You're not God. You never will be God. You might be a little, cheap tin imitation of God, but you'll never be as God. There's one God and one only: the great, eternal, transcendent God of the universe.

But, it's so seductive. You know what he was saying to Eve? "Eve, this creature that you've been talking to calls himself God. He's trying to head you off at the pass. You'll never fulfill yourself. Listen, Eve." He says, "Don't eat that fruit." Do you know why He said, "Don't eat that fruit?" 'Cause, when you eat it, you'll become like He is, and He's cornered the market on being God. He doesn't want any competition. "Now, Eve, He told you this was wrong. Eve, how do you know it's wrong? 'Cause He said so? Eve, you're a babe in the woods. You're not even dry behind the ears. You don't know. All

you have is His Word. Eve, try it. You might like it. I mean, after all, isn't experience the best teacher, Eve, hmm? Ah, you see, Eve, how do you know that this is wrong? All you have is His Word."

How many young people have ruined their lives through experimentation—experimenting with drugs, experimenting with sex, experimenting with other things—when God has given us His Word? But, rather than saying, "Well, I'm not going to do this, because God says so," they say, "Well, at least I'm young. I'm going to try it. Everybody has to sow his wild oats." No, you don't. But, if you sow them, you have to reap them. *A lot of people want to sow wild oats six days a week, and come to church on Sunday and pray for crop failure.* Because, they won't take God at His Word.

One young lady was trying to get another young lady to sacrifice her virginity, to give herself to become the dirty plaything of a dirtier man. This girl was a virgin, and a Christian. She said to this girl, who had already sullied her own life, "Look, I want to tell you something. Any time I want to become like you, I can; any time you would again become like me, you cannot."

Ladies, girls, save yourself for the one you're going to marry. Young man, keep yourself pure. Again, God's laws are for your welfare. I tell our kids, *"You eat your cake today; you'll have a crummy tomorrow."* God has a wonderful plan for you.

What was God's plan for Adam and Eve? God made man in His image, so we could have fellowship with Him. In the book of the Revelation, He says His name will be in our foreheads (Revelation 14:1). *"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him"* (1 Corinthians 2:9). God had a wonderful and a glorious plan for Adam and Eve, a gracious plan, but the devil wanted them to think, first of all, negatively about God; secondly, skeptically about God; thirdly, lightly about God—"you don't have to worry about punishment"—and, last of all, suspiciously about God. "Why, God doesn't have a wonderful plan for you."

And, friend, you'd be surprised, today, how many people think that if they serve God, it will cramp their style. This is where the spirit of rebellion is in our world, today: Adam's rib, Satan's fib, women's lib. He was saying, "Look, Eve, I am going to liberate you." And, she fell into bondage. And, all of the problems that we have in the world, today—all of them, all of them, a-I-I, every one of them—root in these four ancient lies—"four lies that have ruined the world."

II. Overcoming Satan's Lies

Now, the Bible says, over in the Book of the Revelation, the 12th chapter, speaking of that old serpent, the devil, and it says, concerning the saints: *"And they overcame him"*—that is, the devil; listen to this—*"by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of*

their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death” (Revelation 12:11).

A. Calvary’s Conquest

How would you like to overcome Satan and live free from those four lies? Number one: *“They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb”* (Revelation 12:11). That’s Calvary’s conquest. Christ, on the cross, undid all that the devil did there in the Garden of Eden. On the cross, Satan’s back was broken. And, through the blood of the Lamb, every lie that you believe can be forgiven. You can be cleansed and pure, and you can see, through the lenses of the cross, what the real truth is. *“They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb”* (Revelation 12:11).

When Billy Graham started as a young preacher, there was a professor from Cornell University who said to him, “Young man. You’re gifted. You’re intelligent. You’re winsome. You’re persuasive. You can go a long way, if you’ll leave out that blood stuff.” Graham said, “I made up my mind I would preach on the blood of Jesus more than ever.”

“They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb” (Revelation 12:11). Friend, Jesus died for you. He shed His blood for you. If you’ve been taken by the devil’s lies, here’s the truth, through the Lord Jesus: You can be forgiven, cleansed, renewed, restored. *“They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb”* (Revelation 12:11).

B. Courageous Confession

“The word of their testimony” (Revelation 12:11). What does that mean? I want to tell you what Jesus means to me? No. The word of your testimony is the Bible. The Word of God is the word of your testimony. Take God’s truth, the written Word of God, and overcome the devil’s lies.

C. Complete Commitment

And, last of all, not only Calvary’s conquest, and not only courageous confession, but complete commitment. *“They loved not their lives unto the death”* (Revelation 12:11). Now, what does that mean? It means that, if necessary, they would die for their faith. *Do you have a faith worth dying for? If you don’t, you don’t have a faith worth living for.* And, *until a man is no longer afraid to die, he’s not yet ready to live.* Thank God, thank God, thank God, Satan’s lies can be obliterated by the truth of God’s Word, by the blood of the Lamb, the word of our testimony, and by a solid, complete commitment to Jesus Christ. Are you ready to make that commitment?

Conclusion

Bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. If you’d like to receive Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord, I’d like to help you. And, I want

to tell you, today, that God loves you. He loves you. Don't you let the devil get you to thinking negatively about God. I want to tell you, today, that the Bible is truth. Don't let the devil put doubts in your mind, skepticism about the Word of God. I want to tell you that God is righteous. You need to be saved, because, if not, you'll face judgment. And, I want to tell you that God is gracious. God loves you. God has a wonderful plan for you. And, God is stretching out His arms of grace and love to you, today.

Are you ready to step into those arms? Are you ready now—today, now—to receive Him? Pray like this: “Dear God, I need to be saved and I want to be saved. Jesus, thank You that You died in my place on the cross. Thank You for Your precious shed blood. I believe You're the Son of God, and I receive You into my life, today, as my Lord and Savior. Forgive my sin. Thank You for doing it. Oh, thank You for forgiving it. Cleanse me, Lord. Wash me. And now, Lord, come live in me, and begin now to make me the person You want me to be. Save me, Jesus. Thank You for doing it. Thank You. Now, Lord Jesus, I'll make it public. I will not be ashamed of You, because You died for me. I love You, Jesus. Amen.”

Overcoming Satanic Deception

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: July 5, 1992

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 3:1–5

“And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.”

GENESIS 3:4–5

Outline

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Introduction

Turn in the book of Genesis—that ought to be easy to find—the third chapter. When you’ve found Genesis the third chapter, I want you to look up here. We’ve already announced that our subject today is “Overcoming Satanic Deception.” The Bible calls Satan “the great deceiver.” (Revelation 12:9) The biggest liar in this city, your city, and the cities around the world is Satan himself. And Jesus Christ told us about the nature of Satan in John chapter 8 and verse 44.

Now, keep your Bibles open to Genesis chapter 3, but let me just set the stage with John chapter 8 and verse 44. Jesus, speaking to the liars of His day, said, “*Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts*”—that is, “the desires”—“*of your father ye will do.*” (John 8:44) That is, like father, like son. And then Jesus describes Satan, and I want you to listen to Him. Jesus said of Satan, “*He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar,*”—“*for he is a liar*”—“*and the father of it.*” (John 8:44)

Now in that incredible verse in John chapter 8 and verse 44, Jesus Christ told us two things about Satan—well, other things, but two primarily. First of all, he said he is a murderer, and then he said he is a liar. His motive is murder. You got it? His method is to lie. Now, learn that about your enemy, the devil. Satan is a murderer. He wants to bring death to purity, love, you, joy, and happiness. He wants to bring physical death, spiritual death, and eternal death. He is a murderer. But what is his chief tool for murder? How does Satan destroy? He destroys by deceiving. Now he is, Jesus said, the father of all lies; that is, he is the master liar. (John 8:44)

And I want to say also, because he is the master liar, he is very clever. The Bible speaks of “*the wiles of the devil.*” (Ephesians 6:11) The cleverest lies sound the most like the truth. And all lies have some truth in them—all good lies.

A clock that won't even run is right twice a day, isn't it? All lies have some truth in them.

You see, the devil is very, very subtle. Paul said, in 2 Corinthians chapter 11 and verse 3, “*But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.*” (2 Corinthians 11:3) The devil beguiled Eve with his subtlety. His lies are so very subtle. They sound so much like the truth.

Question: What is more dangerous: a clock five minutes wrong, or a clock five hours wrong? Carelessly, you may say, “Well, the clock five hours wrong is more dangerous than the clock five minutes wrong.” But wait a minute. When you look at a clock that's five hours wrong, you say, “That's wrong. Somebody tell me what time it is.” But a clock five minutes wrong can cause you to miss your airplane. You see, dear friend, the lie that is closest to the truth is much more dangerous.

And so the devil, when he wants to destroy you, he begins by deceiving you, because he works first on your mind, and then he works on the rest of you, because, you see, the thought is the father of the deed.

The devil had rather get you to believe a wrong thing than to do a wrong thing, because if he's got you believing the wrong thing, it follows, as night follows day, you'll be doing the wrong thing as well as believing the wrong thing. *The thought is the father of the deed. You sow a thought; you reap a deed. You sow a deed; you reap a habit. You sow a habit; you reap a character.* It all begins with the thought life. Now, follow me. Satan is a liar. He lies in order to get his work done, because he's a murderer. He is a master liar. He is a clever liar. His lies sound the most like the truth. He wants to lie to you because he wants to change your thought processes in order to deceive you and destroy you.

Now he is not only the father of lies, he's not only the cleverest liar, but he lies about the biggest subject. What is the biggest subject? God—God. Satan, being the deceiver

he is, wants to deceive you primarily about God. Now if Satan can get your thinking wrong about God, if he can put lies in your heart, deceptions in your heart and your mind about God, beyond the shadow of any doubt or peradventure, he has you in everything else—if he can distort your idea of God. A. W. Tozer, a great preacher of yesteryear, said this—and it is so true: “No religion can rise higher than its concept of God.” And in the scripture now that I’m about to read, Satan has distorted the idea of God in three basic ways. Now we find this right in the threshold of human history all the way back in the Garden of Eden. So Satan is often deceptive; Satan is often duplicitous, but his methods are as old as Eden.

Look, if you will, in Genesis chapter 3, verse 1: *“Now the serpent...”*—that refers to Satan—*“Now the serpent was more subtil”*—that is, “more crafty, more wily”—*“than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden,”*—that is, “in the middle of the garden”—*“God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day that ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods...”*—oh, dear friend, that’s New Ageism, right? The New Age is not new. Underscore—*“ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.”* (Genesis 3:1–5)

And I’m going to stop there for just a moment, and we’re going to go look at these three lies from the master liar concerning the very nature and the character of God. There are three ways that Satan wants you to think about God. And if he can get you to think about God in these three ways, he has you.

I. Satan Wants You to Think Severely About God

First of all, Satan wants you to think severely about God. Now Satan does not primarily deny the existence of God or the fact of God; that’s too self-evident. Satan is too clever for that. Satan admits that God is there, but what he wants to do is to get you to think of God as being cruel and harsh and severe. What Satan wants to do is, when you think of God, he wants your minds to be filled with negative thoughts. He doesn’t want you to think positively about God; he wants you to think negatively about God. He doesn’t want you to think kindly about God; he wants you to think severely about God.

You say, “Pastor, how do you know that?” All right, look in verse 1: *“Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?”* (Genesis 3:1) “Did God say, ‘You can’t have this’? Did God make all of this beautiful garden and then tell you not to touch it?” Well, of course, that was a lie. God had not

said, “Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden.” There was only one tree that they were forbidden to eat of, isn’t that right? Just one. That was the tree in the midst of the garden.

As a matter of fact, go back to Genesis chapter 2 and verse 16, and you’re going to find out, “*And the LORD God commanded the man saying, Of every tree...thou mayest freely eat.*” (Genesis 2:16) “Help yourself.” God said, “I made it for you. I love you.” But now Satan says, “God said, ‘Don’t eat of anything.’” Now, what was Satan doing? Satan was trying to get Eve to think negatively about God, severely about God, to think of God as some kind of a cosmic killjoy, that God is so straightlaced, God is so severe, God is so cruel, that He has forbidden His creatures any legitimate joy and any legitimate pleasure.

And there are many people, when they think of salvation, they think of belonging to the Lord as like taking bad medicine in order to get well. The idea of serving God to them is painful. The idea of being a Christian is negative. It’s something you endure, they think, in order somehow to please God, but that everything that God has made is either illegal, immoral, or fattening, that God is just one great big cosmic killjoy.

Well, that’s not the idea of God. My dear friend, you’d better get that negative idea of God out of your heart and out of your mind. *God is not some sort of a severe, cruel, vengeful deity sitting upon a throne somewhere hurling down thunderbolts of wrath, up there thinking up laws to make you squirm, like a worm in hot ashes, trying to keep His laws.* If Satan can get you to thinking negatively about God, he already has you.

Can you imagine the glories of the Garden of Eden? Can you imagine how beautiful Eden must have been?

Not so long ago, I was in Victoria, Canada. I hope someday, if you have an opportunity, that you can go to Victoria and go to the Butchart Gardens there. They’re so beautiful. I mean, you walk through those gardens—indescribably beautiful—it looks like every blade of grass has been manicured. As you walk through there, you wonder what the Garden of Eden must have been like—what the Garden of Eden must have been like.

And God made this Garden of Eden, and God put Adam and Eve there, and God with a smile on His face said, “Adam, I made that for you. Eve, I made that for you. Help yourself.”

“But,” you say, “Pastor, didn’t God put one tree in the middle of the garden and tell them not to eat of it?” Of course He did! That was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Now they needed to know good and evil from what God said about it, not what they experience. And, of course, in order for mankind to have a choice, God had to make a choice possible. No man can be loyal unless he can be disloyal. No man can love unless he has an opportunity to *dis-love*. And so the tree was there as a test. And God

said, “Don’t eat of it.” That wasn’t a threat; that was a warning. *And every time God says, “Thou shalt not,” He’s just saying, “Don’t hurt yourself.” And every time God says, “Thou shalt,” He’s saying, “Help yourself to happiness.”* God loves you. God is a good God. God is good. The devil doesn’t want you to know that.

I want to give you some verses. Psalm 37 and verse 4—listen to it: *“Delight thyself...in the LORD: and he shall give thee”—what?—“the desires of thine heart.”* (Psalms 37:4) Does that sound like a severe God? Does that sound like a negative God? Does that sound like a cruel God, a vengeful God? *“Delight thyself...in the LORD: and he shall give thee the desires of thy heart.”* (Psalms 37:4)

Oh, listen to this—Psalm 84 and verse 11: *“The LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory:”—now, listen to this—“no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.”* (Psalms 84:11) If it will make you healthy, happy, holy, wholesome, God says, “Help yourself, my child. I love you.” *“The LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.”* (Psalms 84:11) Or listen to this—1 Timothy chapter 6 and verse 17: *“God...giveth us richly all things to enjoy.”* (1 Timothy 6:17)

God has given:

*More sky than man can see,
More seas than he can sail,
More sun than he can bear to watch,
More stars than he can scale.
More breath than he can breathe,
More yield than he can sow,
More grace than he can comprehend,
More love than he can know.*

—RALPH W. SEAGER

He *“giveth us richly all things to enjoy.”* (1 Timothy 6:17)

II. Satan Wants You to Think Sceptically About God

Now, first of all, Satan wants you to think severely about God. Do you have it? Here’s the second deception. Not only does he want you to think severely about God, but also he wants you to think sceptically about God—sceptically about God. Now, look in verse 2: *“And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die.”* (Genesis 3:2–4)

Now what he’s doing now is putting scepticism in her heart and in her mind. First of all, he makes her think that God is cruel, that God is withholding things, that God is a

negativist, that He put all of those things there in the garden and said, “Now you can’t touch it.” And now he’s saying, “You can’t trust this God. If this God is not good, surely He can’t be trusted.” By the way, let me say to all Bible doubters and all Bible deniers, *anybody who puts a doubt concerning the authorship, the accuracy, the authority, and the acceptability of the Bible is doing the work of the devil—I don’t care where he teaches or what degrees he may have.* That is the work of Satan to get people to think skeptically about God’s spoken Word. Now God spoke, and what God said was absolutely, totally reliable and authoritative.

Modern man today has all kinds of substitutes for the Word of God. Let me give you six of them:

A. **Relativism**

Relativism. We live in a day today where we’re filled with relativism—that is, that truth is always changing. They say, “Well, you know, we live in a new and a modern day, so what was true yesterday is not today.” Friend, I want to tell you: What is true is always true; and if it’s new, it’s not true. But relativism—and students are being taught relativism—really roots back in Hegelian philosophy.

B. **Subjectivism**

Another standard for knowledge is what we want to call subjectivism: “Well, I just feel it’s true. It just seems to me...” Well, friend, you’re not God. Your feelings are not God. I hear people say something like this: “Well, what’s true for you may not be true for me.” Do you ever hear that? Well, friend, if it’s true, it’s true no matter who it’s for—no matter who it’s for. But that’s subjectivism.

C. **Empiricism**

Here’s another substitute for truth: empiricism. Now, what is that? That just simply means that we decide what is truth by measurements, by testing, by what we call obvious evidence, empirical evidence. The scientist bows down to this standard for truth: empiricism.

D. **Existentialism**

Or existentialism. This is a big one the liberal theologians like. They don’t like to call the Bible the Word of God. Oh no, that offends them. They say it becomes the Word of God when you read it and you have a relationship with it. And that’s a big, double-jointed, highfalutin word that you’ll be introduced to, young people, when you get to college. Existentialism: “Truth is what you experience.”

E. **Rationalism**

Then, of course, there’s just rationalism. You take the Word of God or anything else, and you just parade it past the judgment bar of your mind and your logic. And so you

substitute “thus saith the mind of man” for “thus saith the Word of God.”

F. Pragmatism

And then I suppose the one that more Americans are into than anything else is pragmatism. We don't really even ask, “Is it true?” We ask, “Does it work?”—“Does it work?”

All six of these philosophies—the air is full of them. And they've all come from the master liar himself who said, “*Hath God said?*” (Genesis 3:1) and then said, “*Ye shall not surely die.*” (Genesis 3:4) And all of this kind of thinking leaves modern Americans with no fixed standard of truth. The devil wants you to think, my dear friend, skeptically—skeptically—about God. Americans used to live by the Word of God and run the government by the Constitution that came out of the Word of God.

Today we're just kind of making up the rules as we go along like the sailors described in Plato's *Republic*. They had no compass, so they put their lantern on the bow of the ship and steered by that. That's the way we're going in America today.

My dear friend, Satan, the master liar, has brought us away from a fixed standard of truth.

Now, why is it wrong to steal? Because the Word of God says, “*Thou shalt not steal.*” (Exodus 20:15) Why is it wrong to commit adultery? Because the Word of God says, “*Thou shalt not commit adultery.*” (Exodus 20:14) Why is sodomy a sin? Because the Word of God says it is an abomination. (Leviticus 18:22) That's why. Not because of what you think or what I think. But, you see, when we get away from the fixed standard of right and wrong, then what we do? We get away from the idea of any judgment. My dear friend, law without penalty is only advice, and God was not giving advice when He told Adam and Eve, “In the day that you eat thereof, you will surely die.” (Genesis 2:17) It is the devil's gospel—it is the devil's gospel—that God does not punish sin.

Now, you see, God is a good God, but God is a holy God. Now I told you that all of this is the New Age. *The New Age is as old as the Garden of Eden*. You know what the New Agers have done? They have tried to take away the fear of death from individuals in this twentieth century. And you know how they've done it? How have the New Agers taken away the fear of death? Reincarnation: You just keep on going around and around till you get it right. There's no judgment. There's no death—ultimately. There's no hell. And there's no personal God to whom you must give an account.

Shirley MacLaine, the high priestess of the New Age, said—and I quote: “We can eliminate all fear of death.” And she says, “Why, you know, I've had a number of lives.” One time, she says that she was a princess in Atlantis; that's the lost continent of Atlantis. One time, she was an Inca in Peru. One time, dear Shirley was a child raised by elephants. Now she is right. She just keeps going around. The idea in New Ageism is that man and plants and animals were all related. And we just keep transmigrating until

finally we get it right. Shirley MacLaine said it's like show business: You just keep doing it till you get it right. It's sort of musical chairs, and you have a karma, which is an embodiment of who you are and what you do. And if your karma's good, when you die, you reincarnate to something higher. But if your karma is bad, you may regress. And that's the way, according to them, we go through life. So you may rise to some higher form, or you may come back as a cockroach; you may come back as a spider. The idea is that by your karma you get what you deserve. But if you continue to do right and in each life you continue to live right, after a while, you will end up in nirvana—that is, you will be absorbed into everything and into nothing. Now, “you shall not surely die.”

All the New Age baloney that you're hearing today goes all the way back to the third chapter of Genesis. And, my dear friend, it is just—well, that's right, the Greek word *baloney*. That's all it is—that's all it is. Satan is so clever. Go into any modern bookstore and look at the books on Bible religion: You'll find about *that* many. Look at the books on New Age philosophy and reincarnation and all of this, and you'll find shelf after shelf after shelf in this twentieth century.

III. Satan Wants You to Think Suspiciously About God

Now here's the third thing Satan wants you to do. Not only does Satan want you to think severely about God—that God is cruel. Not only does he want you to think skeptically about God—you don't have to worry about what God says; you don't have to take God's Word at face value. The third thing that Satan wants you to do, my dear friend, is to think suspiciously about God. First of all, he wants you to think sternly about God, and then he wants you to think skeptically about God, and then he wants you to think suspiciously about God.

Continue to read here and listen to a master liar, and this is the lie that sounds so much like the truth. Listen to it—verse 5—Satan explains it all by saying, “*For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes will be opened, and ye shall be as gods,*”—literally, “as God”—“*knowing good and evil.*” (Genesis 3:5)

Now here is what Satan is implying by that statement, that God is unfair. “Eve, God doesn't want you to reach your full potential. God has a monopoly on this thing of being God, and God doesn't want you to understand that you have the ability to be a god also. What God is trying to do, Eve, is to cramp your style. What He is trying to do is to keep you from reaching your full human potential. Why, Eve, you can be like a god. And, how can you be like a god? Well, God is someone who knows what it's all about, and you can know what it's all about, Eve. And, how can you know? By experience and judgment. Eve, you don't need God to tell you what's right. You don't need God to tell you what's wrong. You can be self-authenticating, you can be autonomous, you can be independent, and you can reach your own potential. Eve, come here, baby. I'm going to

liberate you.” *Adam’s rib, Satan’s fib, women’s lib—bang, bang, bang.*

“I am going to liberate you. Why, you can reach your full potential. Eve, let me tell you what is wrong with you, baby. Your eyes are not opened. You are a babe in the woods. Now God said, ‘Don’t do it,’ but all you’ve got is His word. Now that just takes your judgment out of it, doesn’t it, Eve? You just have to trust what someone else says. Why, Eve, how do you know it is bad if you haven’t tried it? Don’t knock it, baby, till you’ve tried it. I mean, how do you know it’s wrong? All you’ve got is what God says up there, and after all, you know, He’s God. He doesn’t want you to know what He knows. If you knew what He knows, then you’d be like God, knowing good and evil. You see, what God has done, He’s cornered the market on being God. Now, Eve, if you make up your own mind what is right and what is wrong, then who’s God? You’re God. Why, you’ll be just like God. You see, you ought to be suspicious of someone who doesn’t want you to know what He knows. What He’s trying to do is to keep you from personal knowledge, where you just simply have to trust Him, you just simply have to trust His word. Why, you’ll never understand this, unless you do it.”

My friend, let me tell you something about sin. There’s nothing in the world more deceiving than sin itself, and those who know the least about sin are those who are the deepest in it. Did that sink in? Those who know the least about sin are those who are deeper in sin. Now what he’s trying to say to Eve is this: “God doesn’t want you to horn in on the God business. He’s cornered the market on that. ‘God doth know that in the day that you eat, then your eyes will be opened, and you’ll be like God, knowing good and evil.’(Genesis 3:5)”

Again, my dear friend, this is the dawning of the New Age movement, in Genesis chapter 3. Do you know what New Ageism is? New Ageism is Eastern religion, Eastern mysticism, come to the West. It’s ancient Hinduism that teaches that all is God, and God is all, and we ourselves become gods. It’s pantheism. It’s rooted in Hinduism. *Pan*, meaning “all,” *theism*, meaning “God.” God is in all, and all is in God; and God is all, and all is God. And we’re God. And there is no personal God like Yahweh Jehovah Elohim, the God of the Bible. God, to the New Ager, is impersonal force, “the Force.” That’s God. Energy. I am God. You are God. Nature is God. Everything is God. That’s pantheism, and that’s what Satan is telling Eve. ‘Why, Eve, you can be God.’” And it’s so subtle, because the Bible wants us to be godly. You see, we are to be godlike—not as God but *like* God—but it’s so subtle, isn’t it?

For example, do you know what a Hindu would say? Well, you know what a Christian says: “God is love.” Is that correct? Of course it’s correct. But now listen to this: “Love is God.” Is that correct? Of course it’s not! It sounds almost the same, doesn’t it? “God is love”; that’s right. “Love is God”; no, that’s wrong. “God is wisdom”; that’s right. “Wisdom is God”; no, that’s wrong.

Do you know why these animal rightists today are so all up in arms about animal rights? Do you know why? That's Hinduism—sacred cows. There's no basic difference between man and animals. Friend, you haven't elevated the animals by doing that. What you've done is devalued man. They call themselves humanists; they're really animalists. And if everything is God—if everything is God—then that's God, that's God, they're God, that's God, the sky is God, the dirt is God. Now if God is dirt, then dirt is God; and if you're God, you're dirt. Understand what this has done. Understand the phony baloney of all of this. We have a whole generation that's bought into this.

Conclusion

You say, "Nobody believes this." My dear friend, Satan has deceived the whole world. It's so clear and it's so plain what the devil has done! First of all, he wants you to think severely about God, then skeptically about God, then suspiciously about God. And once he's done that, then he puts in his own lies. And a man's religion will rise no higher than his concept of God. The devil's lies sound so much like the truth.

You see what he was trying to say to Eve? What he was saying to Eve was, "Eve, God has headed you off at the pass. What God has done, Eve, He has blocked your fulfillment. He has kept you from reaching your potential." Friend, does God have a potential for you? You better believe He does. First Corinthians chapter 2 and verse 9: *"But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."* (1 Corinthians 2:9) Revelation 22, verses 1 through 5, speaks of heaven: *"And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: and they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever."* (Revelation 22:1–5)

Oh, if you only knew what plan God has for you! But I'll tell you what it is. It is to be one with Him, and to be like Him, but not to be your own little cheap tin God. Isn't the devil clever, *"more subtle than any beast of the field"*? (Genesis 3:1)

Friend, why take Satan's substitute when you have God's truth? I want to put these things in your heart and in your mind today. Every boy and girl, I want you to listen to me—every mother's child in this place. Don't you let that dirty devil deceive you. Are you listening to me? Satan wants to deceive you, that he might debauch you, that he might destroy you, that he might damn you. Jesus said he is a liar. (John 8:44) Listen,

young man. He is a murderer and he's a liar. God, help people today to understand this. Don't think about God severely. God is a God of love and goodness and grace. And don't think of God skeptically. There is a God; God's law stands. "The soul that sinneth, it shall surely die." (Ezekiel 18:4; Ezekiel 18:20) And don't think of God suspiciously. Don't think that if you give your heart to God, that somehow that's going to mean loss to you.

My dear friend, the cross upon which Jesus died is a plus sign, not a negative sign. If I had a thousand lives to live, I'd give every one of them to Jesus Christ. Don't you feel sorry for me because I'm a Christian, and don't you let that devil deceive you and destroy you.

The Amazon River is the greatest river in the world. More water flows through the Amazon than the Mississippi and the Nile and the Ganges River put together. It flows with such force that there's current felt two hundred miles out in the ocean, the South Atlantic, as that river flows. And it's fresh water. One time, there was a boat sailing past the mouth of that Amazon River, and they had run out of water on that boat, and the sailors were dying of thirst. And they signaled to another ship that they saw, and they said, "Please, can you share some water with us? Can you give us some water? Our sailors are dying." And they sent back a message across the water and said, "Let down your buckets where you are." And they said, "No, you don't understand. We need water to drink." They sent back the message again: "Let down your buckets where you are." And finally, the third time, they understood. They were sailing in a sea of fresh water and perishing for thirst.

And I'm afraid that's where some of you are right here today: sailing in a sea of fresh water. Oh, how God loves you! Don't perish. Just let down your buckets where you are.

Satan's Four Spiritual Flaws

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: May 23, 1999

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 3:1–5

“Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?”

GENESIS 3:1

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Introduction

Would you be finding Genesis chapter 3. And that's easy to find because that's the first book in the Bible, just three chapters over. And when you've found it, look up here and let me tell you that the world's biggest liar is Satan himself. Jesus pulled back the veil of darkness from the kingdom of Satan, and Jesus said, in the eighth chapter of John, the forty-fourth verse, that Satan was a liar from the beginning. Jesus said that Satan is a liar and he is the father of all lies. In that same verse, Jesus said that Satan is a murderer. (John 8:44) That's John 8:44. And so in that verse, you have both Satan's motive, which is murder; and Satan's method, which is deception.

Now his motive is murder; the devil is a killer. And the Bible says, “The thief comes to steal and to kill and to destroy.” (John 10:10) Satan wants to bring death. He wants to bring physical death. He wants to bring spiritual death. He wants to bring eternal death. He wants to bring death to life, to love, to beauty, to joy, to happiness. Satan is a malevolent murderer, and his method is the lie. He wants to deceive, to deprave, and to destroy. And what we're going to find here in the third chapter of Genesis is the first lie

that was told upon Planet Earth—actually, a succession of lies, four of them that we’re going to talk about—that he told to Eve so long ago.

Now, remember that Jesus said of Satan, “He is the master liar.” (John 8:44) And so you’re going to find as we look at these lies that they sound a lot like the truth, because the cleverest lies have some truth in them. Every good lie has some truth in it. Somebody has wisely said, “Even a clock that doesn’t run is right twice a day.” Isn’t that right? But the cleverest lies sound the most like the truth. And you’re going to find these lies here in this delineation of what Satan did so long ago.

And not only is Satan the master liar, but he lies about the biggest subject. The biggest subject is God. Now to be wrong about God makes you terribly wrong, horribly wrong. The devil may not care about some lies—they’re not all that particularly important to him—but there are some areas in which Satan wants you to believe the wrong thing, because to believe the wrong thing will lead you to do the wrong thing. The devil really had rather have you believe the wrong thing than to do the wrong thing, because if he has you believing the wrong thing, there’s no difficulty for him to get you to do the wrong thing, because the thought is the father of the deed. *You sow a thought; you reap a deed. You sow a deed; you reap a habit. Sow a habit; you reap a character. Sow a character; you reap a destiny.* And it all begins with the thought life.

So Satan would rather push a lie than push narcotics. Satan is a liar. He is the father of all lies. He is the master liar. He is the cleverest liar. He lies about the biggest truth, and the lie about the biggest truth is a lie about God. And that is a lie that does the greatest damage.

Now, why would Satan lie about God? Well, A. W. Tozer said this—and he so wisely said it: “No religion can rise higher than its concept of God.” And so you’re going to find, as Satan first comes into history, as we see him here described in the third chapter of the book of Genesis, you’re going to find these master lies. And may I say that this is not just simply ancient history. This is not what Satan has done; this is what Satan is doing. You’re going to find out that Satan was the first evangelist. He had his own gospel, the devil’s gospel. He came to Eve and told Eve how to be godlike. He’s an evangelist, and Eve was his first convert. And in order to get Eve to believe a lie, he had what I want to call today four spiritual flaws.

Now you know our friend Bill Bright, who’s a personal friend of the pastor, has written a little gospel tract that I suppose all of us have seen, and most of us who have been soul winners have used it one time or another, and I still use, called “The Four Spiritual Laws.” What are they? God loves you and He has a wonderful plan for your life; that’s law number one. Number two: Man is a sinner, and he’s separated from God, and thus he cannot know and experience God’s love and plan for his life. Law number three: Jesus Christ is God’s provision for man’s sin, and Jesus died on the cross to take

away our sin. Law number four: We must personally and individually receive Jesus Christ as our personal Lord and Savior; then we can know and experience God's love and plan for our life. It's a wonderful gospel tract, and we call that "The Four Spiritual Laws."

Erwin Lutzer has said, "Yes, but there are also flaws." And I want to borrow that phrase from Erwin: "The Four Spiritual Flaws." I want you to see what the devil did to corrupt Eve, and I want you to see what the devil will do to corrupt you. And if you're not a Christian today, pay attention now, because the devil has deceived you. You say, "Well, he hasn't deceived me." Yes, he has. Revelation 12, verse 9, says, "*He deceives the whole world.*" (Revelation 12:9) And all of us were deceived by the devil until we came to the Lord Jesus Christ. And remember, his motive is murder. He wants you to be his victim. His method is the lie. He would deceive you today. And if he doesn't deceive you, he'll just try to get you to tune out so that you don't hear what we're talking about.

Four things that Satan did to Eve in the Garden of Eden. Look, if you will, in chapter 3 and verse 1: "*Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field*"—the word *subtil* means "crafty and sly"—"*more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?*" (Genesis 3:1)

I. Spiritual Flaw #1: Thinking Negatively About God

Spiritual flaw number one is to despise God's goodness and to think negatively about God—to think negatively about God. That's what the devil wants you to do: He wants you to think negatively about God. Satan came crawling his slimy, corroding path into the pages of history, and he said, "Did God say that you shall not eat of the fruit of every tree of the garden?" (Genesis 3:1) Now, what was that? It was an attempt to get Eve to doubt God's goodness, God's love, God's amazing grace that Terry just sang about. He wanted Eve to think negatively about God. What it was, was a slander of the character of God. It was Satan's way of saying, "God is not good. God is some sort of a cosmic killjoy. God doesn't want you to have all of this good fruit."

Now, of course, that was a lie. God had not said that she could not eat of that fruit. As a matter of fact, just put in your margin Genesis chapter 2, verse 16: "*And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden*"—listen to this—"*thou mayest freely eat.*" (Genesis 2:16) "It's there. It's for you. Adam, Eve, I made it for you. Help yourself." But what did Satan say? "Oh, hath God said, 'Ye shall not eat of the fruit of every tree of the garden?'" (Genesis 3:1) The truth of the matter is there was only one tree that they were forbidden to take of. But what Satan was trying to do was to get Eve to think negatively about God: "God is so straightlaced. God is so cruel, that anytime He

sees anyone having any pleasure He just sort of moves in to break up the party. Everything good and pleasurable is a no-no.”

The truth of the matter is that God has said a resounding yes to your pleasure. God loves you. Don't get the idea that being a Christian is some sort of a penalty that you pay in order to get to heaven. I would be a Christian if there were no heaven. There is. I would be a Christian if there were no hell, just to know the Lord Jesus Christ as my personal Savior.

Can you imagine what all God made for Adam and Eve? Can you imagine the glories, the splendor, of Eden, and what it must have been like? The most beautiful place you've ever seen would not even begin to compare with Eden. And God made it for Adam and Eve. And God said, “Help yourself.”

They tell a little story of Cain and Abel after Adam and Eve had been put out of the garden because of their sin. Cain and Abel came to a wall, climbed up that wall, and looked over and saw Eden. They went back to Adam and said, “Daddy, we have just seen the most beautiful place in the world. Hey, Dad, do you think we could ever live in a place like that?” Adam said, “We did once, boys, before your mother ate us out of house and home.”

Well, it was a beautiful and a glorious place, and God made it, and God said to Adam and God said to Eve, “Help yourself.”

Do you know what the devil will do to many of you? He will put negative thoughts in your heart concerning the goodness of our God. Listen to Psalm 37 and verse 4. The Bible says, “Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desire of your heart.” (Psalms 37:4) Listen to Psalm 84, verse 11: “*The LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory:*”—now, listen to this—“*no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.*” (Psalms 84:11) Isn't that great? “*No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.*” Listen to 1 Timothy chapter 6, verse 17. The Bible says, “*Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches,*”—but now, listen to this—“*but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy*”—“the living God, who has given to us richly all things to enjoy.” (1 Timothy 6:17) The dirty devil wants you to think negatively about God.

Now, listen to me. God is good all of the time. And anything that causes pain and suffering and moan and groan and woe and heartache and tears is the fruit of sin. It is not because of God. God made a beautiful, wonderful paradise, and He put man and woman in that paradise. And so Satan's spiritual flaw number one is to get you to doubt the goodness of God and to think negatively about God. And, friend, it's a foolish thing if you think negatively about our great God who has given us richly all things to enjoy. (1 Timothy 6:17) When I invite you to Jesus Christ, I'm not inviting you to a funeral; I'm inviting you to a feast, to know the Lord Jesus Christ.

II. Spiritual Flaw #2: Thinking Skeptically About God

Spiritual flaw number two—spiritual flaw number two is to deny God’s truthfulness and to think skeptically about God. Now, notice verses 2 and 3: “*And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden:*”—Eve knew better than that—“*but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die.*” (Genesis 3:2–4) You know how I think he said it? I wasn’t there, but you know how I think he said it? “You’ll shall not surely die.” I mean, what he is doing here is denying God’s truthfulness. “How do you know that you’re going to surely die?” And what he did was to make a skeptic, to make a doubter, about God’s truthfulness. You see, what he did, first of all, was to question God’s goodness, and now he is questioning God’s truthfulness.

Now I want to say this: *Anybody who causes a question mark concerning the Word of God, or anybody who denies the veracity and the truth of the Word of God, is doing the work of the devil. I don’t care what university he teaches in, or what seminary he may teach in.* I care not how many degrees he has after his name. If he inculcates in the hearts and minds of anybody a doubt or a denial of the Word of God, that man is an emissary of Satan. It goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden. “*Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat?*” (Genesis 3:1) “Oh, come on! You will not surely die. Oh, no. Why, your eyes will be opened.”

You see, modern man today will do anything except believe the truth. We have so many substitutes for the truth.

A. Relativism

We have today relativism. Hegel, the philosopher, began relativism in our society, and so everything is relative. And our kids are going to school today, being taught there are no absolutes. All truth is relative truth.

B. Subjectivism

And if that doesn’t go, then others, and especially in some churches today, have been given to subjectivism—not relativism, but subjectivism. They say, “Well, this is what I feel is truth. This is what I think. This is what it means to me. Well, what is true for me may not be true for you, but isn’t it wonderful that we all have our own truth?” And that’s subjectivism: “Truth is what we experience.”

C. Rationalism

And for others, the answer is not necessarily relativism, or subjectivism, but rationalism. They somehow have the idea that all that is truth is what we call empirical truth, what they can put into the laboratory. If they can put God in a test tube, then they might believe in God. Puny man thinks that he can prove God through rationalism, and so he

substitutes “thus saith the mind of man” for “thus saith the Word of God.”

D. **Pragmatism**

And another substitute for God’s truth is pragmatism, and this is the one that’s working in America today. In America today we don’t ask, “Is it true?” We want to know, “Does it work?”—“Does it work?” And so we’re not all that interested in pragmatism.

E. **Postmodernism**

But, you know, the most damning assault on truth today is a word you may not have heard much, but if you’ve read or been in theology, you’ll hear this word—and it’s postmodernism. What on earth is postmodernism? You say, “Pastor, I’ve been longing all morning to hear something about postmodernism.” Postmodernism— these folks don’t believe there is a truth. They won’t argue about truth to you, because that’s not even an issue with them. It’s just there is no real truth, and so it’s a hodgepodge of all of these other things that I have talked about: rationalism and relativism and emotionalism and all of these things. But when they finally finish, they just simply say, “Nobody knows truth. There never has been truth, never will be truth. We make up truth as we go along.”

Now that kind of thinking, which is one of Satan’s spiritual flaws, leads people with no rational basis as to say what is right and what is wrong. And we’re still thinking about the kids in the high schools these days. What has happened in America? Well, one thing: There’s a famine for the Word of God—there’s a famine for the Word of God.

If you listened to James Dobson last week, you heard the program that was a replay of the National Day of Prayer. And one of those speakers there in the Cannon Office Building—and I listened to it on a tape; I didn’t listen to the live program, but I listened to it on a tape this week—he talked about Pavlov, the Russian who worked with animals in what we call conditioned response. That is, he would ring a bell and feed the dogs, and the dogs would salivate after a while just at the ringing of a bell, because they associated the ringing of a bell with food.

But another thing Pavlov did was this—and I’d not heard this before—he would put a dog down over here and put in front of the dog a perfect circle. And when the dog would see the perfect circle, he taught the dog to jump to the right. And if the dog would see the circle and jump to the right, the dog would be rewarded. And so the dog learned that circle equals jump equals food. And then, after he got the dog trained this way, he put in front of the dog an oval, not a circle, but an oval. And then at the sign of the oval, he taught the dog to jump to the left. Oval equals jump to the left equals food. Circle, jump to the right, reward. And the dog was trained this way. And the dog had it down perfectly.

And then Pavlov began to do something. He began to take the circle and morph it

just a little bit so it began to look like an oval. He took the oval and began to change it a little bit so it looked like a circle. And the dog was getting confused and still trying as best he could to get the reward and to do what was right. And finally, Pavlov had a figure on the ground that the dog could not tell whether it was a circle or an oval, and the dog went mad.

Now, folks, that's where our kids are today. They don't know whether it's a circle or an oval. They do not know that there is a fixed standard, because that dirty devil has gotten people to think skeptically about God and cannot believe the fixed Word of God.

Parents are having difficulty today raising children. Well, let me tell you how to raise them. "Child, it's wrong to steal, because God says so. It's wrong to commit adultery, because God says so. You are to obey your parents, because God says so. We're to worship God only, because God says so." "But if the foundations be destroyed, what shall the righteous do?" (Psalms 11:3)

III. Spiritual Flaw #3: Thinking Carelessly About God

Now here's the third spiritual flaw. First of all, Satan wanted Eve to think negatively about God, to doubt the goodness of God. Secondly, he wanted Eve to think skeptically about God and to doubt the truthfulness of God. The third spiritual flaw was to defy God's righteousness and to think carelessly about God—to think carelessly about God. Look in verse 4 again: "*And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die.*" (Genesis 3:4) That is, "Eve, you don't have to worry about judgment. I mean, you can be cavalier about this thing. You don't need to fear God. God is not all that righteous. Now don't worry about God's laws."

Well, friend, God is righteous, and God is holy. Not only is God good, but God is righteous. God will punish sin. God had forbidden them to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And God said, "In the day that you eat thereof, you will die." (Genesis 2:17) That was God's holy law. And law without penalty is only advice. And God wasn't giving advice.

You see, it's the devil's gospel—the devil's gospel—that God will not punish sin. But God sent me here to tell you that God is a holy God, God is a righteous God, and God will punish sin. And whatever happened to hell? If you disobey God and refuse the gospel of Jesus Christ, you're going to die and go to hell—you're going to die and go to hell. There is a hell. You say, "Well, Pastor, today people don't believe in hell anymore." Well, that doesn't change it at all. Jesus Christ had more to say about hell than any preacher in the Word of God. Jesus Christ, the loving Jesus, had more to say about hell than any other preacher in the Word of God.

Abraham Lincoln, who was wise in homey ways, said to a little boy one time, said, "Son, I want to ask you a question. If a dog has four legs, and you call his tail a leg, then

how many legs would he have?" The little boy said, "He'd have five." And Abe said, "No, he'll only have four. No matter what you call his tail, it's still a tail. You can call his tail a leg if you want to, but he only has four legs."

And no matter what people say about hell, they do not take away God's truth concerning the punishment of sin. Now Satan knows that man fears death. Satan knows that. And so he says to Eve, "You will not surely die." (Genesis 3:4)

And by the way, I said, you know, this is not new or old. It's up-to-date. It's all New Age religion. Everything that I have given you, everything, is all New Age religion. How do the New Agers deal with this idea, "You will not surely die"? Well, it's reincarnation. What is reincarnation? Well, you just keep going around and around; you get recycled. You get as many chances at perfection as you need. And in reincarnation there's no judgment. There's no personal God.

And, you know who the high priestess of this New Age religion is? Her name is Shirley MacLaine, an actress, of sorts. She said—listen to this—and I quote her: "We can eliminate all fear of death." And she said she had discovered that once she was a princess in Atlantis, and then she was an Inca in Peru, and then one time she was a child raised by elephants. That's in her past lives that she's had. And you know, Shirley MacLaine said, "It's like show business; you keep doing it until you get it right." And so there are a lot of kids today, while they cannot be taught biblical truth, this Eastern mysticism and New Ageism has come in like gangbusters into the church, and they believe that.

And the idea is that we have something called karma, and if your karma is good, next time you go through, you keep on going up, and you get higher and higher and higher. But if your karma is bad, you're degraded in the next life. And so you may end up as Bob Sorrell going up, or you may end up as a spider going down. And so it just all depends. So you just keep going through and through. And that's the reason many of them are vegetarians, because they believe that animals and humans are all interrelated, and so when you go to McDonald's, you might be eating your grandmother. And so they believe this, that that cow has been reincarnated from something else, *re-in-cow-nated*, and so this is what they believe. I believe *re-in-carnation* is putting the milk back in the can, but you won't get that till after the service.

Satan does not want people to believe that there is a death and a holy and a righteous God and a judgment to face, and so you come up with these silly ideas like reincarnation. People don't like the idea of judgment, and they're glad to listen to this third spiritual flaw, that you can deny the righteousness of God and think carelessly about God.

Do you know one of the worst things people say about preachers today? "He's a hellfire preacher—hellfire and damnation preacher," like "You don't want to go there to

hear him.” I want to say again: You would not have wanted to hear Jesus. I have an idea, I have a suspicion—it’s almost a conviction—*if the Supreme Court of the United States of America could vote on it, they would outlaw hell as cruel and unusual punishment.* They would say, “Well, that’s certainly an un-American thing. You cannot have eternal punishment.” You see, this is a lie out of hell.

IV. Spiritual Flaw #4: Thinking Suspiciously About God

The devil wants you to think negatively about God. The devil wants you to think skeptically about God. The devil wants you to think casually and lightly about God. The fourth spiritual flaw is this, that Satan debases God’s greatness, and he wants you to think suspiciously about God—he wants you to think suspiciously about God. Now, notice how clever he was. Look in verse 5: *“For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.”* (Genesis 3:5)

Now, you know what he’s saying here? “Look. You can’t trust God. Eve, you’re a babe in the woods. Your eyes are not even open. You don’t know what’s right; you don’t know what’s wrong. You don’t know what’s good; you don’t know what’s bad. All you have is His word for it. That’s all you have, is His word for it. You’ve never experienced it. How do you know it’s bad? How do you know? After all, Eve, experience is the best teacher.”

Have you ever heard that? “Experience is the best teacher.” So we get the idea today that in order to find out whether something is good or bad we have to experiment with it. That’s the reason why so many young people have their lives that are wrecked and ruined and are sucked down in the swirling sewers of sin because of experimentation. They say, “Well, I want to experiment a little bit with drugs. I want to experiment a little with Eastern meditation. I want to experiment a little bit with premarital sex. I want to experiment a little bit with sexual perversion.” “I mean, just try it, Eve. You might like it. Hey, Eve, if it’s good, then you can do it some more. If it’s bad, you don’t have to do it anymore. But, Eve, your eyes are not even open. Why, listen. If you’ll do it, then your eyes will be open. You’ll be like He is. You will know the difference between good and bad. You see, He’s got a monopoly on being God. He’s trying to head you off at the pass. He doesn’t want you to have fulfillment. He doesn’t want you to be liberated. He wants to keep you under His thumb. Eve, experience is the best teacher, not somebody’s word.”

Let me tell you something, folks. When it comes to sin, experience is a very poor teacher. And those who know the least about sin are those who are the deepest into it. Did you know that? The Bible speaks of the deceitfulness of sin—the deceitfulness of sin. (Hebrews 3:13) And those who know the very least about sin are those who have

been blinded, and they're into sin, and they come to the place where they get a reprobate mind. They cannot tell up from down, good from bad. They put bitter for sweet, sweet for bitter, light for darkness, darkness for light, good for evil, evil for good, because they try to make themselves the sum, the substance, the total decider of what is good and bad. And, folks, I'm going to tell you, the world is full of that today—these kids who are ruining their lives through experimentation.

One young lady was trying to induce another young lady to sacrifice her purity upon the altar of some man's lust and become the dirty plaything of somebody. And she was saying, "Well, everybody's doing it. Why don't you do it?" And the young girl who was being tempted was a virgin, pure, somebody who knew what God's Word says, that you're to save yourself for the one that you marry. You say, "Well, I'm not married yet. It's not adultery." Friend, the Bible calls it fornication, and the Bible forbids it. And it's adultery against the one you're going to marry—against the one you're going to marry. But this person was saying, "No, go ahead. Go ahead. Go ahead. Everybody's doing it." And this young, pure girl said to this girl who was trying to get her to experiment with sex, said, "Let me tell you something. Anytime I want to become like you, I can; but anytime you would again like to be like me, you never can."

But, you see, the devil—the devil—is trying to get everybody into this experimenting. "Eve, try it. God knows that in the day that you eat, then your eyes will be open, and you'll be like God." (Genesis 3:5)

Now, remember what I told you, that the best lie sounds the most like the truth? I mean, you think about it. Satan is not trying to get Eve to steal or to kill or to commit adultery or to use narcotics. Do you know what the bait is that he's using? He says, "Hey, I want to show you how to be like God. You'll be as God." And that sounds so much like being like God, doesn't it? But there's a big difference between being as God and being like God. "You will be as God"; that is, "you will be your own god." And, folks, again, that's the New Age—that's the New Age.

Do you know what Eastern religion teaches? That we're all gods. You see, they teach pantheism: Everything is God. The animals are God. The plants are God. The air is God. The stars are God. The earth is God. You are God. Everything is God. Now, you think that elevates you? That doesn't elevate you, because you and the animals share divinity; that just brings you down to the level of an animal.

Listen. In India, where they worship these Hindu gods and so forth, they would say that love is God. No, love is not God. God is love. You see, there's a difference. They have the idea that everything is God. No, everything is not God. There is one God. He is distinct and different from everything else. And He is the one that we worship. But here is what the devil is saying to Eve: "Eve, you can be your own little cheap tin god." And I'm telling you, there are millions of Americans who look at their god every morning

when they shave in the mirror. That is their god. They want to become independent, autonomous, do their own thing; nobody else telling them what to do, what to think, what to believe. They are like God, knowing good and evil; and they are going to die and be eternally lost, because they are the devil's convert listening to the devil's four spiritual flaws.

You think about it. We can't celebrate Easter in our schools anymore, but I'll tell you what we can do—I'll tell you what we can do. We can have Earth Day—Earth Day. Well, you think about it. I mean, if you believe that everything is sort of God, then the stars are God, the animals are God, man is God, the dirt is God. Then if the dirt is God, then God is dirt. And if you're God, you're dirt—you're dirt. That doesn't elevate you. That dehumanizes you. But, you see, this lie sounds so much like the truth. "You'll be as God." No, God's plan is for us to be *like* God. He made us in His image—in His image. And He is working toward that plan until one day, even though we're fallen, redeemed we'll rise in His likeness, and we'll be like Him forever. And in the Bible, the psalmist says, "I shall be satisfied when I awaken in thy likeness." (Psalms 17:15)

Conclusion

Isn't it amazing how people today buy into these four spiritual flaws where the devil gets the glory? And some are listening right here. You've been thinking negatively about God. You've been running from God. Why would you run from somebody who loves you? You've been thinking negatively about God? Then you've been thinking skeptically about God. You've been wondering, is this really, really true—is this really true? And then you've been thinking lightly about God. And you say, "Oh, well, if I do wrong, He's a loving God. He's too good to punish sin." He's too good not to punish sin. He's a holy and a righteous God. And then you think, "Well, you know, if I give my heart to Him, if I truly receive Christ as my personal Savior, then that will just head me off at the pass; I can never be all that I ought to be; I can never reach my full potential." No, friend, you will never reach your full potential without Jesus: without knowing Him, without loving Him.

Have you listened to the devil's lies? All of us have at some time. Well, there's another passage—and we won't turn to it, but I love it—over in Revelation chapter 12, verses 9 through 11. And the Bible, there in verse 9, speaks of that old serpent, the dragon. We saw him way back here in the Garden of Eden. Now he is over here in the book of the Revelation. And by the way, there are two books in the Bible the devil doesn't like. You know what they are? Genesis and Revelation: because in Genesis his doom is announced, and in Revelation it's carried out. And thank God there's no devil in the first two or the last two chapters of the Bible, amen? But over there it says this: "That old serpent was cast out, and his angels were cast out with him." (Revelation

12:9)

And then in verse 11—and listen to this—it says this—here’s how to overcome him: *“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.”* (Revelation 12:11) That’s the way to overcome the old lie. The blood of the Lamb, the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanses us from all sin. (1 John 1:7) There is power in the blood of Jesus. Say *amen*. The blood of the Lamb. Thank God for Calvary. Thank God that Jesus, the last Adam, undid what the first Adam did, on that cross.

“They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb.” And it’s because Jesus died for you that you can be saved. And then *“the word of their testimony.”* (Revelation 12:11) They were not ashamed of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said, “If you’re ashamed of me and of my Word, I’ll be ashamed of you when I come in the glory of the Father with the holy angels.” And then it says—and here’s the climactic thing: *“and they loved not their lives unto the death.”* (Revelation 12:11) Now that doesn’t mean they kept on loving Jesus until they died. That’s not what that means. That may be true, but that’s not what that means. It means this, that they loved Jesus Christ and would serve Him if they had to die for their faith.

Would you die for your faith? *Until you’re no longer afraid to die, you’re not ready to live.*

And you may, if you’re a true Christian, have to die for your faith, the way things are changing. You say, “Not today.” Oh? Go out to Littleton. Look at little Cassie Bernall. That gunman comes there into the library or the cafeteria, wherever it was, and says, “Is there anybody here who believes in God?” Little Cassie Bernall stood up, knowing what the consequences were, and said, “I do—I do.”

Yes, *“they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.”* (Revelation 12:11)

Folks, it’s time we stopped playing games, and it’s time we stopped listening to lies. The devil is a liar. The four spiritual laws are these: God loves you and He has a wonderful plan for your life. The second is that sin has separated us from God. The third is that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died for our sins on the cross. The fourth is, if we will receive Him as our personal Lord and Savior, then we can know and experience God’s love and God’s plan for our lives.

The Evolution of a Sin

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: March 1, 1981

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 3:1–6

“And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.”

GENESIS 3:6

Outline

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Introduction

Genesis chapter 3—and we’re going to look today at these next six verses: *“Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.”* (Genesis 3:1–6)

Satan is a decided fact, Satan is a destructive force, and thank God, Satan is a

defeated foe. You need to learn about the devil. You dare not be ignorant about the devil and his devices. And he's done all that he can do to pull the veil of darkness across his kingdom so that you will not understand. But I want us to see, as we look today in this scripture, what I call "The Evolution of a Sin." And I want you to see something of the devil's methods. Actually, the Bible uses the word *wiles* in the New Testament, but it's *methodeia*. It's a word we get our word *method* from. The devil is very methodical. And right here in the opening pages of the Word of God we can find something of the dark, devilish methods of this one that we call the devil. And right away, as we see him appearing on the pages of history, we're amazed at several things.

A. The Devil Appears Where We Would Least Expect Him

First of all, he appears where we would least expect him. Who would be looking for the devil in the Garden of Eden? You see, he sometimes appears where you would least expect him. I believe that the devil comes to church with more regularity than some of you. He appears where we would least expect him. Sometimes—now, don't take this wrong—but sometimes he's in the pulpit—not this morning. One time when I was preaching on the subject of the devil, a little boy told me afterward, he said, "Pastor, when you were up there preaching, I could see the devil just as plain as day." Well, he does sometimes occupy the pulpit. For the Bible says that he has "*false apostles*," (2 Corinthians 11:13) and 2 Corinthians chapter 11 and verse 15, the apostles have transformed themselves into "*ministers of righteousness*," angels of light. (2 Corinthians 11:15) And so he appears sometimes where we least expect him.

B. The Devil Appears in Forms That We're Not Suspecting

And also he appears in forms that we're not suspecting. For example, the Bible calls him the serpent. Now, ladies, don't get the idea of some hideous, repulsive, writhing reptile. The word here literally means "shining one." And I believe it speaks of his beauty, and I believe he was a glorious creature when he spoke with Eve. And there was nothing about his appearance that would have caused her to be frightened at all. Actually, his original name was Lucifer, and Lucifer means "light-bearer." But Lucifer, the son of the morning, became Satan, the father of the night. But in spite of all of that, he still seems to be able to transform himself as an angel of light. And so he appears in forms where we least expect him.

Don't get the idea that when you see the devil he's going to be wearing a long red suit of underwear, with a pitchfork and horns, saying, "Boo!" If he came that way, you would recognize him. But that's a caricature of the devil. That's not the way the Bible describes the devil and his appearances unto men. But many times he comes as an angel of light. And so he appears in forms where we would not be expecting him to

appear and ways we would not be expecting him. Here he is described as the shining one.

C. **The Devil Is the Master of Deception**

And now also we find that he is a master of deception; he is the great deceiver. We find that also because verse 1 says that he *“was more subtil than any beast of the field.”* (Genesis 3:1) He is a liar. The biggest liar in Memphis, Tennessee, is Satan himself. Jesus described him in the Gospels, and you might want to jot this verse down in your margin. In John chapter 8 and verse 44, Jesus, speaking to some unsaved men, said, *“Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth... When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.”* (John 8:44) That is, anybody who tells a lie today is acting like their father the devil. *“He is a liar, and the father of it.”* (John 8:44) He’s the father of all lies. He is the master liar.

Jesus told us two things about the devil in John chapter 8, verse 44. He told us that his motive was murder; his method is the lie. The devil wants to bring death to youth, to life, to purity, to happiness, to joy, to holiness. He wants to bring physical death, soulish death, eternal death, spiritual death, the first death, the second death, death in the lake of fire that burns with brimstone. He wants to bring deaths. He is a death-dealer. His motive is murder. His method is the lie. He must tell the lie to get his dirty work done.

Suppose he told Eve the truth. Suppose he told Eve, “Eve, I want you to take of this forbidden fruit, because I want to damn your soul, because I want to ruin your family, because I want to bring hate and war and crime and disease and heartache and pain and pang and moan and groan and woe and devastation—not only upon you, but upon the millions and billions of unborn children. I want to curse the world through you, and wreck your home, and bring you sorrow.” Would she have listened? Of course not! The only way that he can get his dirty devilish deed done is through lying. He is a liar. And he is a master liar. He is a clever liar.

Now, remember this: He may be always double-tongued, but he is never double-minded. He has one purpose and that is to ruin the human race and therefore insult Almighty God. He’s single-minded, double-tongued. He is a liar. He is a deceiver. He is two-faced but single-minded. Now he’s the cleverest liar, and the cleverest liar can tell a lie that sounds the most like the truth. And we’re going to see, as we study, how much his lies that we’re going to study in a moment sound like the truth.

And he’s not only the cleverest liar; he’s also the biggest liar. And so he tells lies about the biggest subject, and the biggest subject is God. And you’re going to find the devil here in these opening pages of the book of Genesis lying about God and slandering the character of God, because the devil knows if he can get you thinking wrongly about God, he has you. The devil wants to get you thinking negatively about

God, so the devil slanders the character of God, because if the devil can get you thinking negatively about God, fearing God, running from God, or disbelieving God, he has you right where he wants you.

He is the biggest liar. His lies are about the biggest subject. The biggest subject is Almighty God Himself. Oh, would to God that I could get you to understand that the devil had rather get you to believe a wrong thing than to do a wrong thing! Did you know that? The devil wants to control your mind, because the devil knows that if he has your mind, he really has you, because the Bible says, “As [a man] thinketh...so is he.” (Proverbs 23:7) *You sow a thought; you reap a deed. Sow a deed; you reap a habit. Sow a habit; you reap a character. Sow a character, and you reap a destiny.* And it all begins with a thought. And if the thought is wrong, the destiny is wrong. If the belief is wrong, the eternal destiny has been ruined. And so the devil comes here, crawling his slimy, corroding path onto the pages of history here in the third chapter of Genesis. And I want you, as we look at this chapter, to see something amazing and something that will keep us, I hope, the rest of our lives, walking, following the Lord Jesus Christ, as we see the methods of the devil, the wiles of the devil, as we think about what we call “The Evolution of a Sin.”

I. Dialogue

First, the first word I want you to see is the word *dialogue*—*dialogue*. Look, if you will, in verses 1 and 2: “Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said...”—just underscore that—“And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent...” (Genesis 3:1–2) “The serpent said to the woman...” “The woman said to the serpent...” They are carrying on a discussion; they are carrying on a dialogue.

Now, what business did Eve have getting into a conversation with the devil, anyway? She had no business being in a discussion with the devil. That was her first mistake. When the devil came and confronted Eve, the very first thing she should have done was to declare the Word of God, point him to the Word of God, and leave him right there. That’s what Jesus did. When the devil came against Jesus there in the wilderness, Jesus said, “*It is written...*” “*It is written...*” “*It is written...*” And three times Jesus ran him through with that sharp sword of the Word of God. But she doesn’t do that. No, she is carrying on a discussion with him. She’s opening her mind right here to discussion with the devil.

Eve did not need to dialogue with the devil. She should have made her immediate appeal to the Word of God and left it alone. Someone has well said, “We cannot keep the birds from flying over our heads, but we can certainly keep them from making a nest

in our hair.” And that’s what Eve did. She allowed the devil to come and just sort of make a nest in her hair and carry on a conversation. There will be people peddling false doctrines going from house to house and door to door in Memphis, Tennessee, and they’ll want to come into your house and set up dialogue in your house. Don’t do it—don’t do it. Don’t give the devil a place for dialogue.

II. Doubt

First of all, there was dialogue. And after dialogue, there comes doubt. Continue to read: *“Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said...?”* (Genesis 3:1) Can’t you just hear the sneer in that? Can’t you hear the insinuating doubt in that? He did not say that God had not said. He just put a question mark after the Word of God.

Now I’m telling you today, in these last days we’re facing, perhaps as much as never before, those who claim to be Christians are following the course of the devil by putting a question mark after the Word of God. Some people are questioning the authorship of the Word of God. Others are questioning the accuracy of the Word of God. Others are questioning the authority of the Word of God. Others are questioning the acceptability of the Word of God. But you put it down big, put it down plain, put it down straight, and listen to this: Any man, any woman, any boy, any girl—*anybody, anywhere—who puts a question mark after the Word of God is an emissary of the devil; he is doing the work of the devil.* Anybody who causes doubt of the Word of God is doing the devil’s work. I don’t care what seminary he’s in. I don’t care what college he teaches in. I don’t care what prefix he has to his name. He may be called Reverend or Doctor. I don’t care how many initials he has after his name. I don’t care what university he went to. I want to tell you that anybody who puts a question mark after this book is doing the work of the devil.

The devil wants to make us doubt. Now the devil knows that if he can get you doubting, he’s already started. Dear friend, trying to serve the Lord with doubt in your mind is like trying to drive your automobile with the brakes on. And if the devil has already done a job planting doubts in your mind concerning the Word of God, I want to encourage you to bring your doubts to Jesus Christ, honestly bring them to Jesus Christ, and confess them to Him, and say, “Lord, help me with these doubts,” and He will.

III. Denial

Now we’re talking about the evolution of a sin. It begins with dialogue, and then it evolves to doubt. And now the devil is ready for his frontal attack: denial. Continue to read here in verse 2 and following: *“And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat*

of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die." (Genesis 3:2–3) Now, notice Eve here is adding to the Word of God. God hadn't said anything about touching it. But she's playing loose with the Word of God; she's getting in trouble already. *"And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die"*—*"Ye shall not surely die."* (Genesis 3:3)

Now here is an open, plain denial of the truth of the Word of God: "You will not die." That's what the devil says. Now he's getting bold. You see, first dialogue—dialogue—turns to doubt. And now, at the right moment, doubt turns to denial. He just simply denies that God is going to punish her sin.

The devil's gospel is that you can sin with impunity, that God will not punish sin. But with all the unction, function, and emotion of my soul, I'm here to tell you that *"the wages of sin is death."* (Romans 6:23) *"The soul that sinneth, it shall [surely] die."* (Ezekiel 18:20) And the Bible says, *"Be sure your sin will find you out."* (Numbers 32:23) If you can show me any time, any place, anywhere, where anybody ever sinned and got away with that sin, I'll close my Bible and never preach again. *"Be sure your sin will find you out."* More sure than that the sun will rise in the morning is this dictum of the Word of God: *"Be sure your sin will find you out."* (Numbers 32:23)

Now today people are telling us, "Oh, now God is not going to punish sin. He's too good to do that." Friend, that's exactly backward. God is too good not to punish sin. It is God's goodness, it is God's righteousness, it is God's holiness that says that all sin must be punished. And *"the wages of sin is death."* (Romans 6:23) Now we have people today who try to take the concept of hell and punishment out of the Bible. I said from this pulpit several years ago that *if the Supreme Court of the United States of America could vote on it, they would outlaw hell as cruel and unusual punishment.* They would. I'm as convinced as I stand here, if the Supreme Court of the United States of America could stand here, they'd say, "That's un-American. God can't do that." But I want to tell you, dear friend, regardless of what the devil says, sin and penalty are inseparably linked. You see, law without penalty is only advice, and God wasn't giving advice. God has His holy laws, and they cannot be broken.

"Oh," you say, "well, I know a preacher who's a very educated man, and he doesn't believe in hell." Oh?

Abraham Lincoln asked a little boy one time, he said, "Son, if a dog has four legs, and you call his tail a leg, how many would he have then?" The little boy said, "Why, sir, he'd have five." And Abraham Lincoln said, "No, he'd just have four. No matter what you call his tail, it's still a tail." Amen? Call it a leg if you want to, but it's still a tail. And no matter what that preacher or anybody else says about hell, he's not going to change one jot or one tittle of the Word of God.

The devil denies the Word of God. But if all of the scholars, all of the prophets, all of the statesmen, all of the politicians, all of the preachers together were to deny the fact of God's Word, God's Word will stand. *"Let God be true, but every man a liar."* (Romans 3:4)

IV. Delusion

First of all, dialogue—dialogue evolves to doubt, and doubt evolves to denial, and then denial evolves to delusion. Look in verse 5—the devil goes on to say, *"For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as [God], knowing good and evil."* (Genesis 3:5) Actually, the word there should be in the singular. It's a plural noun, but it's the word *Elohim*. It speaks of Jehovah God.

Then the devil said, "Well, you'll be like God Himself. You will know good and evil." That is, "Eve, if you're no longer worried now about God punishing your sin, let me tell you something even more exciting. Did you know that you can be your own god? Did you know, Eve, that you can now live your life independent of God? Eve, I'm going to liberate you, and you're going to be the first liberated woman. You don't have to conform to the Word of God. Why, if you would just experiment, then your eyes would be open, and you would know the difference between good and evil. You could taste this fruit. And if you don't like it, then you don't have to eat any more. But if you like it, you can eat some more. And who will decide whether it is good or bad? You will. Try it. You might like it. And don't knock it till you've tried it."

And it seems so reasonable—it seems so logical—that no longer did she need to submit to some other external authority. She could be her own little cheap tin god. And that, my friend, is sin: when an individual decides and gets the delusion that they can live their life apart from God.

Now, don't think that he was trying to get her to do something gross or repulsive. He wasn't. He was far too subtle for that. You see, this temptation was in the realm of religion. He was trying to get her to commit not primarily a physical sin, though the physical was involved; it was primarily a spiritual sin. You see, he wasn't trying to get her to be a devil—that is, not outwardly—but a god. It wasn't a temptation to fall down; it was a temptation to fall up. You see, he just wanted her to be her own person.

Do you know the devil is not all that interested in getting you to commit the grosser sins of the flesh? You know, sometimes you see a man; he's all drunk in the gutter, covered with vomit and flies. Someone says, "Look what the devil did to that man." No, he did it to himself—he did it to himself. You see some woman who has become the cast-off plaything of lecherous and wicked men, her face racked and ruined with the scars of sin, her body filled with disease, an old castaway. We say, "Oh, look what the devil made her do." No, she did that—she did that.

The devil's kind of ashamed of those kind of people. Did you know that? Did you know that there are some folks living such a way to embarrass the devil? You know, if the devil had his way, he wouldn't want you acting like that. You know what the devil wants you to do? He wants you to put on a nice suit, get a nice tie, put on a beautiful dress, and get some pretty gloves, and get you a little Bible. And he wants you to come to church, and he wants you to sit on the pew, and he wants you to smile and look religious—and live your own life without God. *The devil would rather send you to hell from the pew than the gutter anytime.* You see, dear friend, he'd rather have you a man of distinction than an old drunkard. You are a better advertisement for him. And, you see, the devil's ashamed of some of these folks. They do that all by themselves.

Jesus said, in the Gospel of Matthew, that these things proceed out of the heart of man (Matthew 15:18)—thefts, adulteries, fornication, lasciviousness—these come from within and defile the man. I've got news for you. *If the devil were to suddenly die, you'd go on sinning all by yourself.* It's an inside job.

A little girl, I am told, hit her brother with a broomstick, called him a bad name, and spit on him. Her mother got after her and said, "Sweetheart, you shouldn't have done that. The devil made you do that." She said, "Well, the devil made me hit him with the broomstick and call him a bad name, but spitting on him was my idea." I believe we'd be surprised if we knew that perhaps all three were her idea.

Now I'm not saying that the devil doesn't want people to sin. Of course he does! That's what we're talking about. But the grosser sins—the grosser sins—I kind of believe that the devil had rather you just be a little more distinctive, a little better advertisement for him. Of course, there's something about sin that, once it gets you, you become the slave of sin, and even the devil couldn't stop you if he wanted to. And so here is the delusion—here's the delusion that Eve has. She actually gets it into her mind that she can live her life independently of God, that she can be her own god, that her mind can be the decision point where she herself can decide what is right and what is wrong.

And even as I am preaching today, the devil is trying to tell you, "You sit out there now and listen to what Adrian Rogers says, but after all remember that the bar of judgment is your mind, not the book he's preaching out of." The devil is still at work—still at work—where we don't want to submit to the authority of God.

V. Desire

So notice now what's happening. First of all, there comes that dialogue that evolves into that doubt, that evolves into that denial, that evolves into that delusion, that evolves into that desire. Look again, if you will, in verse 6: "*And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired*"—

there's our word—*"to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof."* (Genesis 3:6) And so her delusion turns to desire, and this time it is a perverted desire, because she has the idea that now she can choose what she wants, and she desires what God has forbidden.

Here's the tree in the midst of the garden. God said, "You'll not eat of it, and the day that you do, you'll surely die." (Genesis 2:17) But she looks at it, and oh, it looks so beautiful! What she sees, first of all, it's good for food. And then she sees it's beautiful to look at. And then she sees, in some mysterious way, that it's supposed to make her intellectually superior and spiritually knowledgeable. And so she partakes of it. And she illustrates what the Epistle of 1 John says: *"All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."* (1 John 2:16)

Now you see what got her was the lust of the flesh, good for food; the lust of the eyes, pleasant to look at; and the pride of life, desired to make one wise. You see, what are these three temptations? They are in the realm, first of all, of doing—that's the lust of the flesh; in having—that's the lust of the eyes; and in being—that's the pride of life. All of us, sometimes, get in trouble because we want to do the wrong thing, we want to have the wrong thing, we want to be the wrong thing.

Now, let me just tell you something here about temptation, and this will be worth coming for, if you listen to it. Let me tell you how to deal with temptation. You see, what the devil does is to find a God-given desire in your heart and then pervert that desire. He takes a God-given desire, a God-given ambition, a God-given proclivity, a God-given drive, and he perverts it. You see, the devil has no raw materials. God made everything. And so the only thing the devil can do is take what God has already made and what God has already created, and twist it and pervert it. So what the devil does is find a normal, natural, God-given instinct and desire and drive and proclivity, and he perverts it.

For example, the desire for food is normal. Gluttony is a perversion. The desire for sex is normal. Adultery is a perversion. You see, the devil is the original pervert. Did you know that? The devil is a pervert, and he is a perverter.

Now, how do you deal with the temptation? Well, one way to deal with the temptation—a very wise way—is to find the area in which you're tempted, and to find out what God's legitimate fulfillment for that legitimate ambition, drive, and desire is, and fulfill it legitimately. And when you do that, then you don't have an itch the devil can scratch. Do you understand what I'm trying to say? You see, in this matter of doing, for what greater thing could you do than serve God? In this matter of having, what greater things could you have than the riches of Christ? In this matter of being, what greater could you be than to be a child of God? And when you understand the right way, then

your desires are not perverted and twisted.

VI. Decision

But notice now the evolution of a sin. Here he begins with a dialogue, and that dialogue turns to a doubt, and that doubt turns to a denial, and that denial turns to a delusion, and that delusion turns to a desire that is perverted. But the devil's not finished yet. That desire then turns to a decision. Look, if you will, please, in verse 6. And the Bible says, "*She took of the fruit thereof, and did eat.*" (Genesis 3:6) And I want to say right now, she made a decision. And it was her decision. Nobody made it for her. And she said later on—she tried to say—"The devil made me do it," but God wouldn't buy that. She did it all by herself. Now the devil tempted her, and the devil deceived her, but it was really her fault.

Pay attention. There are not enough demons in hell or out of hell to make you deny the Lord. You see, God will not allow your will to be coerced. If the devil could, he would coerce everybody. The only reason he doesn't is because he can't. You see, God will not coerce you, and God will not allow the devil to coerce you. When God made you, God made you in His image and God gave to you a will.

In a moment, when I finish preaching, I'm going to give a gospel invitation. I'm going to say, I want those of you who will today openly, publicly, receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior to leave your seat and come forward, and let it be known by your coming forward that you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that you're willing to trust Him as your Savior, you're not ashamed to confess Him as your Lord, and I'm going to ask you to leave your seat and come. Now the devil will whisper in your ear 1,001 excuses for not coming. Of course, he can't give you any reason. But he'll give you 1,001 excuses. But I want to tell you there are not enough demons in hell or out of hell to keep you from doing it if you want to.

On the other hand, I'm going to be praying that the Holy Spirit will convict you of your sin, and God the Holy Spirit, who is speaking through me, is going to be speaking to your heart and inviting you to come to Jesus Christ. But there are not enough angels in heaven or out of heaven to force you down this aisle, because God gave you a will—God gave you a will. And it was Eve's choice. She took and she ate. For that diluted desire turned into a decision, and she made it. And she made it wrongly. But it was her decision. But the moment she decided that way—at that moment—she became a slave of sin. The Bible says, in the Gospel of John, that "whosoever commits a sin is the slave of sin." (John 8:34) And her choice became a chain that bound her. And from the moment she chose wrong, she then became the slave of Satan.

I heard of the tyrant of Syracuse who had something against the blacksmith in the kingdom. And so he called the blacksmith in, who was not aware that he'd fallen out of

favor with the tyrant of Syracuse, and the tyrant said, "I'd like to see a specimen of your work. Bring your bellows, bring your forge, bring your anvil, and forge for me a chain." And so he brought all of this before the throne. And he heated the forge with his bellows, and he took that molten iron. And with his hammer and with his anvil, he forged a chain. Finally, he'd finished a great chain. He said, "There, sire, is a specimen of my work. Here is a chain so strong that a team of horses could not part it." And then with a fiendish gleam in his eye, the tyrant of Syracuse said, "Guards, take the chain and bind the blacksmith, and throw him in the dungeon."

You see, he was chained with the very chain that he himself had forged. And that's exactly what happened to Eve. She that commits a sin, he that commits a sin, is the servant of sin. Her choice became a chain, but it was her decision.

And so many people today are slaves of sin, and the devil says, "Jump," and they say, "How high?" Oh, they say they're free, but they're free to do what they want. They're not free to do what they ought. Only Jesus can make them free to do what they ought. And when they do what they want, they don't want what they do when they see the ultimate end of it. The devil is a hard taskmaster.

VII. Death

But now I want us to go on. Not only does the delusion and the desire turn into a decision, but the decision evolved into death. Now the Bible says she did eat. And I want you to go back to chapter 2 and verse 17 and read that. God says, in chapter 2, verse 17, "*But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*" (Genesis 2:17) And the decision turned to death. She ate, and she did surely die.

"But," you say, "wait a minute, Brother Rogers. The Bible goes on to describe how she had a family and children. And she spoke with Adam and so forth. Did she die? It seems like she was still alive." She died, and she died that day. But how did she die? She died spiritually. Death, in the Bible, is not primarily the separation of the soul from the body; it is the separation of the spirit from God. Let me tell you how she died: She died immediately in the spirit, progressively in the soul, and ultimately in her body. But she was dead the moment she ate. Actually, the Hebrew says, "Dying, thou shalt die." (Genesis 2:17) She died, and was in a process of dying. She was dying. She died spiritually. She was cut off from God. And from that moment on, the fellowship with God was gone from her.

And let me tell you what salvation is while we're right here in the neighborhood. You know, so many people think salvation is getting your sins forgiven. No, that gets you ready for salvation. It's necessary, but that's not what salvation is. Some other people think that salvation is going to heaven when you die. No, that's a fringe benefit. You

know, being a Christian has a wonderful retirement plan. Did you know that? That's a fringe benefit. That's just a by-product of salvation, but that's not salvation. *Salvation is not getting man out of earth into heaven; it is getting God out of heaven into man.* That's what salvation is. You see, when she sinned, she died. She became minus God. God moved out of her.

The Bible says concerning our Lord, *"In him was life; and the life was the light of men."* (John 1:4) And so when the Lord went out, the life went out. When the life went out, the light went out. And there she is, dead, dark, and depraved, and doomed, because sin now has come to full fruit in her life, and her delusion became a desire, which became her death.

VIII. Dissemination

But wait a minute. We're not finished yet. There's one more step in the evolution of a sin. Look, if you will again, in the last part of verse 6—and the Bible says, *"And [she] did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat."* (Genesis 3:6) And the death turns to a dissemination. She spreads it. You know, dead things corrupt things around them, don't they? And here is her corrupting influence. You see, the sinner becomes a seducer. There is an unholy contagion to sin. And not only has she done wrong, but she's now dragging Adam with her. You see, now the devil has a team member. The devil has someone to help him to do his dirty conversion work. And now Adam has become a sinner, because she is now disseminating the views of the devil. *"She gave to her husband, and he did eat also."* (Genesis 3:6)

Let me tell you something: If you go to heaven, you'll most likely take someone to heaven with you through your influence. But if you go to hell, you'll most likely take someone to hell with you. Do you know what the Bible says? *"None of us live unto ourselves, and none of us die unto ourselves."* (Romans 14:7) Here Eve not only corrupted herself, but she became the devil's tool to corrupt Adam. There are some of you fine men who are listening to me who are not Christians. Some of you are listening by means of radio or television, and you're not Christians. I want to warn you, if you don't get saved, you're going to die and go to hell. But furthermore, you're going to take some of your loved ones with you, perhaps your own children.

I heard of a man who was in his home one day. He was a cultured, educated, outwardly kind man. And a soul winner came and knocked on the man's door, a visitor from the church. The man, being gracious, went to the door and opened the door and invited this man in. This earnest soul winner took his Bible and sat down by this man and told him of the love of God and the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The unsaved man sat there and listened. He listened courteously. He smiled. He nodded his head. He thanked the man for coming, refused to receive Jesus, graciously showed him

to the door, and sat down and unfolded his newspaper again with a smug look upon his face.

His little boy, who was not yet even old enough to go to school, had been watching the whole thing. He was sitting on the floor playing with the toy. When the earnest soul winner had left the house, the little boy dropped his toys, went and snuggled up in his daddy's lap, put his arms around his daddy's neck that he'd admired so much, and shook his head this way, and said, "We don't want to be an old Christian, do we, Daddy?" You see what he was teaching? Not aware, of course, that there's a child down there listening.

Oh, there's something about sin, though, that corrupts those around us. There's something about the sinner that makes the sinner a seducer. "And none of us live unto ourselves, and none of us die unto ourselves." (Romans 14:7) And I believe the hell of hell for some men, for some women, will be that not only did they go there, but they drag their loved ones with them. Oh, there was the dissemination of that sin.

Conclusion

Well, that would be a bad note to end on, so turn with me to Romans 5 for just a minute—just a moment. And it's worth turning to—Romans chapter 5. I want to show you just several verses, and we'll be finished. Look in Romans chapter 5, verse 12. Here's what the New Testament has to say about all that we've been talking about: "*Wherefore, as by one man*"—that is, Adam—"*sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.*" (Romans 5:12) Now there's none of us here who would dare stand up and say we've not sinned—I think not. "*Death passed upon all men, for...all have sinned.*" (Romans 5:12) Sin came into the world through Adam, but we're all sinners by nature, sinners by birth, sinners by choice, sinners by practice, and sinners under the condemnation of death. That's what Romans 5:12 tells us.

But oh, skip down, if you will, please, to another verse. Look in verse 17—Romans 5, verse 17: "*For if by one man's offence death reigned by one;*"—that is, by Adam—"*much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.*" (Romans 5:17)

Now, what does that tell us? It tells us, dear friend, that Jesus came to undo what Adam did. And did you know, in a strange way, it's good for us that Adam sinned. You say, "Now, how?" Oh, friend, this is the glory of the gospel. You see, Jesus was slain before the foundation of the world. And did you know that, in God's heart and mind, God really planned for you to be redeemed by His Son when He made you, to begin with? Oh, strange are the mysteries of God! But I want to tell you, dear friend, it is better for you to have what Jesus gives you than what Adam would have left you had he never

sinned. You gain more in Jesus than you ever lost in Adam. That's what the Bible means when it says, "Where sin did abound, grace doth much more abound." (Romans 5:20) *I had rather be a saved sinner than an innocent angel.*

Let me illustrate what I'm talking about. Adam had natural life. I have supernatural life. Adam was merely innocent. I am positively righteous. Adam lived in an earthly paradise. I am seated in heavenly places. Adam was the lord of Eden. But I am the heir of all things. Adam was God's creature. But I'm a member of the Body of Christ. Adam was able to fall. I am eternally secure. Adam may have been happy. But I have "joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8) through the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's the reason someone wrote a song, "Angels never knew the joy that my salvation brings." Aren't you glad for Jesus? And aren't you glad that Jesus came to undo what the devil did? Salvation is a gift, and you may receive it right now.

Unmasking Satan's Lies

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: October 31, 1993

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 3:1–13

“And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.”

GENESIS 3:4–5

Outline

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Introduction

Today, would you take God's Word and find the book of Genesis chapter 3. Right away, you will recognize that it is a vitally important passage in the Word of God if you are a Bible student. It's a foundational passage. We're dealing in these days with foundational truths: "Back to the Basics: What Every Christian Ought to Know." We could call it Christianity 101. And today we're speaking on this subject: "Unmasking Satan's Lies." Now you'll never be a victorious Christian until you understand your enemy and depend upon your Savior. So we want you today to look into the Word of God, because we're going to use the Word of God today to pull away the veil of darkness from Satan's kingdom. Even before we read this scripture, I want to tell you something about the nature and the activity of the devil.

Now in another place, in John chapter 8 and verse 44, Jesus Christ was talking to those who were not saved, and He said to these unsaved ones: *“Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth... When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.”* (John 8:44) He is the master liar. He is the father of all lies. And in John chapter 8 and verse 44, Jesus told us these two things about Satan: His motive is murder; his method is the lie. Have you got it? His motive and his method are in John 8, verse 44.

Now he wants to bring death to you, death to purity, death to happiness. He wants to bring physical death, spiritual death, eternal death. He is a murderer, and the way he does his nefarious work is through a lie. Satan is a craftsman when it comes to telling lies. He is, Jesus said, the father of all lies. (John 8:44) So I want you to learn this about Satan: He is a liar beyond all other liars. And when we pull the veil of darkness away from his lies today, we’re going to see four of his master lies. I call them Satan’s four spiritual flaws. You’re going to see them here: the four spiritual flaws. They are right here in the book of Genesis.

But let me say this, that they are very clever lies. The cleverest lies always sound the most like the truth. Now anybody can tell a lie and not be a good liar. Even a clock that doesn’t run is right twice a day, isn’t that right? And a clever lie sounds the most like the truth. Therefore, a clock that is five minutes wrong is far more dangerous than a clock that doesn’t run at all and is right twice a day. A clock that is five minutes wrong is so near the right time that it can cause you to miss that airplane or be late for that vital appointment. Some people might think that a clock five hours wrong is more dangerous than a clock five minutes wrong, but not so. If you look at a clock five hours wrong, you say, “That must be wrong; somebody tell me what time it is.” But a clock that is five minutes wrong is the most dangerous.

Now Satan tells the cleverest lies. And the cleverest lies are the most like the truth, and yet they are diabolical lies. He never comes saying, “I am a liar.” To the contrary, the Bible speaks of him as *“an angel of light.”* (2 Corinthians 11:14) I want to say something else. Not only is he the cleverest liar, but he tells his lies about the biggest subject. The biggest liar would deal with the biggest subject, would he not? And what is the biggest subject? God—God. And here in Genesis we’re going to find four of Satan’s biggest lies about the biggest subject, and that is God Himself. Satan wants you to get a wrong conception of God, because if you get a wrong conception of God, he’s got you where he wants you. A. W. Tozer said, “No religion can rise higher than its concept of God.” Did you hear that? “No religion can rise higher than its concept of God.” Therefore, Satan had far rather get you to believe a wrong thing than to do a wrong thing, because it is the thought that is the father of the deed. And Satan would most

rather get you to believe a wrong thing about God.

Now having said that, let's look here in Genesis chapter 3, verse 1: *"Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day that ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat."* (Genesis 3:1–6)

Now I'm going to pause right here, because I've gotten to the scripture that I will use to show to you these four spiritual flaws.

I. Spiritual Flaw #1: Thinking Negatively About God

What's flaw number one? What does Satan want to do in your mind? How does Satan want you to think this day about God? Put it down big and plain and straight: Satan wants you to think negatively about God—negatively about God. If Satan can get you to thinking negatively about God, he has put a spiritual flaw in your thinking.

Now, notice how he begins here. These are the first recorded words of Satan as he crawls his slimy, corroding path onto the pages of history. And the very first thing we hear him say is this: "Hath God said that ye shall not?" Listen to it. He says, "Hath God said that ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" (Genesis 3:1) Now what he did was to introduce a negative thought concerning God right there. Now God is not a negative God. God is a positive God. God is full of grace. God is full of love. God is full of kindness and goodness and sweetness. But what Satan wanted Eve to do is to think of God as being severe, to think of God as being cruel, to think negatively about God. And did you know that there are many people in the world today who are going to die and go to hell because they think negatively about God and therefore will not come to God? The very thought of God terrifies them, and they are repelled by the thought of God rather than attracted by the thought of God. Put it down, my friend: If you think negatively about God, you're going to have a hard time worshipping God.

So many people think of God as sort of a cosmic killjoy. And that's exactly the way that Satan wanted Eve to think of God. Satan wanted Eve to think that God is so straightlaced, so severe, so cruel that He has forbidden any legitimate enjoyment; that everything that is pleasurable is either illegal, immoral, or fattening; that every time God sees someone having pleasure, He moves in to break up the party. That's the way that

Satan wants people to think of God.

The truth of the matter is that God had said a resounding yes to man's pleasure. Look, if you will, in chapter 2 and verse 16 of this same chapter: *"And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat."* (Genesis 2:16) Now, what had Satan said? Satan said, *"Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?"* (Genesis 3:1) But what had God said? God said, *"Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat."* (Genesis 2:16)

There was only one tree of all of the trees that was forbidden. It would be like a person saying, "Well, I don't want to come to Bellevue Baptist Church, because there's one seat that I can't sit in." You've got seven thousand seats to sit in. And here's the Garden of Eden—here's the Garden of Eden. And it was all there. And God says, *"Come in and help yourself. I made it for you. I am a good God."*

Can you imagine the glories and the beauties of the Garden of Eden? And God made it all for His children. When God created Eden, God said to Adam and Eve, "Adam and Eve, this is yours. I love you. Help yourself." *Don't think of God as some vengeful deity sitting up there on some great white throne hurling down thunderbolts and making laws to make people squirm, like a worm in hot ashes, trying to keep those laws. God is good.*

Well, you say, "God has given us some laws." Of course He's given us laws. Why? Because He is so loving. *Every time God says, "Thou shalt not," God is simply saying, "Don't hurt yourself." And every time God says, "Thou shalt," God is saying, "Help yourself to happiness."* Don't let anybody ever get you to thinking negatively about God. Put these verses in your margins if they're not already there. Psalm 37 and verse 4: *"Delight thyself...in the LORD: and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart."* (Psalms 37:4) I didn't say that. God said it.

Put this one down—Psalm 84, verse 11: *"The LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."* (Psalms 84:11) I didn't say that. God said it. *"No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." If it will make you healthy, happy, holy, wholesome, God says, "I love you. Help yourself."*

Listen to this scripture—First Timothy chapter 6 and verse 17. It speaks of "God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy." (1 Timothy 6:17) Have you ever gotten the idea that being a Christian is a life of negativism, it's a life of misery? My friend, it is a life of *"joy unspeakable and full of glory."* (1 Peter 1:8) And there are so many people, however, who have bought into the devil's lie, and they are thinking negatively about God.

II. Spiritual Flaw #2: Thinking Skeptically About God

Spiritual flaw number one, therefore, is to think negatively about God. Spiritual flaw number two is to think skeptically about God—skeptically. Now, notice, if you will, as we continue to read, Genesis chapter 3, verses 2 through 4: *“And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden...”*—Eve knew better than that—*“We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die.”* (Genesis 3:2–4)

Now, you see, now he is introducing not only negativism but doubt into her mind. He wants her to think negatively, and he wants her to think skeptically. *“Hath God said?”* (Genesis 3:1) That brings doubt. *“Ye shall not surely die.”* (Genesis 3:4) That is denial of the Word of God.

Now, please listen to what I’m about to say. There’s a battle going on in the world today over the Word of God. Anybody who causes skepticism concerning the authorship, the accuracy, the authority, and the acceptability of the Word of God is doing the work of the devil. Clearly and plainly let me say that again. *Anyone who causes skepticism concerning the authorship, the accuracy, the authority and the acceptability of the Word of God is doing the work of the devil, no matter what degree he holds, what title he wears, what position he occupies, or what school he teaches in.* It makes no difference. That is the work of the devil: to get you to thinking skeptically about God.

It is amazing the sources of authority that people are using today other than the Word of God, alternatives to God’s truth. I want to mention about six of them very quickly.

A. Relativism

One is relativism, that truth is always changing. And so we have morality by majority.

B. Subjectivism

The other is subjectivism. Someone says, “Well, what is true for you may not be true for me.”

C. Empiricism

Another is empiricism. That’s a word we don’t use very often, but what it simply means is, the only truth we can know is what we can measure or test. This is the scientific approach to truth.

D. Existentialism

The other is existentialism. That’s another big word that we don’t often use. But it

means that truth is only what we experience, that the Word of God only becomes the Word of God as we read it and get some experiences out of it.

E. Rationalism

The other is rationalism, where we make a god of logic, and we parade things past the judgment bar of our own mind. And we decide what is true and what is not true, and we substitute “thus saith the Word of God” for “thus saith the mind of man.”

F. Pragmatism

And I suppose the most dangerous of all is the one that we’re at today, and that is pragmatism. We don’t even ask whether it’s true or not. We just simply ask, “Does it work?”

All of these—all of these—are just repackaging exactly what Satan was doing in the Garden of Eden. All he’s done is take these old lies and repackaged these old lies to get this skepticism. All of these ways are Satan’s way of saying, “Think skeptically of this book, the Word of God.” We have a generation of young people today who have no moral standard, no moral foundation, no fixed standard for right or wrong. And because they have no final authority—“that God has said”—they have no moral compass.

Now, listen. Why is it wrong to steal? God has said so. Why is it wrong to commit adultery? God has said so. Why is it wrong to commit fornication? God has said so. Why is it wrong to dishonor your parents? God has said so. Why is it wrong to worship any other being than the Almighty? Because the Word of God teaches that it is a sin. But, you see, Satan says, “Oh now, wait a minute. Don’t get boxed in by that. Hath God said? Oh, ye shall not surely die.” And so when he got her to thinking (a) negatively about God, it was much easier to get her to think, (b) skeptically about God.

III. Spiritual Flaw #3: Thinking Lightly About God

Now here’s the third spiritual flaw. Number one: to think negatively about God. Number two: to think skeptically about God, that God is not to be trusted or believed. Number three: to think lightly about God—to think lightly about God. Now, continue to read in verse 4. And he says here in verse 4, “*Ye shall not surely die.*” (Genesis 3:4) Now what he says is, “You don’t have to worry about the judgment of God. There doesn’t need to be any fear of judgment. You no longer have to stand in awe of the Almighty. God said that you were going to die, but don’t worry about that.”

I want to say also that Satan is behind the idea that you can sin with impunity. God gave His Ten Commandments, not ten suggestions. And law without penalty is only advice. And God was not giving advice; God was giving His holy law. It is the devil’s gospel—please listen to me—it is the devil’s gospel that God will not punish sin. You say, “Well, I don’t believe in death, hell, and judgment.” Well, that’s your privilege, but

it's not going to change it.

One of my favorite illustrations is of Abraham Lincoln. He asked a little boy one day, he said, "Son, I want to ask you a question. If a dog has four legs, and you call his tail a leg, then how many would he have?" "Well," the fellow said, "he'd have five, Mr. Lincoln." Abe said, "Nope, he'd just have four. No matter what you call his tail, it's still a tail." No matter what you say about hell, you don't put out the fact of hell or abolish the fact of judgment.

There is a God who will punish sin. Satan says, "Oh, you will not surely die." (Genesis 3:4) Now the New Age religion that we have today, do you know what that is? New Ageism is just a repackaging of this old, old lie. We have the idea of reincarnation. Do you know what reincarnation is? Reincarnation is the idea that you keep coming back again and again and again until you finally get it right; you get as many chances as you need. The idea of reincarnation is the devil's modern way of dealing with this old lie that is so old as Eden. In reincarnation, there is no personal God, there is no judgment, there is no God to whom we give an account.

Shirley MacLaine, the modern high priestess of New Age religion, has said—and I quote: "We can eliminate all fear of death." Now that's exactly what Satan is saying right here: "Ye shall not surely die. We can eliminate all fear of death." And Shirley MacLaine said, "Once I was a princess in Atlantis. Then one time I was an Inca in Peru. And another time I was a child reared by elephants." I can say some things I think she was, but I mean, that's the kind of idea where you say, "Nobody believes that." If you don't think anybody believes it, go visit one of our local bookstores and see the books on this New Age religion. They get the idea that plants and animals are all interrelated, and we're all transmigrating, we're all in the process of becoming something. Shirley MacLaine said, "It's like show business; you keep doing it until you get it right."

Now if you've got a certain karma, if your karma is bad, you may come back as a lesser thing: You may come back as a spider or as a worm. Or if your karma is good, you may progress: You may come back as some celebrity, or whatever. But finally, everybody is all absorbed, just in celestial fields of happiness. But, you see, the Bible doesn't teach that. The Bible teaches "*it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.*" (Hebrews 9:27) The Bible teaches that you're going to give an account for the way that you live. (Romans 14:12) But Satan says, "Oh, no, no, no. You can think lightly about that." He gets you to thinking negatively about God, he gets you to thinking skeptically about God, and then he gets you to thinking lightly about God.

And we have a generation today that absolutely does not like the idea of God judging sin. They think that's un-American. I have a deep suspicion, almost a conviction, *if the Supreme Court of the United States could vote on it, they would outlaw hell as cruel and unusual punishment*. They would. They would say, "God can't do that; that's

un-American. There can be no such thing as hell.” That’s all from the devil himself. People say, “Well, you know, God is too good to punish sin.” Friend, you’ve got it backwards. God is too good not to punish sin. If God did not punish sin, He’d not be holy; God would topple from His throne of holiness.

IV. Spiritual Flaw #4: Thinking Suspiciously About God

Well, let me give you spiritual flaw number four—spiritual flaw number four. Number one is what? What is it? Think negatively about God. Number two: He wants you to think—what?—skeptically about God. Number three: He wants you to think lightly about God. “Oh, you don’t have to worry about that. You will not surely die. You can sin with impunity. You can get away with it.” Spiritual flaw number four: He wants you to think suspiciously about God—suspiciously about God.

Look, if you will now, in Genesis chapter 3, verses 4 and 5: *“And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die.”*—now, watch the suspicion that he’s going to plant—*“for God doth know that in the day that ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.”* (Genesis 3:4–5) Now, what’s he trying to do? He’s trying to say, “Eve, you know what? God is holding out on you. God is trying to cramp your style. God is being unfair to you. God doesn’t want you to reach your potential. God is trying to keep His monopoly on being God. The truth of the matter is, He doesn’t want you to know what He knows; He doesn’t want you to experience what He experiences.” And he’s trying to get her to think suspiciously about God. He’s saying to her, “Eve, you can never be all that you could be, or ought to be, by going God’s way. You’ll do it far better if you’ll do it yourself.”

Now, really, what he was saying to her is, “Eve, you need to be liberated.” There are a lot of things, friend, that are very old. Here’s Satan’s fib about women’s lib right here. “Eve, I’m going to liberate you. If you live according to this book, it will keep you from personal fulfillment. Now, Eve, God has said not to eat of this fruit. But, Eve, how do you know that it’s really not good? I mean, Eve, how do you know that? I mean, you haven’t tasted it. You haven’t experienced it. All you have got, Eve, is His word. Now, why take His word for it? Try it. You might like it. Might be good, it might be bad. But how do you know personally unless you experiment?”

You know, we have a generation of young people who are going to hell in a hand basket because of this philosophy. They’re experimenting with drugs, experimenting with sex, experimenting with the occult. Rather than standing on the Word of God, they just simply want to see for themselves how it will be. To think suspiciously about God means that it follows, as night follows day, that you want to act independently of God. And there are a lot of folks who say, “You know, I wouldn’t go down there and let that man preach from that Bible and tell me how to live. I’ve got a mind. If something is

wrong, I've got enough sense to figure it out. If it's right, I've got enough sense to figure it out."

That is exactly, precisely, what the devil told Eve so long ago. "Eve, be independent; be autonomous. Eve, reach your potential. Why, Eve, you're a babe in the woods. Eve, your eyes are not open yet. Eve, go ahead and experience it. And then, rather than having the Word of God, you've got something far better than the Word of God: You have got your own decision. Why, you will be like God, knowing good and evil. God knows good and evil, doesn't He? Well then, you'll be like God. You'll know what's good, and you'll know what's evil. Why, Eve, you won't have to have anybody else to tell you, because you will know yourself." Of course, that's a lie. The truth of the matter is, the deeper people go into sin, the less they understand sin. Those who understand sin the least are those who are deepest into sin, because the Bible speaks of the deceitfulness of sin. (Hebrews 3:13)

I heard one day of a young lady who was pure as the driven snow. She was a virgin. There was another young lady who had lost her virginity and had become the dirty plaything of even dirtier men. And this girl who had lost her virginity was trying to get this virgin girl to sacrifice hers upon the altar of some man's lust. Do you know what the virgin girl said to this other girl? She said, "Listen. Anytime I want to become like you, I can. But anytime you would like to become like me again, you cannot." That's a good word, isn't it? A good word in this generation of young people who are all wanting to try it for themselves, experience it for themselves.

And again, how is this repackaged in the New Age religion? Do you know what the New Age religion is? You can be God. That's exactly what Eve was told. You can be your own god. You see, these are just old fools with new faces. The names have been changed to protect the guilty. The same old lies are just being repackaged.

Now the New Agers, they come around with what we call pantheism. Do you know what pantheism is? *Pan*, meaning "all"; *theos*, meaning "God." Everything is God, and God is everything. That's the reason that you have this new cult of Indian religions and tree huggers and people who say it's wrong to eat meat, and all of these kinds of things. Why is that? Well, that's Hinduism; that's Far Eastern religion that has come over here into America. That's not by chance. If you peel it back deep enough, you'll come all the way back to Genesis chapter 3, that you will be like God. (Genesis 3:5)

Now the idea is that God is not a personal, transcendent, sovereign God. "Why, anybody can be like God. Why, you're God; we're all gods. We have God within us because, you see, if God is all, then all is God." The Hindus would not say that God is love; they would say that love is God. They would not say that God is wisdom; they would say that wisdom is God. "Everything is God." "That is God." "The sky is God." "The earth is God." "He is God." "He is God." "I am God." "We're all God because God is

everything.” Doesn’t that sound wonderful?

I want to tell you something else, friend. If God is everything and everything is God, then dirt is God and God is dirt. And if you are God, you are dirt. Now you figure it out. Friend, if God is everything, then that does not elevate man; it just humanizes and animalizes God, the great transcendent God. And so Satan comes along here and he says, “Oh well, you will be God.”

Now, remember that the best lies sound the most like the truth. And the truth of the matter is that God does want us to be like Him—not *as* Him, *like* Him—to be godly. God wants to stamp His image into our souls and make us like the Lord Jesus Christ. But what a clever lie this is! Rather than teaching us to love Him and worship Him as the great, sovereign, transcendent God, it wants us to kick Him off the throne, put ourselves on the throne, stick out our own chest, ball up our fists in His face, and say, “I am God.” Do you remember the one who first said that? Read Isaiah chapter 14: “*I will exalt my throne above the stars of God... I will be like the most High.*” (Isaiah 14:13–14)

And these lies have come back into this world today: to think suspiciously about God. There are a number of people who are sitting in this building today, and you get the idea that if you were to give your heart to Jesus Christ today that somehow that would head you off at the pass, that you would never be all that you could be, that that would cramp your style. That’s a lie out of hell. You will never be what you can be, apart from Jesus Christ. God loves you with an infinite love. “*Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.*” (1 Corinthians 2:9)

Conclusion

But those are four spiritual flaws. Number one: to think negatively about God. Number two: to think skeptically about God. Number three: to think lightly about God. Number four: to think suspiciously about God. And when the devil gets you to thinking wrong, he can get you to doing wrong, because it is the thought that is the father of the deed. Jesus said, “He is a liar and he’s a murderer.” (John 8:44) He wants to bring death to you.

Well, take your Bible and turn to Revelation 12 now. Leave the book of Genesis and turn to the book of Revelation. I want to say there are two books in the Bible that the devil hates. He hates Genesis and he hates Revelation. You want me to tell you why? Because in Genesis his doom is pronounced, and in Revelation it’s carried out, amen? Amen. Somebody has well pointed out, there’s no devil in the first two or the last two chapters of the Bible. And I like that. Now you met the serpent in Genesis 3. You’re going to meet the serpent again in Revelation 12. Look in verse 9: “*And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the*

whole world...—this is what we’re talking about: these four spiritual flaws—*“which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.”* (Revelation 12:9)

Now that verse tells us much, but it tells us that Satan is the old serpent and the deceiver. But notice chapter 12 and verse 11, one of my favorite verses in all of the Bible: *“And they overcame him...”*—who? The serpent—*“they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.”* (Revelation 12:11)

Now, let me tell you how in this twentieth century, today, you can overcome these four spiritual flaws. Here is the recipe right here. They overcame him three ways.

A. By Calvary’s Conquest

First of all, by Calvary’s conquest. *“They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb.”* (Revelation 12:11) That means by the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Your power to overcome Satan is in the blood of the Lamb of God who died on that cross for you. When Jesus Christ was facing the cross, He said, *“Now [is] the prince of this world...cast out.”* (John 12:31) That is, “Through my death I will destroy him that has the power of death, that is, the devil.” (Hebrews 2:14) And at Calvary, Satan’s back was broken.

Now what you need to learn is this, that the only way you’re going to overcome Satan in this day and in this age is through the blood of Jesus Christ. We sang that song, “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God,” and one line in that song says, “His craft and power are great, and, armed with cruel hate, On earth is not his equal.” Isn’t that right? But *“they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb.”* (Revelation 12:11) Satan fears Calvary.

Listen. You put your sin under the blood of Jesus Christ. The Bible says, “The blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanses us from all sin.” (1 John 1:7) Satan fears the blood of Christ. Be saved through the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Come to Him and say, “O Father, in my hand no price I bring; simply to thy cross I cling.” And Satan says, “Oh no, he’s come the way of the cross. Oh no, I wish he’d not done that.” *“They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb.”* (Revelation 12:11)

It is said that one day Napoleon, that archangel of war, was in a war room with some of his generals. They had the charts there and the maps of the world. And Napoleon had a pointer, and he was pointing toward the British Isles, and the British Isles happened to be painted on that map in red, and he said, “Had it not been for that red spot, I would have conquered the world.” Surely the devil has to say that about Calvary, doesn’t he? “Had it not been for that red spot, I would have conquered the world.”

“They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb.” (Revelation 12:11)

B. By Courageous Confession

And secondly, *“by the word of their testimony.”* (Revelation 12:11) That is, they were not silent about it. They were open and vocal concerning their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, not ashamed of Jesus Christ. Give your testimony. Oh, what power there is in the testimony of a blood-bought child of God to overcome Satan!

Where should you give your testimony? Give your testimony to the saved. Let's encourage one another. Say, “Friend, let me tell you what Jesus means to me.” Give your testimony to the lost. *A Christian with a glowing testimony is worth a library full of arguments.* Give your testimony to God. I frequently give my testimony to God. I say, “Lord, I'm yours. I belong to you. You saved me. I love you, Jesus. You're real to me.” He loves to hear that. But, friend, give your testimony to the devil. *“They overcame him...by the word of their testimony.”* (Revelation 12:11) You say, “What do you mean, give your testimony to the devil?” Just tell him what's what. Tell him who you are. Tell him, when he gets on your case and comes with these lies and insinuations, “Satan, you're a liar. My Savior said that you're a liar. And I'm not going to argue with you, I'm not going to plead with you, I'm not going to wrestle with you. I am going to give you the Word of God, which is the word of my testimony. I am saved; my sins are under the blood of Jesus Christ. I am inhabited by the Holy Spirit; my body is a temple of the Holy Ghost, which I have of God. And you, Satan, are trespassing on my Father's property. And in the name of Jesus, be gone.”

You say, “Can you speak to him that way? Isn't that like praying to the devil? I'm not praying to a cat when I say, “Scat.” Friend, the Bible says, *“Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”* (James 4:7) How? Calvary's conquest. Courageous confession: the word of their testimony.

C. By Complete Commitment

And last of all, *“And they loved not their lives unto the death”* (Revelation 12:11): complete commitment—complete commitment. What does that mean? It means that they said, “Whether we live or not, we're going for God.” *“They loved not their lives unto the death.”* That is, “If it means that we pay with our own blood for our faith, if we have to die for Jesus, we're not going to serve the devil.” You see, *when a man is no longer afraid to die, for the first time ever, he's ready to live.* *“They loved not their lives unto death.”* (Revelation 12:11) Why? Because Christ has conquered the grave. That's the way to overcome him.

Now if you try to hold back, well, you're already being defeated.

There's a story about some of Caesar's soldiers. They were warriors, and they were on a ship, a boat. And they came against a little island off the coast of Britain to conquer that island. And these soldiers got out of that boat, and the people up on the hill in the

village saw them. And the people in the village thought, “Well, we’ll defend our little island.” They weren’t a warfaring people, but they got some sticks and some pitchforks and some rakes and some rocks, anything they could get to fight with, and they started down the hill to meet these soldiers. And do you know what they saw? When these soldiers got out of their boat, they turned around and set fire to it and shoved it out into the ocean to burn and sink. And when the people in the village saw that, they laid down their pitchforks, their rakes, and their sticks and surrendered. Do you know why? These men had not come to retreat; they had come to conquer or die, but not retreat.

Hey, how about your Christian life? Have you kept a boat pulled up on the beach? You say, “Well, I’m going to quit drinking, but I’m going to keep this fifth of liquor, in case I go back.” You will—you will. You say, “Well, I’m going to be a Christian, but I’m not going to come down there and make it public, because if I come down there and make it public, then I might not be able to live it, and I might fall away.” You will—you will. You know why? Because you are already backing up. The devil has already gotten you intimidated. What you need to say is, “I will overcome him by the blood of the Lamb, the word of my testimony, and I will love not my life unto the death. I’m going for God—I’m going for God. I’m getting out of the boat with both feet. Every inch, every ounce, every nerve, all, every fiber, as much as in me is, by the grace of God, I’ll live for God!” And God will pour incredible power into your life.

“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.” (Revelation 12:11)

The Guilty Pair

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: March 8, 1981

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 3:7–15

“And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.”

GENESIS 3:8

Outline

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Introduction

Take your Bibles, please, and turn to Genesis chapter 3—Genesis chapter 3. We’ve been preaching through Genesis. Today, we’re going to see what happened to Adam and Eve after they sinned and took that forbidden fruit that we preached about last Sunday morning. The title of our message today is “The Guilty Pair”—“The Guilty Pair.”

And I want us to begin our reading in verse 7. Now, remember, this follows hard on the heels of their disobedience to God. And now we’re going to see the results of that disobedience: *“And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.”* I believe that was the first miniskirt right there. *“And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden. And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that*

thou shouldest not eat? And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat. And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all [of] the days of thy life: And I will put enmity...—that word *enmity* means “warfare”—“*And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*” (Genesis 3:7–15)

Adam and Eve are now about to discover the vital, terrible, awful truth of Galatians chapter 6, verse 7: “*Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*” (Galatians 6:7) Somewhere I heard this little saying: “Life is short. Death is sure. Sin is the curse. Christ is the cure.”

We’re going to find this about sin today; we’re going to find out something about the curse of sin and the death that it brings. But also, praise God, hallelujah, we’re going to find out something about the wonderful, glorious, marvelous life that the Lord Jesus Christ has provided for us. You know, I just believe that we have a generation that doesn’t fear sin like it ought to. We ought to fear sin as though it were some contagious disease, as though it were a rattlesnake in the coil. We ought to fear sin because of the devilish power of sin.

An old country preacher told me years ago something like this. I’ve never forgotten it. He said, “Sin will take you further than you want to go.” He said, “Sin will keep you longer than you want to stay.” And he said, “Sin will cost you more than you want to pay.” I think that is terrific. Think about it again: “Sin will take you further than you want to go. Sin will keep you longer than you want to stay. And sin will cost you more than you want to pay.” Many of us have the idea that we can just dabble in sin, dart into sin and out of sin, and get away with it. But oh, I hope today that you’ll see something of the fearful, terrible, awful, awesome, hellish, hurtful, hateful work of sin today.

I. Sin Turns to Shame

Now the first thing I want you to notice—look at verse 7—I want you to notice that their sin turned to shame. Do you have that? Their sin turned to shame. Look in verse 7: “*And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked.*” (Genesis 3:7) Now here they are with a sense of shame, a sense of guilt. They didn’t have that before. Why now, after they sin, do they feel so naked? It is not that they were not clothed before, but they were clothed with a different garment before. I believe that they were clothed before with a garment of glory and light. Look at this verse—Psalm 104, verse 2. This is the way God covers Himself. The Bible says, in Psalm 104, verse

2—it speaks of God— *“Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment.”* (Psalms 104:2) God wears a robe of light and glory. And when God appears, He appears in this world as the Shekinah glory, that effulgence of light.

Do you remember when the Lord Jesus Christ was transfigured? The Bible tells us there, in Mark chapter 9, verses 2 and 3, that when Jesus Christ was transfigured, His raiment became glistening white: As bright as the sun was the Lord Jesus Christ. (Mark 9:2–3) The Bible says, *“His raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them.”* (Mark 9:3) Do you remember when the Bible says, in Psalm 8, where God created man, and the Bible says, *“And when God created man that He crowned him with glory”?* *“He crowned him with glory.”* (Psalms 8:5)

Here was man enveloped in glory wearing a robe of pristine purity and light. But when he sinned, he fell short of the glory of God, and the glory departed. And now he sees himself; he is conscious now of his guilt and of his shame and of his nakedness because of the glory of God that has departed from him. And he feels this sense of shame. The Bible says, in chapter 2, before their sin, they *“were not ashamed.”* (Genesis 2:25) But now the Bible says that sin has turned to shame. But I thank God that it did. I thank God that Adam and Eve had not so hardened in sin that they could not feel a sense of shame.

And oh, my dear friend, I pray God today, that if there’s sin in your heart and in your life, there’s also a sense of shame, because if there is a sense of shame, there is hope for you. Listen to Ezra chapter 9, verse 6. I like what Ezra prayed: *“And said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens.”* (Ezra 9:6) Ezra said, “God, I’m so ashamed of the way we’re living. God, I can’t even look into your face.” My friends, it’s not good to sin. But thank God for sinners who can still feel a sense of shame, because there are some people who do not feel a sense of shame. Jeremiah chapter 6, verse 15—listen to what Jeremiah said of the people of his day: *“Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush.”* (Jeremiah 6:15) We live in a generation of unblushables today. Someone has said, “Man is the only creature of God that can blush, and he’s the only one that needs to.” But Jeremiah said these people had become so hardened in their sin that they had lost their sense of shame. They couldn’t even blush. Oh, I pray to God that you still have a sense of shame.

But let me tell you something else. The last stage in human depravity is this. The first stage is when you feel shame. The second stage is when you no longer feel shame. You get immune to our sin. But let me give you the last stage of human depravity. It is mentioned in Philippians chapter 3, verse 18. The apostle Paul, with great scalding tears streaming down his cheeks, looked out at some people he knew,

and he said, in Philippians chapter 3, verse 18, *“For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their [appetite], and whose glory is in their shame”*—*“whose glory is in their shame.”* (Philippians 3:18–19) Not only had they lost the normal sense of shame, but they actually glory in the vile things they do. *Sin that used to slink down back alleys now struts down main streets*—I mean, people who are proud of their sins. They are arrogant about their sins. A little booklet in a hotel lobby in San Francisco was titled “Where to Sin in San Francisco”—“Where to Sin in San Francisco.” In other words, here’s where to go if you want to go out and have a big time. Anytime Hollywood wants to get a big crowd, what do they advertise? Sexy, sinful, lurid, shocking, shameful. And the people flock in. Why? They glory in their shame. I want to tell you, that’s the last step on the way down.

For Paul spoke of these people, and he said here in Philippians that their *“end is destruction.”* (Philippians 3:19) I pray to God that you can still blush. I pray to God that you can still feel a sense of shame. Adam and Eve did. They knew that they were naked. There is something good about that because we live in a generation that is literally laughing its way into hell. We sit in our homes and watch all kinds of fornication and adultery and giggle and laugh about breaking God’s seventh commandment, which says, *“Thou shalt not commit adultery.”* (Exodus 20:14) We’re somehow proud of that. And everybody is coming out of his closet today. I watched last night on a news broadcast a young man who murdered a woman, raped her, and drowned her three children. He sat there with a stone face and clear eyes and said, “I don’t feel any remorse, not any”—“not any.” *“Whose glory is in their shame.”* (Philippians 3:19) That’s the last stage. And there are many that way, and Paul says their *“end is destruction.”* (Philippians 3:19)

II. Shame Gives Way to Sham

Now, notice what happened to Adam and Eve. Step number one: Their sin turned into shame. Step number two: Their shame gave way to sham. Look again, if you will, please, in verse 7: *“And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.”* (Genesis 3:7) So they decide now that they’re going to cover their own shame. And so Eve and Adam, evidently being very cunning, they get together, and they take fig leaves, and they fashion themselves a garment to cover their shame, which is symbolic of their sin.

And what does this represent? What does this represent? It represents the sham, the hypocrisy, the mockery of people who are trying to undo their sin life and to cover their sins with man-made garments. It may be the man-made garment of religion, of

education, of morality, of ritual, all of these things—the fig leaves that can never ever cover our shame and our sin before the eyes of Almighty God, “before whom all things are open and naked,” (Hebrews 4:13) the Bible has to say.

Oh, I feel sorry for some of you who are living a life of sham. Outwardly, you seem to be religious; outwardly, you seem to be a good person. But all you’re dressed in is the fig leaves of your own making, the works of your own hands. And the Bible says, in Titus chapter 3, verse 5, that it is “*not by works of righteousness [that] we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.*” (Titus 3:5) Oh, be done with the fig leaves of this man-made covering! You’ll never cover your guilt that way.

III. Sham Leads to Separation

But, thirdly, watch this: Not only did their sin turn to shame, and not only did their shame turn to sham, but then sham always leads to separation. They were separated from God. Look in verse 8, if you will now: “*And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD.*” (Genesis 3:8) Just underscore that; they “*hid themselves from the presence of the LORD.*” Sin now has driven a wedge between them and Almighty God, and this sham has led to separation. You see, at first Adam and Eve, I am certain, were quite proud of what they had done. You know, Adam looked over at Eve, and she’s all dressed up there in fig leaves, and he says, “Boy, honey, you are stunning. That is terrific. Green is your color, darling—matches your eyes.” And she looked at Adam and she said, “Oh, you big ol’ brawny brute, you. You’re so handsome all dressed up there in your brand-new Hart Schaffner & Marx green suit there. I just love you. You look so handsome. You look so good.”

And, you know, the man who has a do-it-yourself religion, he’s quite proud of it. And it seems to do pretty good until he faces the scrutiny of God. And God comes walking through the garden, and when Adam senses the presence of the thrice-holy God of Israel, Adam says to Eve, “Say, I don’t feel so good.” Eve said, “I don’t feel so comfortable either. I kind of still feel a little naked. Let’s you and I head for the bushes.” And they try to hide themselves from God there. They’re separated from God, but they have found out that neither leaves, nor trees, nor distance, nor darkness, nor anything can hide themselves from the all-seeing eye of God, whose eyes are like a flame (Revelation 1:14) that cause those leaves to wither. But they’re separated from God. And the devil, with a sly smile sliding up his face, is congratulating himself, for he has done exactly, precisely, what he wanted to do: to drive a wedge between man and God, and to get Adam and Eve to be afraid of God and to think negatively about God. For God is to be loved, and God is to be enjoyed. And God is a good God. How wonderful it is to know Him!

But now here they are, afraid of God, running from God, hiding from God. Some of you are doing exactly the same thing. You think God is your enemy. You fear Him. You're afraid of Him, because sin has led to shame, and shame has led to sham, and sham has led to separation. Well did Isaiah say in Isaiah 59, verse 2, *"But your iniquities have separated between you and your God"—"your iniquities have separated between you and your God."* (Isaiah 59:2)

IV. Separation Leads to Seeking

But I want you to notice the next step: fourthly—and I thank God for the next step—that separation led to seeking. Look, if you will, please, in verse 9—verse 9: *"And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?"* (Genesis 3:9) Now, notice it was not Adam who was seeking God; it was God who was seeking Adam. You would have thought that after Adam realized the terrible, awful thing that he had done, after Adam had felt the sense of shame and guilt, that Adam, conscious-smitten, would have said, "Oh, God, Oh, my God, where art thou? Come, God. Have mercy on me." But he didn't do that. Rather than seeking God, he runs from God; he hides from God. You put it down straight and put it down big: God sought Adam, not Adam seeking God.

Now you say, "What does that have to do with me today?" Friend, we need to learn something about salvation: We love Him because He first loved us. Just remember this. You say, "Well, no, no, no, no. It was my idea. I saw my need of God. I sought God out." The only reason that you sought Him is because He first sought you. The Bible says, in Romans chapter 3, verse 11, *"There is none that seeketh after God"—"no, not one...none that seeketh after God."* (Romans 3:10–11)

Where, out of your old sinful, depraved heart, is going to come a desire to know God? It cannot. Man is totally depraved, and I thank God for the grace of our salvation, that the mighty God was moved in mercy by the pitiful plight of sinful man. And God Himself took the initiative. And God would have been perfectly just to have flung them into hell right then. But He didn't do it. And when God comes into the Garden of Eden, He does not come in there as a detective. He does not come in there as a policeman saying, "Where are you?" It is a heart of compassionate love, a broken heart. "Adam, Adam, where are you?" God is seeking.

I want to tell you something, dear friend. God is seeking you today. Did you know that? He still seeks. He still calls. He still searches. The song that we sang, that the choir sang, that J. J. sang, that Elmer and Tommy sang, do you know what all that beautiful music was about? For one thing, it was God seeking you. Do you know what this sermon is about? It is God seeking you. Do you know what these prayers are about? It is God seeking you. You're not here by accident. God is seeking you. God loves you. God calls you. Oh, I thank God for the Lord Jesus Christ, who said, in

Revelation chapter 3, verse 20, *“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) It’s not that we’re out all over town, running around trying to find God. God today is knocking at your heart’s door. Did you know that? That sickness, that sorrow, that accident, all of the things, that beautiful sunset—all of it—is God knocking at your heart’s door, saying, “I love you. I want to come in.” I love Luke 19, verse 10: *“For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”* (Luke 19:10) And Jesus didn’t come to condemn you; He came to seek you. He came to save you.

God is calling for you today. His great heart, His great yearning heart, is calling. For the Bible says, in Romans 5:8, *“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”* (Romans 5:8) That’s good news, friend—that is good news. God didn’t wait till we got right, till we went after Him. But God saw us, vile as we are, weak as we are, sinful as we are, and His great mighty heart of grace and love caused Him to seek us. And this sermon today is the Lord seeking you. Thank God—thank God—that separation led to seeking, that here is God seeking for Adam.

But let me tell you something else. God will not always seek. Did you know that when you go on, and you pass the point where you can blush over your sin, and you get hardened in your sin, that God may stop seeking? Do you know what He said in Genesis chapter 6, verse 3? *“My spirit shall not always strive with man”—“My spirit shall not always strive with man.”* (Genesis 6:3) The Bible speaks of some people, and the Bible says, “And God gave them up.” (Romans 1:24)

Listen to me, unsaved person. You intend to get saved? You intend to get right with God? You intend to go to heaven, not to hell, when you die? Did you know you can cross the deadline? Did you know there comes a time when God will give you up? Did you know that God says, *“My spirit shall not always strive with a man”?* (Genesis 6:3) The Bible says, *“To day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.”* (Hebrews 3:15) God seeks, but one of these days, He’s going to call His last call. One of these days, He’s going to knock His last knock.

*There is a time, we know not when,
A point we 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 patience and His wrath.*

—J. ADDISON ALEXANDER

Some of you today may step over that deadline. Some of you today may say a final *no*

to the Lord Jesus Christ. And God says, “My spirit will not always strive with a man.” (Genesis 6:3) Thank God if you can still feel a sense of shame. Thank God if you can still hear the voice of God. Thank God if Jesus is knocking at your heart’s door. Thank God—thank God. And don’t let the day of opportunity pass.

V. Seeking Turns to Searching

You see, sin turned to shame, and shame turned to sham, and sham turned to separation. And then God stepped in, and separation turned to seeking. But watch it now. Seeking turned to searching, because after God has sought Adam out, and after God has confronted Adam, now He begins to search Adam, to test Adam, and He starts to ask Adam questions. But He’s asking these questions of Adam not for information. God already knows everything. You can’t tell God anything He doesn’t know. But God is asking questions to bring Adam to Himself. I have heard a long time ago an old preacher say, “You’ve got to get folks lost before you can get them saved.” Now he doesn’t mean that they are not lost, but you have to get them to see that they are lost. There are so many people who will not admit their sinful condition.

And so let’s continue to read, as we’re saying that the seeking led to a searching. Look in verse 10, if you will—Adam is speaking to God: *“And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked?...”*—now God already knows all of this, but He’s saying—*“Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.”* (Genesis 3:10–13) You notice the alibis here? You notice how God is trying to bring them face-to-face with their sin?

But I want you to notice a proclivity in human nature that does not want to bow its head and say, “I am guilty; have mercy upon me.” Let’s go back to that young man that I was talking about on television last night. Many of you saw that news broadcast, did you not? Broke my heart. But he said, “No, I don’t feel guilty.” And here is the reason why he said he didn’t feel guilty. He said, “Society failed me—not my fault. They should have known when I was ten years old I was a bad boy, and they didn’t do anything for me, so I don’t...” And he says, “I believe there’s a hereafter, but,” he said, “I believe I’ve had all the hell I’ll ever have right here on this earth.” My heart broke when that young man said that. I thought, “How blind he is!” Here he is, you see, and when he’s face-to-face with his sin, he doesn’t feel guilty. Man constantly wants to make an alibi for his sin. Man wants to believe that he is ill, but not evil; he is sick, but not sinful; he is weak, but not wicked; and it’s really the result of environment.

And here Adam begins to blame it on God. He says, *“The woman whom thou gavest...me.”* In other words, “It’s not my fault, God. It’s your fault, or at least it’s her fault.” *“The woman whom thou gavest...me, she gave [to] me...and I did eat.”* (Genesis 3:12) “You gave her to me; she gave it to me. Not my fault, Lord.” Adam blamed Eve. God turns to Eve. Eve says, *“[Well,] the serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.”* (Genesis 3:13) She blamed the serpent. Adam blamed Eve. Eve blamed the serpent. The serpent didn’t have a leg to stand on. There—just one, two, three. Everybody is being blamed, but nobody is saying, “It’s me, it’s me, it’s me, O Lord, standing in the need of prayer.” Nobody is saying, “I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me.” But here are the searching eyes of God, and here is God trying to bring Adam and Eve into this place where they come into a confrontation with their sin.

And that’s what God is trying to do today. Why don’t you pray what the Psalms teach us to pray in Psalm 139, verse 23: *“Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be [some] wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting”?* (Psalms 139:23–24) God will never be able to lead you into everlasting life until you allow Him to search you and try your heart and to reveal to you that sin, until you bow your head and say, “O God, I acknowledge my sin.” You see, dear friend, this seeking led to a searching, where God was trying to get man to acknowledge his transgression. For there is absolutely nothing that God Almighty can do for any of us until we acknowledge our sin before Him. *“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.”* (Proverbs 28:13) That’s what the Bible says—that’s what the Bible says.

VI. Searching Reveals a Prophecy

But wait—wait—there’s something even more wonderful. Watch. The searching pointed out the need of a Savior. The searching led to a Savior. And our Lord now is going to give one of the most wonderful prophecies in all of the Bible. It is the first Bible prophecy that we’re about to see. It’s found in verses 14 and 15. Look at it—Genesis 3:14 and 15: *“And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life.”* (Genesis 3:14)

God says to the serpent, “You’re going to bite the dust,” and God pronounces judgment upon the serpent. And there is no hope for the serpent. There is no redemption for the devil. And the Bible tells us, in Matthew, that hell is prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41)—those that follow him whom Jesus called a *“generation of vipers.”* (Matthew 3:7; Matthew 12:34; Matthew 23:33; Luke 3:7) That’s what He called them: *“a generation of vipers.”*

But then our Lord says something—oh, what a thrill it is! He gives us verse 15. The

first gospel sermon that was ever preached was preached by God Himself in the Garden of Eden—the congregation: Adam and Eve. You want to hear the first gospel sermon ever preached? Here it is—Genesis 3:15—because the searching led to a Savior. Now I want you to see the first gospel sermon ever preached. This is the seedbed of all Bible prophecy. Almost all of the Bible is wrapped up in Genesis 3, verse 15. And God says, *“And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”* (Genesis 3:15) There are three things in this verse I want you to see: first of all, a battle is prophesied; secondly, a birth is prophesied; thirdly, a bruising is prophesied.

A. A Battle Is Prophesied

In Genesis chapter 3, verse 15, first of all, a battle is prophesied. God says, “I’m going to put warfare, serpent—I’m going to put warfare between your seed and the seed of the woman. I will put enmity between you, your seed, and the woman”—a battle. (Genesis 3:15) *Enmity* means “warfare.” And what God was doing right now is declaring war on the devil and declaring war on sin. And war has been declared. And God has thrown down the gauntlet. And there is a continuing battle between righteousness and unrighteousness, between heaven and hell, between good and evil, between light and darkness, between Christ and Antichrist. The seed of a woman and the seed of a serpent—there is a battle.

And that invisible war is raging on American soil, and that battle is being fought in this congregation this morning as I am pleading for the souls of men. There is a battle with no holds barred. It is a fight to the death—warfare. And I want to tell you who’s going to win, and it’s not the devil, amen? Our Savior must prevail. He cannot fail—our great God, amen. But here is a battle that is prophesied.

B. A Birth Is Prophesied

But go on. There’s a birth that is prophesied. Look again, if you will, in verse 15: *“And I will put enmity between thee and the woman,”*—now, watch it—*“and between thy seed and her seed.”* (Genesis 3:15) Now the old rabbis used to read this and scratch their heads, because this is an unusual verse: the seed of the woman. Now if you know anything about Bible language, you know the Bible always speaks of the seed of the man. The seed for procreation is in the man; the egg for fertilization is in the woman. And so the Bible speaks of the seed of the man, the seed of a man, more than one hundred times. But in this place—in this place only—it speaks of the seed of the woman.

What’s our Lord talking about? Over here in the dawn of human history He’s pointing to the virgin birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. There would be coming One who would be the seed of the woman. “Behold, a virgin shall conceive and be with child, and

they shall call His name Emmanuel,” (Isaiah 7:14) which being interpreted is “God with us.” Here, our Lord looks down at the war, and then He looks at the way that He’s going to accomplish the war, and He’s going to look at His mighty victor, that One, who though God Himself, would become man and be born of a virgin. And through man, He is going to destroy him who is the devil. Now God could just go like that and destroy the devil. God says, “I’m going to do it another way. I’m going to become a man. And, as man that the devil has tried to ruin, I’m going to destroy you, devil.” It is the seed of the woman.

You see, why did Jesus have to be born of a virgin? Why the virgin birth? You take away the virgin birth, and your hope of heaven collapses like a house of cards. Why the virgin birth? You see, we need a substitute. And in order to be our substitute, God had to become a man. But furthermore, we need a sinless substitute. And in order for Jesus to have been sinless and not to have inherited the sin nature of Adam, He had to be born of a virgin. And so, therefore, we have a perfect, sinless substitute provided by the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. The seed of the woman—the seed of the woman.

See here in Genesis chapter 3, verse 15, (Genesis 3:15) how a battle is prophesied! There is a warfare going on! See how a birth is prophesied! One of these days, the seed of the woman, the Lord God Emmanuel, Jesus, is going to step out of heaven down to this earth and be born as a man and fulfill the prophecies that say “there is one God and one mediator between God and man, Himself man—Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5)—a man who will die for us, the seed of the woman.

C. A Bruising Is Prophesied

But I want you to notice something else: Not only was there a battle prophesied, and not only was there a birth prophesied, but there was a bruising prophesied. And here in Genesis chapter 3, verse 15, God says that the seed of the serpent is going to bruise the seed of the woman in the heel. Look at it again. And God says, “*It shall bruise thy head, and thou*”—the serpent—“*shalt bruise his heel.*” (Genesis 3:15) What’s He talking about? He is talking here about what happened to the Lord Jesus when He came into this world.

You see, where does a serpent strike? Right there in the heel. And here is this withering, slithering, vile serpent that reaches out with those fangs and fastens those fangs upon the Lord Jesus Christ and injects into the Lord Jesus the bitter, burning venom of sin. And the old serpent strikes at Jesus and bruises His heel. “Him who knew no sin God hath made to be sin for us.” (2 Corinthians 5:21) And the Bible says, “*He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities.*” (Isaiah 53:5) He was the Lord Jesus. And He took that terrible, vile, awful venom; the precious, perfect, holy Savior took the venom of sin.

That is a prophecy of the first coming of Jesus, because He came into the world the first time to die, and the serpent bruised His heel. But go back and look in verse 15. It

says, “And her seed”—the seed of a woman—“will bruise thy head.” (Genesis 3:15) There’s coming a time at the Second Coming of Jesus when our mighty Lord coming in power will crush the serpent’s head. That’s the Second Coming of Jesus, when He comes again. You see what a wonderful prophecy this is. His incarnation and His coronation are prophesied here. You see, the bruising of the serpent’s head is still out in the future.

Oh, I realize that the power of the devil was broken at the cross, but I want you to know that he is going to be crushed. You see, the devil is still at work today. Don’t get the idea that the devil is inoperative today. The devil is doing his dirty work today, but there’s coming a time...just put in your margin Romans chapter 16 and verse 20. I love this verse. Romans chapter 16, verse 20—here’s what Paul told of those saints who were at Rome, who were suffering under the iron boot of the Caesars. He said, “*And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you*”—“*the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet.*” (Romans 16:20)

Now, wait a minute—wait a minute. Who is going to bruise the devil: Jesus or us? The answer is yes—yes. You see, here’s the great thing. Man, when we got saved, we became a part of the Body of Christ. I am in Him, and He is in me. And we are going to participate with our Lord in that victory. And when He reigns, we will reign with Him.

Some ladies were talking about the Body of Christ and where they would like to be since we are members of His Body. One woman said, “I’d like to be His great heart and love as He loved.” Another said, “I’d like to be His eyes and to be able to see and understand as He understands.” Another said, “I’d like to be His ears and know and learn as He learns.” One little old saint who’d had a hard time all of her life—the devil had been giving her *what for*, for so long—said, “I want to be one of His feet and bruise the devil when he comes.” Friend, we will—we will.

Conclusion

“*The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet.*” (Romans 16:20) That time is not far off when the saints of all of the ages are going to sing and shout the victory! Because of the virgin birth and the blood atonement, we shall reign; we shall rule with the Lord Jesus Christ! And that’s what God told Adam and Eve way back in the Garden of Eden. Isn’t the Bible a wonderful book? I mean, there in one verse, in Genesis 3:15, God preached a marvelous gospel message that starts with the warfare, the virgin birth, the first coming of Jesus, the Second Coming of Jesus, and the ultimate victory of all of the saints.

Don’t you be in hell when all of this is going on. Man, don’t miss it—don’t miss it. God brought you here today to find the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior.

Listen to me. *The devil sails a sinking ship, and he rules over a doomed domain.*
Choose sides carefully. There's a war going on. Choose sides carefully. Our Savior cannot fail. He must prevail. And we're going to see, as we study the book of the Revelation, we're going to read tonight how the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ. (Revelation 11:15)

Do you know Him? Are you saved? "Oh," you say, "yes, Brother Rogers, I realize my sins have separated me and my God, and I'm tired of the sham. I don't want to try to be justified by my own life. I'm tired of the fig leaves of my self-righteousness. And God has searched me, and I acknowledge my transgression. And today, once and for all, now and forever, I receive Jesus Christ as my personal Savior."

The Blood Atonement

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: March 15, 1981

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 4:1–8

“And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.”

GENESIS 4:8

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Contrast of Their Worship
 - A. The Worship of Cain
 - B. The Worship of Abel
- II. The Consequences of Their Worship
- III. The Conflict of Their Worship

Conclusion

Introduction

Take your Bibles, please, and turn to Genesis chapter 4—Genesis chapter 4. I want to speak to you today on this subject: “The Blood Atonement”—“The Blood Atonement.” And I read here from Genesis chapter 4, verse 1: *“And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD. And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.”* One son was a shepherd; the other son was a farmer. *“And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him. And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.”* (Genesis 4:1–8) “The Blood Atonement.”

Have you ever noticed that in the morning when you go out to pick up the newspaper, or to walk in the yard when the sun is just coming up, that it casts the shadow of your body if it's a bright day, and that the shadow of your body is somewhat

distorted and elongated? It may run across the lawn and up the side of the house if the sun is just coming up in the east. But then as the sun continues to come up a little more, your shadow takes a little more definite shape. And then in the forenoon, when the sun is at about a forty-five-degree angle, the shadow becomes very sharp and very precise. But finally, when the sun in the summertime comes directly overhead, the shadow disappears altogether, and all that is visible is you, but you're standing in the brightest light possible.

Now, really, in a way, that is a parable of what happened in the Bible, as God revealed to us the truth of the blood atonement. Now the Bible tells us, in the book of Hebrews, and also in the book of Colossians, that the things that happen in the Old Testament were shadows. They were "*a shadow of things to come,*" (Colossians 2:17) Paul tells us, in Colossians chapter 2, verse 17. You see, in order for there to be a shadow, there, first of all, must be a light. And then there must be some object upon which the light is shining. Now the light is the revelation of God given through His Holy Scriptures, and the object upon which that light is shining is the Lord Jesus Christ. But in the dawn of civilization, in the dawn of revelation, those shadows are not very clear, not very distinct, not very plain. But as the Son of God's revelation continues to rise, the shadows become sharper and sharper, and clearer and clearer, until we get to the high noon of the New Testament and the Gospels. And there in the dazzling light of God's revelation, we see no longer the shadow, but we see Jesus Christ Himself in all of His purity.

Now I want you to see now with me one of these Old Testament shadows that begins to tell us about the Lord Jesus Christ and about the blood atonement. It is the story tucked away here in Genesis 4, the story of the two sons of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel. Now the fourth chapter of the book of Genesis is written to tell us that God is to be worshipped. That's what it's all about, that God is to be worshipped. But it also tells us that there is a right way and there is a wrong way to worship God. You know what Jesus said in the Gospel of John? Jesus said, "*God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*" (John 4:24) "*For the father seeketh such to worship him.*" (John 4:23) That means that some people worship God, but they are not in the Spirit, and some people worship God, but their worship is not according to the truth of God's Word. And that kind of worship, dear friend, is not worth a half a hallelujah.

I want to show you now the difference between biblical worship and biblical salvation, and false worship and false salvation. And we find it here in the story of these two boys who came to worship the Lord. And Cain, of course, was a farmer, and so he worshipped the Lord by bringing of the fruit of the ground. He brought vegetables and fruit to offer to the Lord. And then Abel, who was a shepherd, took a little animal—I

suppose it was a lamb, a precious, spotless, little lamb—and with shed blood he worshipped the Lord. Now you see such a contrast. It is a contrast here that is as far removed as the east is from the west. And I want you to see with me this morning, as we study under three headings: first of all, I want you to see the contrast of their worship; secondly, I want you to see the consequences of their worship; and thirdly, I want you to see the conflict of their worship, because one of these brothers ended up murdering the other.

I. The Contrast of Their Worship

Are you ready? First of all, let's notice, if we might, the contrast of their worship. Look, if you will, in verses 3 and 4 again, as we go back and look: *"And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock."* (Genesis 4:3–4) Now, let me say that all religion is not the same. You know, somehow we have thought it almost un-American if we don't just put our arms around everybody else and say, "Well, God bless you. You believe one way, and I believe another way. And your way is just as good as my way." Friend, that is not true. Listen. There is but one way to worship God, and that's God's way—that's God's way. Now *Jesus is not just a good way to heaven; Jesus is not even the best way to heaven. Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven.* Now that may sound narrow to some people, but, friend, it's just as true as I'm standing in this pulpit.

Do you know what Jesus Christ said? Jesus said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man"—now, listen to this—"no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."* (John 14:6) And then the Bible says, in Acts chapter 4, verse 12, *"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."* (Acts 4:12) If Jesus Christ is not the only way to heaven, Jesus Christ is none of the ways to heaven. If Jesus Christ is not the only way to heaven, Jesus is a faker, Jesus is a fraud, Jesus is a sham, Jesus is a charlatan, because He claimed to be something that He was not. A faker, a fraud, a sham, and a charlatan is nobody's Savior. If He's not the only way, He is none of the ways. He Himself said, *"I am the way, the truth...no man cometh unto the Father, but by me"*—John 14, verse 6. (John 14:6) And so I want you to see here that there is a contrast between these two ways.

A. The Worship of Cain

First of all, I want you to notice the worship of Cain, in verse 3. What did Cain do? *"In process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD."* (Genesis 4:1–8) Now, remember that God had said, "Cursed is the ground, and in order to get anything out of the ground, Adam, now you're going to have to work the ground. It's not going to be like it used to be in the Garden of Eden. You're not just going to be able to tickle the soil and it will bloom with vegetables. Oh, no—no,

no, no. Listen. You're going to have to work; you're going to have to struggle. In the sweat of your brow you're going to earn your food. You're going to earn your bread that way." (Genesis 3:17–19) And oh, how hard ol' Cain must have worked! I'm sure he was a good farmer.

Thank God for farmers, and thank God for the hard work that they do. And I'm not putting down farmers when I tell you this. We're all dependent upon the farmers. And thank God for them. If it weren't for the farmers, we wouldn't have much to eat, would we?

Now, listen. But here he is out there working hard in the noonday sun, plowing and planting and cultivating and weeding and hoeing. And now he takes all of this—he takes this that represents the very best that he can do. I imagine he took the most beautiful flowers, he took the most fragrant of the herbs, he took the most luscious vegetables and the ripest fruits, and he propped them and spread them before the Lord. And he says, "Dear Lord, here is my offering to you." It must have looked like a county fair. How gorgeous it was! How beautiful it was! But the Bible says that God would not accept it; God had no respect to that offering. God turned His back on that offering. It was nauseous to God. Why? Because Cain did not understand the biblical principle that he should have understood. And I'm going to tell you in a little bit further why he should have understood that biblical principle. But here is a biblical principle: We can only come to God and approach God on the basis of the blood atonement—we can only come to God and approach God on the basis of the blood atonement. In the New Testament, we read, in Hebrews chapter 9, verse 22, "*Without shedding of blood [there] is no remission [of sin].*" (Hebrews 9:22) Absolutely, emphatically, beyond a shadow of any doubt, the Bible teaches that "*without shedding of blood is no remission [of sin].*"

Have you ever heard this expression: "You can't get blood out of a turnip"? Have you ever heard that? Well, I don't know where that expression originated, but it may have originated right here. Now he may have brought some turnips to the Lord, but there's no blood in the turnip. "*Without [the] shedding of blood is no remission [of sin].*" (Hebrews 9:22) It was very beautiful, but it represents the salvation of works, the way that people try to save themselves by doing good. They think that they can bring the fruit of their labor, of their toil, and offer it to God, and God is going to accept it. But the Bible says it is "*not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.*" (Titus 3:5) The Bible says, "*Without [the] shedding of blood is no remission [of sin].*" (Hebrews 9:22)

Now we divide religions up into all kinds of different religions. We say, "There's Christianity, and there's Confucianism, and there's Buddhism, and Mohammedism, and rheumatism, and all of these religions." And we divide them up. And then not only that, but we take Christianity and we divide Christianity up. We say, "There's the Baptists,

and there's the Methodists, and there's the Episcopalians, and there are the Assemblies of God, and there are *this*, and *this*, and *this*." And we divide Christianity up. But let me tell you something, dear friend. There are only really two divisions of all religion, and that is the salvation of works and the salvation by grace. That's it: only two religions.

Now Cain represents the salvation by works, where he tries to be right with God by what he does. You see, the difference between religion and real salvation is, religion is rooted in what man tries to do for God, but salvation is rooted in what God does do for man. One is spelled *do*; the other is spelled *done*. And there are so many people who try to justify themselves by the works of their hands. And the Bible says that "Christ is become of none effect to you, whosoever you are, that are justified by the works of the law." (Galatians 5:4) You see, if righteousness comes by the law, if you could be saved by being good, if you could offer the fruit of your hands to God and be right with God, then Calvary was a blunder.

You see, here was Cain, who said, "I just believe I'll do it this way." His idea did not come from the revealed Word of God; it came out of his own noggin, out of his own head, out of his own ideas. He said, "This is the way I think I'll do it." Some people say, "Well, you know, I'm looking for a religion that suits me." You better find one that suits God—suits God. I mean, who are you: God? Are you God? A religion that suits you? Listen. There's the thrice-holy God of the universe, the One who made you. And it is God who has revealed how He is to be worshipped. And so here is Cain with his own man-made religion, with his idea on works and rituals. Oh, it was beautiful, it was cultured, it was gorgeous, it was sacrificial—but it was not accepted. That was the religion of Cain.

And you know what the Bible says in Jude verse 11? Listen to it: "*Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain*"—"Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain." (Jude 1:11) The way of Cain is the way of woe. Now, just mark it down—Jude 11: "*Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain.*" Way back over in the next to the last book in the Bible, the Bible is still talking about this fellow Cain and the terrible mistake he made: "Woe unto them! Woe unto them! Woe unto them! They've gone in the way of Cain." What is the way of Cain? The way of Cain is self-righteousness. The way of Cain is trying to put your hands under your feet and lift yourself off the ground. It cannot be done—it cannot be done. Therefore, "*to him that worketh not,*"—the Bible says—"but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." (Romans 4:5) "*Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*" (Romans 5:1) "*Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.*" (Titus 3:5) "*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.*" (Ephesians 2:8–9) "*Woe unto them! for they*

have gone in the way of Cain.” (Jude 1:11)

Are you offering to God the fruit of your hands today? Are you saying to God, “God, what a good boy I am: I go to Bellevue Baptist Church, I go to Sunday School, I give my tithe, I read my Bible, I pray”? You can do all of that and go to hell—all of it. You’re not saved by the works of your hands.

B. The Worship of Abel

Now, let’s contrast now and see Abel and the offering that Abel brought to the Lord. Look, if you will, please, in verse 4: *“And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering.”* (Genesis 4:4) Now Abel understood the blood atonement. Do you know, I’ve listened to Bible preachers, and they say, “Well now, Abel didn’t understand anything about the blood atonement. This doesn’t have anything to do about the blood; it was just the attitude of Abel’s heart.” I want to tell you, dear friend, that Abel understood the blood atonement, and I’m going to prove it to you in just a moment—that Abel understood the blood atonement, and that’s the reason he brought a lamb.

Now in the first place, the Bible says, in Hebrews chapter 11, verse 4, *“By faith Abel offered...a more excellent sacrifice”*—*“By faith Abel offered...a more excellent sacrifice.”* (Hebrews 11:4) Just put that down there in your margin—Hebrews 11, verse 4. Now, where did he get faith? Where does anybody get faith? Nobody has had faith until God first speaks. Now, put it down: Faith comes from hearing the Word of God. Romans 10, verse 17: *“Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”* (Romans 10:17) You’ve never had faith, I’ve never had faith, nobody’s ever had faith in anything, until God has spoken. There are some radio preachers, and you know, they’re preaching, and they say, “You name it and claim it.” Friend, you can’t claim it until God names it. Listen. *God has to name it before you can claim it. God has to speak before you can have faith. What faith is, is just taking God at His Word. “Faith cometh by hearing.”* (Romans 10:17)

Now the Bible says it was by faith that this man offered a more excellent sacrifice. Abel knew and he understood the blood atonement. Did you know that Abel was a prophet? Did you know he was one of the Old Testament prophets? Did you know that he was a man who prophesied concerning the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? Just turn to Luke chapter 11, verse 49—Luke chapter 11 and verse 49. Jesus is speaking—Luke 11:49: *“Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them...”*—now, notice this phrase—*“I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute: that the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; from the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias...”* (Luke 11:49–51)—*“from the blood of Abel.”* Do you know what Jesus said Abel was? He was a prophet who was killed for his faith. He was a

prophet. Jesus said that Abel was a prophet.

Now the prophets had one message. Every prophet had the same message. Do you want me to tell you what it is? Acts chapter 10, verse 43, tells you what the message of every prophet was: *“To him”*—that is, to Jesus—*“give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive the remission of sins.”* (Acts 10:43) All of the prophets had one message: Believe on Jesus and be forgiven. And Abel was a prophet. Jesus said Abel was a prophet. And the Bible says the prophets—all of the prophets—said that through Jesus, when you believe on Jesus, you’ll have remission of sin.

Now somehow we get the idea that Cain and Abel were a couple of country bumpkins. Out there they didn’t know anything, plowing up ground with a stick, herding around a bunch of sheep. One day they just sort of sauntered into the presence of God and tried to worship Him. But oh, no! The Bible says that this man worshipped God by faith. And in order to have faith, he had to have the Word of God. The Bible says he was a prophet. He understood the blood atonement. I want to tell you, dear friend, he may not have understood it as you understand it, as I understand it, standing this side of Calvary, but he was a man of God. He was one of the Old Testament prophets that pointed to the Lord Jesus Christ.

I want to tell you, dear friend, that the blood atonement wasn’t something that God thought up in the New Testament. It wasn’t an afterthought with God. It wasn’t some sort of an emergency measure. God had the blood atonement in His heart, in His mind, when He swung this planet into space. The Bible tells us, in Revelation chapter 13, verse 8, that Christ was *“slain from the foundation of the world.”* (Revelation 13:8) That is, God had bloody Calvary in His heart, in His mind, in His soul, when He made this world. And God took His prophets, and all of the prophets had been prophesying about the Lord Jesus Christ. You study this book, dear friend, and you study it hard, and if you don’t find Jesus where you’re studying, you’d better go back and restudy it, because you missed the message. It’s all about Jesus—all about Jesus.

Somebody says, *“Brother Rogers, have you read the four Gospels?” Friend, I’ve read all sixty-six. The Old Testament says somebody is coming. The New Testament says somebody has come. The Epistles and the Revelation say somebody is coming again. And that somebody is Jesus.* Jesus is the hero of the Bible, *“to [whom] give all the prophets witness.”* (Acts 10:43) All of the prophets speak about the Lord Jesus Christ, starting right back here with Abel. The second child in the very first family was a prophet, a man of God, so long ago. You see, there is a principle, dear friend, that starts in the book of Genesis and goes all the way through to the book of Revelation. That’s the reason why we’re studying these two books together—and that is blood atonement. *You cut this book anywhere; it will bleed. There is a red river of redemption.* It welled

up there in the Garden of Eden and flowed past the gates of Eden when God made for Adam and Eve coats of skin.

Do you remember we studied that last week? Remember Adam and Eve had three kinds of garments. First of all, they had a robe of glory; they were covered with light. And then they lost that robe of glory, and they had a robe of guilt. They knew that they were naked, and they were covered with shame. And then they had robe of grace, as God killed an innocent animal, and with that innocent animal, He made for them coats of skin. What was God teaching right there in the dawn of civilization? *“Without [the] shedding of blood is no remission [of sin].”* (Hebrews 9:22) And then we see Abel as he comes continuing in the same idea. And he brings this pure, spotless lamb and the fat thereof, and God had respect unto the prophet Abel’s offering. (Genesis 4:4)

We continue on through the Bible, and we find after centuries have passed and men have sunk deeper and deeper into sin that Noah, when he gets off of his boat, what is the first thing that he does? He offers a bloody sacrifice unto Almighty God, where, even though the centuries have come, and even though the centuries have gone, and even though God has judged and purged the world with a flood, still the Bible teaches *“without [the] shedding of blood is no remission.”* (Hebrews 9:22) We see Abraham as he’s ready there to sacrifice his son Isaac. And some people here would accuse God of cruelty. But I want to tell you, there’s no more sacred picture in all of the Bible than Abraham on Mount Moriah, in Genesis chapter 22, getting ready to sacrifice Isaac, when the angel of the Lord says, “Abraham, stay your hand.” And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and a ram was caught in the thicket. And the Bible says, “Abraham offered that ram in the stead—in the place—of his son.” (Genesis 22:13) No wonder the Bible says, “Abraham saw my day and was glad.” (John 8:56) Jesus was speaking: “Abraham saw my day. Abraham saw me.” The Bible says the gospel was preached unto Abraham. There was a blood atonement. For the Bible says, *“Without [the] shedding of blood is no remission [of sin].”* (Hebrews 9:22)

We see this on the night of the Passover as the Jews are now becoming a nation and getting ready to come out of the land of Egypt. And we read there in the Bible, in the book of Exodus, that God said to those Jews, “Before you come out of that land, you’re to take a lamb, and you’re to slay that lamb. And there’s to be a lamb for every house. And you’re to take the blood of that lamb, and you’re to strike it on the lintels and the doorpost of the house.” Can you see that as they strike it on the lintels and on the doorpost? Can you see the cross that’s made there? Can you see the bloody cross as they make it there? And the Bible says that a death angel was going to come to the land that night. And God said, “I’m going to be looking for the blood.” And God said, “If I don’t see the blood, I’m going to come in and slay the firstborn in every family.” But God says, *“When I see the blood, I will pass over you.”* (Exodus 12:13)

Had they put rubies and diamonds and emeralds and all kinds of gold and silver and precious things upon those doorposts instead of the blood, the angel would have come in and slain the firstborn. I want to tell you, had they written beautiful, gorgeous thoughts and poetry of all kinds and tacked it upon the door, the death angel would have come in. I want to tell you, had they taken a precious, spotless lamb and set that lamb before their door without killing that lamb, the death angel would have come in. God says, *“When I see the blood, I will pass over you.”* (Exodus 12:13) For the Bible says, *“Without [the] shedding of blood is no remission [of sin].”* (Hebrews 9:22)

And the Levitical sacrifices come, and upon thousands and thousands of smoking altars there the red river of redemption continues to flow. And what were all of those Levitical sacrifices talking about? They were all pointing to *“the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”* (John 1:29) And one day, ol’ John the Baptist stepped from the banks of the river Jordan, and when he saw my precious Savior, that wonderful Jesus coming, John the Baptist pointed to Him and said, *“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”* Now I want to tell you this shadow that we see back here in the book of Genesis was just pointing to the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Do you remember reading about that Russian psychologist whose name was Pavlov? Pavlov did some experiments with dogs and what he called a conditioned reflex. That is, he put his dogs in their pens, and then he had a bell, and he would ring the bell, and then he’d feed the dogs. The next day he’d ring the bell before he’d feed the dogs. The next day he’d ring the bell before he’d feed the dogs. Ring the bell, feed the dogs. After a while, he got these dogs so conditioned that all he had to do was ring the bell, and these dogs would begin to drool and salivate. They knew that the ringing of the bell meant food.

Now that’s exactly what God was doing in another way in these Old Testament sacrifices. You see, in these Old Testament sacrifices, God was building up into the hearts and minds of His people that sin means death. Bell means food; sin means death. Sin means death—sin means death. *“The wages of sin is death.”* (Romans 6:23) *“The soul that sinneth, it shall [surely] die.”* (Ezekiel 18:20) “I require a blood sacrifice.” The Bible says, *“It is [impossible] that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.”* (Hebrews 10:4)

Well, the Bible says these things are shadows; they’re pointing to the Lord Jesus Christ. And here back in the dawn of civilization, we see a shadow. Yes, it’s not clear. Yes, there’s not a lot of form. Yes, there’s not a lot of color. There’s no color. There’s no real power and substance in a shadow. But, dear friend, we’re living now in high noon, and God is pouring all of His light upon the Lord Jesus Christ. And God is saying, “Behold, the Lamb of God”—“Behold, the Lamb of God. Look at Jesus, the Lamb of

God, that taketh away the sin of the world.” (John 1:29) You see the comparison of their worship: one, a worship of works; another, a worship of blood atonement and therefore by grace. For the Bible says, *“Without [the] shedding of blood is no remission [of sin].”* (Hebrews 9:22)

II. The Consequences of Their Worship

Now I want you to see the consequences of their worship—the consequences of their worship. The Bible says, in verses 4 and 5, that God received one offering; God did not receive the other offering. (Genesis 4:4–5) The difference between the religion of Cain and the religion of Abel is the difference between righteousness and unrighteousness. It is the difference of acceptability and unacceptability. It is therefore the difference between heaven and hell.

You say, “Now, wait a minute. After all, Cain was doing the best he knew how. Why couldn’t God just say, ‘Now, Cain, I’ll have to admit that you didn’t do it exactly the way I wanted, and I’ll have to admit there’s no blood sacrifice here, but Cain, I’m going to accept you anyway’? Why couldn’t God do it that way?” God’s holiness would not allow Him to overlook Cain’s sin. You see, God must judge sin. God’s righteous judgment, God’s holiness, God’s integrity says that sin must—it must, it must—be punished.

Turn to Romans chapter 3 for a moment. And Romans chapter 3, verse 23, you know but we’re going to start reading there, and we’re going to read some that we don’t normally read—Romans chapter 3, verse 23: *“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”* (Romans 3:23) Including Cain and Abel, this is true of all people who have ever lived. It’s true of you; it’s true of me. All have sinned. We’re sinners by birth, sinners by nature, sinners by choice, sinners by practice, sinners under judgment. *“All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”* That’s what the Bible says.

But now, look. Continue to read here in verse 24: *“Being justified”—that means “being made right with God”—“freely by his grace...”—that means “without earning it, without working for it, without buying it, without deserving it”—“Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:”—the only way that you can receive grace is through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. At the cross we were redeemed. Now, notice verse 25—“whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood...”—now we’re talking about the blood atonement. Do you know what that word *propitiation* means? It means a “satisfaction”—it means a “satisfaction”—“whom God hath set forth to be a [satisfaction] through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.”* (Romans 3:24–25)

Now, what does that mean? It means, dear friend, that God has a holy law, and that law cannot be overlooked. God never has, God never can, God never will let one-half of

one sin go unpunished. If God were to let one-half of one sin go unpunished, God would cease to be a holy God. God would topple from His throne of holiness. I've said it before, that when a guilty man is acquitted, the judge is condemned. If God ever lets a sinner go unpunished, God Himself becomes a sinner. Such a thing is unthinkable. God has sworn by His holiness that sin will be punished. His righteous law must be satisfied. What meets the satisfaction of God's law is the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, Jesus' death upon the cross. The Bible says He is the propitiation—He is the satisfaction—for our sins.

And so notice in verse 26, Paul says, *"To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."* (Romans 3:26) Just put a star by that. Because of the cross, God can be both just and the justifier of those that believe in Jesus. Now if God were to forgive us without the cross, He'd be the justifier, but He wouldn't be just. He wouldn't be just, because He would be overlooking sin. But, on the other hand, if God were to give us what we deserve...

You know, there are a lot of people who say, "Well, you know, I just hope God will give me what I deserve." Boy, I hope He doesn't give me what I deserve!

One lady went to the photographer to have her picture made, and it looked just like her, so she didn't like it. She took it back to the photographer and said, "You'll have to do it over again." He said, "Why, what's wrong with it?" She said, "It doesn't do me justice." He looked at it, and then he looked at her and said, "Lady, you don't need justice. What you need is mercy." And this is what all of us need.

Now if I got justice, if God gave me what I deserved, I'd go to hell. But, on the other hand, if God justified me, He wouldn't be just anymore. He would have overlooked my sin. But don't you see the cross is God's way that He can be the just justifier? Don't you see the cross is God's way where Jesus took my place, and all of my sin, and all of my shame, and all of my blame, and all of my unworthiness? "Him who knew no sin God hath made to be sin for me." (2 Corinthians 5:21) And Jesus, God's Lamb, took my sin to the cross, and there He bowed His head and said, *"It is finished."* (John 19:30) That means "paid in full." "My righteous demands have been satisfied." He is the propitiation—He is the satisfaction—for my sin. So that's the difference, dear friend. The consequence is that one of these boys went to heaven, and the other boy went to hell.

The Bible speaks of some today, and it says, *"Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain."* (Jude 1:11) There are but two ways: the way of Cain and the way of the cross. Which way are you going? There are but two ways: the way of Cain and the way of the cross. *"Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain."* In the dawn of civilization God is teaching this lesson—and would to God that you'd learn it: *"Without [the] shedding of blood is no remission [of sin]."* (Hebrews 9:22)

Now I know there are some of you who still don't believe this. You believe in culture rather than Calvary. You're going to bring your herbs, your fruits, your flowers. You're going to bring your ingenuity. You're going to bring your good deeds. You're going to bring your Golden Rule. You're going to bring it all, and you're going to say, "Now, God, look and see what a good boy I am!" But God's not impressed. The Bible says, "*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.*" (Ephesians 2:8–9) You're not going to be a boaster when you get to heaven. You're going to give Him all of the glory.

I want to tell you, if you were to start with Cain and Abel and take the best men that ever lived—all of them—and you were to extract from those best men that ever lived the finest qualities of their lives, and you were to take from all of those men the finest qualities and put them all into one man, that one man would have to bow at the feet of Jesus Christ by faith and His shed blood in order to get to heaven. You understand that? What I'm telling you, dear friend, is that there is no salvation apart from the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Put it down big, put it down straight, put it down plain: "*Without [the] shedding of blood is no remission [of sin].*" (Hebrews 9:22) You say, "I don't agree with that." "*The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.*" (1 Corinthians 1:18)

You can try culture if you want. You can try works if you want. You can bring the fruits of your hands if you want. But the Bible says, "*Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain.*" (Jude 1:11) Why do you think God put this story in the Bible?

*I must needs go home by the way of the cross:
There's no other way but this.
I shall ne'er get sight of the Gates of Light
If the way of the cross I miss.*

—JESSIE BROWN POUNDS

Now Abel—Abel—was slain. But don't worry about that. The Bible says, "*He being dead yet speaketh.*" (Hebrews 11:4) Listen. Death, to the child of God, is not a period; it is a comma. And we leave behind all that we have, and we take with us all that we are. And, dear friend, all that you are is what you are in the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. The Conflict of Their Worship

Now one last thing, and I'll be finished. I want you to notice the conflict of their religion. Oh, it's a sad story. But look, beginning in verse 5—Genesis chapter 4 and verse 5: "*But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?*" (Genesis 4:5–6) And then skip to verse 8: "*And Cain talked with Abel his brother:*"—I believe there was a little subterfuge here. I believe he was luring

him away out into the field—*“and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.”* (Genesis 4:8) Oh, the conflict of their worship!

Did you know, dear friends, that false religion is one of the meanest things on this globe? Did you know that people don't need religion? They need to turn from religion to Jesus Christ. And here's the awful thing: There is so much hatred; there's so much strife; there's so much division. Do you know what happened in Iran? That was over religion—over religion, over a militant religion. Religion without Jesus is mean and narrow.

I want to remind you that it was a religious crowd that crucified Jesus. And anytime you see anybody trying to force somebody else to believe their way, you back off; it's not of God. I believe what I believe with all of my heart, but I would not lift one finger to force you to believe what I believe. And if you want to believe something else, you have every right. You know, sometimes when I preach a sermon about Jesus being the only way, some people think, “Well, you know, he's just trying to force me to believe his way.” I couldn't do it if I would. I wouldn't do it if I could. Friend, that's your business. I believe with all of my soul, I would fight for your right not to believe it. We preached that last week. Religion marked by force is not the religion of the Bible. Now we don't have to agree with other people, but we ought to love other people.

But here's ol' Cain now who sees somebody else standing out a little different from him, and he can't stand it. So he wants to do something about it. Now, just come up real close. I'm going to tell you something now—pay attention. If you are a true Bible believer in these last days, and if you preach the message that I preach—that Jesus Christ is the only way—you can get ready for the wrath of this world to fall on you.

There are people listening to me right now who are as mad as Ned at me right now: “Who is he? Where does he get off preaching this?” Let me tell you something. Those early Christians could have gotten along just hunky-dory with the Roman Empire if they had just said that Jesus is one more way among the many ways. They had a pantheon for all their gods, and they had Zeus, and Nike, and all the rest of them—Mars and the rest of them. And all we have to do is just have a little niche for Jesus, and everything would have been fine. But they said, “We're not going to have a niche for Jesus. It is not Jesus, plus; it is Jesus, only.” The world doesn't like that. They think that's narrow; they think that's bigoted. But the strange thing is that there's nothing so intolerant as the intolerance of the “tolerant” against the intolerance of the “intolerant.” What I'm trying to say is that these so-called broad-minded people come down like a hammer on those who refuse to be as broad-minded as they, and there is a narrowness to their broadness.

Now here's what Jesus said, in John chapter 16, and I want you to put this in the

margin right there where it says that Abel got killed. Jesus said, *“These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things said I not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you.”* (John 16:1–4) That is, later on, people who really believe in Jesus Christ are going to be a thorn in the side of this old world headed toward the Antichrist. And they’re going to say, “What’s the matter with these people? They won’t cooperate with the system. What’s the matter with these people? They seem to stand out against everything. What’s the matter? Don’t they understand that the only way that we’re ever going to get together is to have one great big world government and one worldwide religion? See? Well, the only thing to do with these people is just to exterminate them in the name of God.” And Jesus said, “They who kill you will think they do God a service.” (John 16:2)

Now I’m not trying to frighten you. Jesus said, “These things are going to happen to you, but don’t worry about it; not a hair of your head will perish.” (Luke 21:18) I’ve always kind of laughed at that. He said, “They’re going to cast you into prison. They’re going to kill you. They’re going to do this and that. But not a hair of your head will perish.” You see, that’s exactly what the Bible means when it says that Abel, *“he being dead yet speaketh.”* (Hebrews 11:4)

Conclusion

O God, forgive us for our narrowness when it comes to other things. But oh, may God ever keep us true to the one way of salvation. It’s the way of the cross—it’s the way of the cross. Do you understand that? Do you believe it? Oh, friend, I want to tell you today that if you will receive Jesus Christ, *“though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”* (Isaiah 1:18) There are two ways: the way of Cain, the way of the cross. One leads to heaven; one leads to hell. I know which way I’m going.

*When He shall come with trumpet sound,
Oh, may I then in Him be found.
Dressed in His righteousness alone,
Faultless to stand before the throne.*

—EDWARD MOTE

The Rapture of the Church

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: March 22, 1981

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 5:5–24

“And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.”

GENESIS 5:24

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Introduction

Take your Bibles, please, and turn, if you will, to Genesis chapter 5. We’ve been preaching through the book of Genesis. Last week, we studied the story of Cain and Abel—the way of Cain and the way of the cross. And now today we are going to study in Genesis chapter 5, and we’re not going to be able to read all of the verses in Genesis chapter 5. But by means of introduction, I want us to begin reading some random verses.

Look with me at Genesis 5, verse 5: *“And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years: and he died.”* (Genesis 5:5) *“And all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years: and he died.”* (Genesis 5:8) *“And all the days of Enos were nine hundred and five years: and he died.”* (Genesis 5:11) *“And all the days of Cainan were nine hundred and ten years: and he died.”* (Genesis 5:14) *“And all the*

days of Mahalaleel were eight hundred ninety and five years: and he died.” (Genesis 5:17) And verse 20: *“And all the days of Jared were nine hundred sixty and two years: and he died.”* (Genesis 5:20) *“And he died...and he died...and he died...and he died.”* Here’s the refrain. It sounds like we’re reading an obituary column. But then here is a name, suddenly, that stands out like a gardenia in a desert of death. Look with me in verse 21: *“And Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah: and Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters: and all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years: and Enoch walked with God:”—*and it doesn’t say, “and he died.” It says—*“and he was not; for God took him.”* Now that’s strange. All of these other people: “and he died...and he died...and he died...and he died.” But here’s a man—the Bible says, *“And he was not; for God took him.”* (Genesis 5:21–24)

Well, what on earth happened to this man? How did he go to heaven? How did he get out of this world? Well, turn to Hebrews chapter 11, verse 5. Just keep Genesis 5 marked, and turn to Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 5, and let’s look at a very interesting verse. Somebody said, concerning commentary material, “It’s amazing how much light the Bible will throw on those commentaries.” Now, let’s see what the Bible says about Enoch. We’re reading here in Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 5: *“By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.”* (Hebrews 11:5) Well, he didn’t die, therefore. The Bible teaches that God just translated him. That is, God took him physically, bodily, to heaven without dying.

One man was complaining about the situation in the world to Mark Twain, and he said, “I’m just afraid the world is coming to an end.” And Mark Twain said, “Well, don’t worry about it. You’ll never get out of it alive anyway.”

But he was wrong—he was wrong. Enoch got out of it alive, and Elijah got out of it alive. I have a feeling some of us are going to get out of it alive. I have a feeling that some of us who are living in this day and this age are going to heaven without ever dying. The Bible calls this the Rapture of the Church, and that’s what I want to speak about today: “The Rapture of the Church.” I want to speak about it from the fifth chapter of the book of Genesis—“The Rapture of the Church”—from the Old Testament.

And that’s not strange. Last week, from the Old Testament and from the fourth chapter of the book of Genesis, we talked about the blood atonement, amen? You remember last week? We looked backwards to Abel’s lamb. And now today, we’re going to look at Enoch’s translation. You see, last week, we looked back to the cross of Christ; this week, we’re looking forward to the coming of Christ. And we’re going to see it right out of the Old Testament. I love the Old Testament. I love the book of Genesis because the book of Genesis is the seedbed of all Bible prophecy.

And so here is this man Enoch. He went to heaven in a wonderful way. I call him the first astronaut. You see, Enoch went to heaven, and he had a departure, not a death. He had a translation, not a tomb. He had a rapture, not a requiem. And how exciting this Old Testament saint is! Now there are three things that we're going to notice about this man Enoch, as we study together, so you can just keep your thoughts with mine.

I. Enoch and His Times

First of all, we want to be thinking some about Enoch and his times—in other words, the situation in which Enoch lived—because Enoch, I believe, is a type and a prophecy of the Rapture of the Church. And I think we're going to find a correlation and a correspondence between Enoch and his times and ourselves and our times. So I want us to see something about Enoch and his times. And then I want us to see something about Enoch and his testimony, for remember over there in Hebrews the verses that we read—verses 4 and 5? The Bible says that *“he had this testimony, that he pleased God.”* (Hebrews 11:5) And we want to talk about his testimony. Enoch and his times, and Enoch and his testimony. And then the Bible says also, over in the book of Hebrews, that he *“was translated that he should not see death.”* (Hebrews 11:5) And so we'll talk some about Enoch and his translation. So that's what we're going to be thinking about today: Enoch and his times, Enoch and his testimony, and Enoch and his translation.

A. Conditions in Enoch's Times

Now I want us to think very much about Enoch and his times. Now some people may not realize, but Enoch was a contemporary of Adam. Did you know that Adam was still living when Enoch was born? Did you know that? Adam was 622 years old when Enoch was born. He was just in the prime of life. He lived to be 930. You say, “Brother Rogers, do you really believe that those people actually, actually, literally lived to be hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of years of age?” Yes, I believe that. You see, this was back before sin had taken its toll. This was back before man's body had been eroded away. This was back before the pollution and the environmental things that are in the world today had taken place. We're living today, we're reaping the consequences today of centuries of sin, and this is what it's done to man. But God made a marvelous machine when he made the first man and put him there in the Garden of Eden.

And so Adam was in the prime of life when Enoch was born. Seth, who is the founder of the godly line, was 492 years old when Enoch was born. And I'm sure that Enoch learned some things from Seth. And Jared, who was Enoch's father, was 162 years old. He was just a kid, just a boy. He must have gotten married awfully young to have a boy that soon. But anyway, that's how old his daddy was when Enoch was born. But remember that Enoch was a contemporary of Adam. If you'll get your Bible down

and trace it out, you can see this for 308 years. And I just feel that Enoch may have known many of the spiritual leaders of that day. And there was a lot of spiritual preaching and teaching going on in that day; there was a lot of salt. And yet all of that salt did not keep that antediluvian world from corruption, and there was a falling away and a great apostasy that came just before Enoch went to heaven. I want you to keep that in mind.

1. Social Permissiveness

Now I want us to look at Enoch's day very carefully. And look, go back and find out what Enoch's day was like; go back to chapter 4 for just a moment. Last week, we didn't preach on all of chapter 4. I want you to look in chapter 4, verse 19. I'm talking about Genesis chapter 4 and verse 19. And here the Bible introduces to us a man named Lamech. Now there were many people who were alive, but God the Holy Spirit only chose certain people, because these people are illustrative, and they, in some ways, they typify what was going on in that time. I believe that they were the leading opinion makers of that day. Now I want you to see what the Bible has to say about this man named Lamech, who was a contemporary of Enoch. The Bible says, "And Lamech took unto him two wives." Now you see, God's plan was one man for one woman till death do them part, but here you see the beginning of a sexual revolution—a sexual revolution. Here was a man who wanted to sate his lust. Here was a man who cared not what God's plan was there in the Garden of Eden, but he "*took unto him two wives.*" (Genesis 4:19)

And then I want you to skip on down to verse 23: "*And Lamech said unto his wives, Adah and Zillah, Hear my voice; ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech: for I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt. If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold.*" (Genesis 4:23–24) Listen to him swagger; listen to him belch out his violence. Here was a man whose life was marked by vice and violence—vice and violence. And why did the Holy Spirit record that there? I believe it is illustrative of what was going on in that particular day. Enoch's day was a day of social permissiveness. The restraints were being removed from society, and every man was beginning to do that which was right in his own eyes. And immorality was rampant, and sex was blatant, and there were multi-marriages. And there was this idea of social permissiveness.

2. Scientific Progressiveness

And then, right on top of that, there was scientific progressiveness. Look, if you will, in chapter 4 and verse 17—chapter 4 and verse 17: "*And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived, and bare Enoch:*"—now this was another Enoch; this was the devil's Enoch—"and he builded a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his

son, Enoch.” (Genesis 4:17) Now men are starting to move to the city, and now great metropolises are beginning to be built. And what are the men doing there in the city? Look down, if you will, in verse 22: “*And Zillah, she also bare Tubalcain, an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron.*” (Genesis 4:22) Why, they had an industrial revolution! They’re starting now to mine the earth. They’re starting now to get the smelting furnaces going. They’re starting now to put things together. And now we see not only social permissiveness, but we also see scientific progressiveness. Man now has been driven from the Garden of Eden, and now he’s putting his ingenuity and his mind together. He’s going to try to create a synthetic, artificial paradise. And man that started in the Garden of Eden has now moved into the city of sin. And he’s using now his own ideas, his own wit, and his own wisdom that God gave him to serve God with and using them in ways that are not altogether wrong, but ways that are not submitted to the ways of God.

3. Spiritual Presumptuousness

And so, therefore, this day of social permissiveness and scientific progressiveness led to spiritual presumptuousness—spiritual presumptuousness. We see the faith that was delivered to Adam and for which the martyr Abel died that we preached about last week on the wane. And we see a rise of arrogance, and a rise of humanism, and a rise of ungodliness taking place already in this particular time. After a while, it got so bad that the thoughts of men’s hearts were only evil continually, (Genesis 6:5) and God had to send the flood and destroy them all.

You get something of the idea in verse 16, where the Bible says, in chapter 4, verse 16, “*And Cain went out from the presence of the LORD.*” (Genesis 4:16) He’s not walking with God. He doesn’t care anything about God now anymore. He’s going to live his life. He’s going to be his own little cheap tin god. And so that’s the day, that’s the age, in which this man lived. There seemed to be a disdain of God. Here we see this man Lamech; it seems as though he is lifting his puny fist into the face of God, as if to say, “God, whatever you want me to do makes no difference to myself. I’m going to do what I want to do.”

Now we’re talking about this man and his times, this man Enoch. And I believe this man Enoch is an illustration of Christians today, because I believe this is an Old Testament prophecy and type of the Rapture of the Church.

B. Conditions in Our Times

Now let’s look at you and your times; let’s look at me and my times. What kind of days are we living in?

1. Social Permissiveness

I believe you’d have to say we’re living in days of social permissiveness. Wouldn’t you

have to say that? I believe we are. Listen. A leading racketeer recently boasted that organized crime is bigger, and a bigger business, than the federal government. Organized crime is bigger than the United States government. Pornography alone is a four-billion-dollar-a-year business—four billion dollars on pornography. Can you imagine how much pornography would have to be printed and distributed to make pornography a four-billion-dollar-a-year business? And our streets, even here in the city of Memphis, Tennessee, have become jungles of terror, where people are afraid to go out of their houses at night.

I was reading this week's *Newsweek* magazine, the March 23 issue, 1981, and on the front is a gun looking right at you. You can see the bullet up the barrel, or at least you can see the bullets in the chamber. And this is the lead article. It's called "The Epidemic..."—get the word *epidemic*—"The Epidemic of Violent Crime." And the *Newsweek* article describes the crime and gives some horrifying statistics that I'll not bore you with this morning or burden you with this morning. But I want to give you some commentary that was written into this article—and I'm quoting now: "This time around, however, there is none of the old optimism proclaiming, 'We know what the problems are, and we have the solutions at hand.' The problems look more complex than any blue ribbon panel feared, and the solutions never more allusive. The police, already up against long odds, can't seem to find a way to do much better. The courts continue to be denounced while they dispense rough justice under trying conditions. The prisons are already filled to bursting, and that doesn't seem to have cut down on the clamoring for tougher sentences or on the crime rate itself." And then this article in this magazine went on to say, "Another frightening difference in the crime picture is that life now seems pitifully cheap."

I want to tell you, friend, that's the result of evolution and humanism. Man is more than an animal, but when people begin to believe—they are taught—that they are animals, then what is the real value of an animal? They are saying now that life begins to be pitifully cheap.

Law enforcement officials think they have witnessed a shift toward gratuitous slaughter. "It used to be your money or your life," said Assistant District Attorney William Black. "Now it's your money and your life. Every big city has seen it: A small argument turns ugly, guns are drawn, and somebody dies, because a radio played too high, or a clerk miscounted some change. The attitude seems to be, 'What is the use of having a gun if you're not going to use it?' " And then it lists some horrible, terrifying, senseless crimes that have taken place in our beloved America. And I'll not read those. I have some of them written down here.

But then I want to skip on down and read something else: "Such viciousness cries out for an explanation, but motive and cause remain as murky as ever." I want to tell

you something, friend. That's the reason the social experts will never be able to help us with the world's problems. They'll never know the cause. Do you know what the cause is? S-i-n—sin. But who in the leading universities is going to stand up and say that? Who in the leading universities is going to say that the heart of the human problem is the problem of the human heart? *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."* (Jeremiah 17:9)

But I want you to go on. They say it's just as murky as ever. And then, I'm quoting one man. He said, "I went to school for eight years to get my PhD in criminology," says James Brannon, executive deputy chief of the Detroit police. "It took me that long to learn that we don't know much of anything." Here's a man who studied eight years and earned a PhD, and he says, "I don't know what the answer is." We're not going to think our way out of the mess we're in, friend. You put all the PhDs together, and let them pool their ignorance, and their PhD is going to stand for "Phenomenal Dud." I'm going to tell you something, friend. They do not know, and so much of this is being spawned by television. I want to leave this *Newsweek* article.

I want to quote a syndicated columnist named Max Rafferty. I like to read old Max because he's pretty tough, but he's pretty incisive. He's writing for the Los Angeles Times, and this is what he says. He was talking about the coming television programs, this fall's television shows. And here are some of them. He said, "Then there are this fall's TV shows. They are more like stag movies than anything else. In one of them, two male transvestites"—that is, men who like to live and dress and act like women—"live in an all-female hotel. In another, bets are made on whether or not a girl will lose her virginity. Still another features Danny Thomas' television daughter who goes steady with a married man." And then Rafferty says, "What in blue blazes is going on? No other generation would have put up for a single day with garbage like this. Why do we put up with it?"

Well, I'll tell you why we put up with it: It's the old principle of the frog dropped into the bucket of cold water, and then the heat's turned on. And it gets warmer by degrees until he doesn't realize what's happening to him. He doesn't have enough sense to jump out until he is boiled to death. If you were to drop a frog into a pot of boiling water or hot water, he'd jump out.

You see, that's what they're doing to us. Friend, your children are being systematically seduced—did you know that?—systematically seduced, as this garbage and this filth is being pumped, pumped, pumped.

Now by the way—and this isn't in my sermon notes—but I thank God some people are getting together for a Coalition for Better Television. Amen? Amen! You know, everybody says, "Censorship! Censorship!" No, we're not in favor of censorship. Brother, I'll fight against censorship, because I want to be free to do what I'm doing

today: preaching the gospel. I don't believe in censorship, but I do believe what Mr. Wildmon has said down here in Mississippi: "The television people and the networks have a right to put their money where they want to put their money in their programs." And he said, "The advertisers have a right to put their money where they want to put their money with their advertising. And decent people have a right to put their money where they want to put it when they buy their products." Amen? We're just going to look and see who is advertising this junk and say, "We're not going to buy your junk; we're just not going to do it." And we're going to hit them where it hurts the most: in the pocketbook. But I want to tell you, dear friend, that this is the day that we're living in, the day of moral and social permissiveness.

The *Wall Street Journal*—I mean, my goodness, the sober *Wall Street Journal*—said this in a front-page article recently. And it headlined, "King Lear: Sexual Pictures in Ads Become More Explicit and More Pervasive." And then it talked about the downright seamy advertising, and it says that television ads by companies are using more and more sex to sell products. The story quoted the head of one major agency as saying—and I quote: "People are looking for a new stimulant on a subconscious level, and sex is the last taboo." Listen to this: "Incest, rape, and homosexuality go into programming because the networks realize the pulling power of sex." And the *Journal* noted that "barriers are tumbling fast"—I say, "My soul! You mean there's more to come?" "The barriers are tumbling fast." I thought, "The barriers, it seemed to me, are almost already all down"—and reported even that nudity is common in European commercials right now.

And NBC recently provided to American viewing audiences a show entitled *Number 96*, which, according to the *New York Times* news service, is a program dealing with—I want you to listen to this; here's the subject matter—"homosexuality, witchcraft, murder, drug addiction, alcoholism, teenage and adult promiscuity, insanity, and rape." Now that's entertainment. You see what a person entertains himself with—you see what a generation of people entertain themselves with—and I'll tell you what level of life they are living on—see what it takes to amuse them. I'll tell you, dear friend, what amuses us ought to amaze us and ought to horrify us, but it doesn't do it. Yes, what I'm trying to say is this is a day of social permissiveness.

2. Scientific Progressiveness

And then, what is our day? It is also a day of scientific progressiveness. Isn't it amazing how much we know and how stupid we are? And back in that day, they were wresting secrets from the earth, and they were discovering things and making things. And they become artificers and creators and inventors and all of these things, but civilization was going down, down, down, down, while man's mind was so fertile. Look at our scientific progressiveness. Why, now they tell us we can have babies in test tubes! We can get in

there, and the genes and the chromosomes and the DNA, and we can do some genetic engineering. We can create our own race of men. Why, there are some even daring to say that one day perhaps we'll be able to make a clone, a human being, or a semi-human being, or only God knows what, created from a cell of another living person!

3. Spiritual Presumptuousness

And we're living in a day not only of scientific progressiveness but spiritual presumptuousness. Do you know what the leading religion is in America and in the world today? Humanism—humanism. You say, "Well, that sounds pretty good. I believe in being a humanitarian." I didn't say *humanitarianism*; I said *humanism* that makes man the sum and the substance, the center and the circumference, of everything. Now another word for humanism is *atheism*, but they don't like *atheism*. That word doesn't market too well, and so they've gotten a high-sounding word, a good-flying word, that sounds so good, which is *humanism*. And many people say, "You know, that sounds so much like *humanitarianism*; it sounds so good." But it's a way of doing business leaving God out.

Now we're just talking about Enoch and his times, and I want you to keep that in mind—that while he was a contemporary of Adam, and while he knew much spiritual truth, and while there was much spiritual truth being propagated—here was a world that was corrupting, and going down, down, down, and moving swiftly to the end of an age.

II. Enoch and His Testimony

Now I want you to see, second, I want you to see Enoch and his testimony, for the Bible says he walked with God, (Genesis 5:22) and the Bible says that "*he had this testimony, that he pleased God.*" (Hebrews 11:5) Look in chapter 5, verse 22: "*And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters: and all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years: and Enoch walked with God.*" (Genesis 5:22–24) And Hebrews chapter 11 said that "*he had this testimony, that he pleased God.*" (Hebrews 11:5) Here was a man who was walking with God. Something happened to him.

Now he didn't always walk with God. I mean, there was a time when he was like everybody else, but he had a sudden, climatic, and dramatic conversion. And it happened about the time of the birth of his baby boy, for the Bible says he "*walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years.*" (Genesis 5:22) Now for sixty-five years he's like everybody else, and then he has a conversion experience. He decides he's going to walk with God. I believe I know the two things that caused him to walk with God.

A. The Warning from God Prompted Fear

I believe, first of all, there was the warning from God that prompted fear. God sent him a warning. Would you ever name your baby Methuselah? I mean, think about it.

Methuselah: That's a weird name. And yet he has this little baby, and he names him Methuselah. Now Methuselah is a compounding of several words that in the Hebrew mean, "It shall be sent when he is dead." You know what his name was? He was little *It Shall Be Sent When He Is Dead*. Would you name a kid *It Shall Be Sent When He Is Dead*? That's his name: *It Shall Be Sent When He Is Dead*, Methuselah, or *When He's Gone, It Will Come*. That's what the name Methuselah means.

Now, why? What's this all about? You see, I believe that God here is speaking of a flood. As a matter of fact, I'm virtually certain that God is speaking of a flood, because when Methuselah died, the flood came on the dot—on the dot. We are going to see in a moment why Methuselah, therefore, lived to be so old. He lived longer than any other man that ever lived. Want me to give you a little riddle? The oldest man who ever lived, who died before his father did. Who was that? Of course, Methuselah, because his father never died. You see, Enoch went to heaven without dying. He's the oldest man who ever lived, who died before his father did. His name was Methuselah. Now when little Methuey was born, I guess they had to call him Methuey or something like that. You couldn't, you know, go around saying, "Oh, *gitchy gitchy goo*, Methuselah." I mean, you couldn't do that. And so when he was born, God evidently sent to Enoch a message.

You know, there's a verse in the Bible that blesses my heart. It's Amos chapter 3, verse 7. It says, "*Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.*" (Amos 3:7) And before God got ready to judge the world, He found a man. I believe Enoch was a prophet of God. The Bible says he was a prophet of God. He prophesied the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus. He was one of God's prophets. And God says, "Now when he's gone, it's going to come. This judgment is going to descend." And I believe there was a warning from God that prompted fear in his heart. I believe God said something like this to Enoch: "Enoch, you know this earth is getting so wicked, so vile, so corrupt, it cannot go on." And the Bible teaches that the flood came the day Methuselah died.

Now you can understand why he lived so long. Look in verse 27, if you will. The Bible says, "*And all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred sixty and nine years: and he died.*" (Genesis 5:27) Why? Because of the love and the long-suffering of God. God knew that when He brought judgment it was going to be terrible—it was going to be horrible. And so God called His preacher Noah, "*a preacher of righteousness.*" (2 Peter 2:5) And we're going to preach in a week or two on Noah, who preached with the wrath of God in the foreground, the ring of hammers in the background, as that ark was being

prepared. And Noah, with tears streaming down his cheeks, was begging people to repent and get right with God. And the long-suffering of God was waiting. Nine hundred and sixty-nine years God waited, but they didn't repent.

Some people say, "Well, you know, you preachers, you're always talking about the Second Coming of Jesus. You're always saying Jesus is going to come. Why hasn't He come?" You read what Brother Simon Peter had to say about it in his book. He said, "*The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come.*" (2 Peter 3:9–10) It will, just as the flood did come. Nine hundred and sixty-nine years the patience of God waited. Nine hundred and sixty-nine years the grace of God pleaded. But the flood came. The Bible says, "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be." (Matthew 24:37) History is like a broken phonograph record; it just keeps repeating itself. "As it was, so shall it be." We're seeing the days of Enoch, and we're seeing our days.

And here was God's love; here was God's mercy. But God has two attributes: There's God's justice and there's God's grace. And these are in a war, if we could speak of God having that kind of ambivalence in His heart, which actually He doesn't. But what I'm trying to say, as someone has so aptly said, that "the raging waters of God's wrath are furiously pounding against the dam of His mercy." And one of these days, the dam of God's mercy will give way to the waters of God's wrath, and this generation will be judged like that generation. And who knows when it's going to happen? I don't know. You don't know. But it is going to happen. Just as surely as I'm standing here in this pulpit, God is going to judge this world: water the first time, fire the second time. I believe there was the warning from God that prompted fear.

Now when you talk about fear, I know there are certain psychologists and other people who wrinkle their brow out there and say, "Now, you know, Brother Rogers, I don't think that fear is the best motive." Well, I really don't think that fear is the best motive if you mean quaking in your boots. I believe it's pretty smart to have some fear. I mean, I'm not going to be one of those parents who's going to tell my kids there's nothing to fear but fear itself. I mean, can you imagine those precious people over there in Atlanta telling those precious black children, "Nothing to fear but fear itself, child"? There is something to fear. I wouldn't tell somebody going out in a swamp infested with alligators and rattlesnakes, "Nothing to fear but fear itself." Oh, no, no! People going in and out among drug dealers and pornographers: "Nothing to fear but fear itself." Rape is "nothing to fear but fear itself." There's plenty to fear—there's plenty to fear—especially if you don't know the Lord. You know, the Bible says, "*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.*" (Psalms 111:10) The Bible says, "Fear not him that's able to destroy your body, but fear Him who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell."

(Matthew 10:28)

The doctors use fear. You know, they say, “Don’t smoke; you’ll get cancer.” It doesn’t seem to do much good. Have you noticed a full-page ad advertising cigarettes now? At the bottom it says, “Boy, it’s gonna do you in.” I mean, they put it on there. I mean, they print it on there. But they know—they know—human nature. Isn’t it amazing? I mean, you see people in the supermarkets buying cancer by the carton and embalming fluid by the six-pack. I mean, it doesn’t matter. Man, they don’t care what it’s going to do to them. But, you see, here was a man—here was a man—somehow who could hear the Word of God when God warned him.

Listen. Let me tell you something about fear. I’d rather frighten you to heaven than lull you to hell. *We’ve got a generation of people being chloroformed by the devil, laughing their way to hell, strutting their way to hell, facing judgment, and not knowing that it’s surely coming.* Enoch knew it was coming. I believe every time little Methuey got the colic, he said, “Take care of yourself, kid.” Listen. Whenever he goes, it’s going to come. I mean, boy, they didn’t let him have a stubbed toe without a bandage. When he goes—when he goes—it’s going to come.

B. The Word of God Produced Faith

Now, how did he get this testimony? Well, there was the warning from God that prompted fear, and there was the Word of God that produced faith. You see, fear is not enough. You’ve got to have faith. Now there was the Word of God that produced faith. I know that Enoch was a man of faith, because he’s listed over there in Hebrews chapter 11. The Bible said, “By faith he walked with God.” (Hebrews 11:5) Now you’ve never had faith, I’ve never had faith, they’ve never had faith, we’ve never had faith, nobody’s ever had faith, nobody ever will have faith, apart from the Word of God. Put it down big, put it down straight, put it down plain: *“Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”* (Romans 10:17) You know what faith is? Faith is believing what God says. That’s what faith is. Now if God hasn’t said something to you, how are you going to believe it? Faith is believing what God says. See? He heard the Word of God.

Now I don’t know which of his contemporaries brought the Word of God to him. I kind of like to think that one day he was in the supermarket buying some Pampers for Methuey, and when Adam came in, he said, “My soul and body! Is that Adam? I’ve never met...There is Adam!” Of course, you know, Adam must have been signing autographs everywhere. I mean, can you imagine? He was the first man to ever live. “Why, there’s Adam!” And Enoch, knowing that judgment is coming, and knowing that there must be more to life, he goes over to Adam, and he says, “Adam, can I have a word with you? Adam, there’s something I’ve been wanting to ask you. Adam, what was it like in the Garden of Eden? Tell me, Adam.” And Adam says, “Oh, my boy...”—of course, he’s just a few hundred years old—“Oh, my boy, it was glorious. The fruit, the

rivers—crystal clear—the flowers, the balmy breezes, the animals.

“But wait a minute. I don’t want to mislead you. That wasn’t the most wonderful thing about paradise. The most wonderful thing is this, that God would come every day to the Garden of Eden. And I walked with God. My God and I, we walked the fields together. We’d go down flower-strewn pathways. He’d take me by the hand to a sunlit mountain, and we’d see His grandeur. We’d watch together the glorious, glowing sun go down. I would love Him and He would love me. Enoch, to walk with God, that was paradise—paradise.”

And I believe there may have been a desire in old Enoch’s heart saying, “That’s what I want more than anything else: I want to walk with God. More than I want life, more than I want breath, I want to walk with God. I want to please God. Well, if I displease God, it doesn’t matter whom I please. And if I please God, it doesn’t matter whom I displease. I just want to go hand in hand with my God.” And he heard somehow the Word of God through Adam, through Seth, through somebody. He heard the Word of God, and the Bible says, by faith, here was a man who walked with God.

Oh, I wish today that you would take this Word of God that I’m preaching and that God the Holy Spirit would use me today as His instrument to take this Word and inculcate faith in your heart and a desire in your heart to say, “Henceforth and forevermore, I want to walk with God”! Boy, if you decide that today, it will be worth it to me to have preached this message today.

C. The Walk with God Provided Fellowship

And so there was the warning from God that produced fear, there was the Word from God that produced faith, and therefore there was the walk with God that provided fellowship. He just walked with God. Listen to Hebrews 11, verse 5, again: *“By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.”* (Hebrews 11:5)

Now, dear friends, he pleased God. God said that about someone else. Do you remember? “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” When you are pleasing God, you are Christlike—when you are pleasing God, you are Christlike. You want to know what it’s like to be like Jesus? Not to wear a beard, a robe, and sandals, but to please God. *“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”* (Matthew 3:17) Enoch *“had this testimony, that he pleased God.”* (Hebrews 11:5) You say, “Yeah, sure, back in those days. Man, what about my days? I’ve got problems, Brother Rogers.” Well, friend, who doesn’t? I’ve got them. You’ve got them. We’ve all got them. Adam had them. I mean, everybody’s got problems. Enoch had a family. The Bible says he *“begat sons and daughters.”* (Genesis 5:22) He didn’t walk with God in a monastery somewhere. I mean, he walked with God in an age just like ours. Listen. He didn’t just

take a little step. He walked with God for three hundred years. He walked with God—three hundred years he walked with God. In an age of apostasy, in an age where there was a sexual and scientific revolution going on, in a day where humanism had already taken over, in a day where there was filth and violence—so much that God had to destroy the world with a flood—that’s when he walked with God.

And you people listen to me. Don’t you come telling me that it can’t be done. If it won’t work at home—Enoch lived at home—and if it won’t work in a sinful age, and if it won’t keep on working, it’s not the real thing; you don’t have what Enoch had. I mean, listen, folks. It wasn’t easy for him to walk with God. But here he had this testimony that he pleased God.

*O how sweet to walk in this pilgrim way,
Leaning on the everlasting arms;
O how bright the path grows from day to day,
Leaning on the everlasting arms.*

—ELISHA A. HOFFMAN

You know, I’m not trying to make you feel bad when I talk about all these terrible things about our age.

*O how bright the path grows from day to day,
Leaning on the everlasting arms.*

III. Enoch and His Translation

Let me just take a few moments as I close this message to talk about Enoch and his translation. Friend, he went to heaven without dying. He didn’t go through the grave. And nobody knew what happened to him. The Bible said he “*was not found.*” (Hebrews 11:5) Look at that: He “*was not found,*” in Hebrews chapter 11. And here in Genesis chapter 5, verse 24, it says, “*He was not.*” (Genesis 5:24) That means they looked for him. They couldn’t explain it. Friend, it was mysterious and supernatural.

Conclusion

Do you know one day the headlines are going to say, “Extra! Extra! Read all about it: Thousands Suddenly Missing”?

Captain Noah and the Good Ship Grace

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: March 29, 1981

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 6:1–8

“And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.”

GENESIS 6:7–8

Outline

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Introduction

Now I want you to find Genesis chapter 6—Genesis chapter 6—and we’re going to begin reading in verse 1—Genesis chapter 6, verse 1. The title of our message is “Captain Noah and the Good Ship Grace.”

Genesis 6:1 begins this way: *“And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose. And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years. There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown. And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them. But...”*—and I thank God for that little word *but*—*“But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD”*—*“But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.”* (Genesis 6:1–8)

And it is this verse that has caused me to entitle my message, “Captain Noah and the Good Ship Grace.” This is the first mention of the word *grace* in all of the Bible, and a marvelous mention indeed it is. And we’re going to find some sweet truths about the Lord Jesus Christ as we study together.

First of all, I want to say that the flood that took place in the days of Noah was a historical fact. As a matter of fact, the archeologists tell us that all civilizations everywhere have a record of the flood. They have their flood legends, their flood stories. Now they do not come exactly as the story in the Bible, because these legends have been handed down through the years. And of course they’ve been corrupted. They’ve not been guided as the Holy Spirit guided the writers of the Scripture to record the precise story that took place. But we know that all of these flood legends, all of these stories, root to a common source. And someone might say, “Well, the Bible is just one more of those legends.” No, the Bible reveals the truth out of which all of these other legends sprang and from whence they grew.

But not only does archeology tell us that there was a flood; geology tells us that there was a flood. And there is great geological evidence for the catastrophe of the flood.

But I want to tell you, I don’t believe in the flood because of archeology or geology. I believe it because of Christology: Jesus believed in the flood. Jesus said, in Matthew chapter 24, “As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the day of the coming of the Son of man.” (Matthew 24:37) And the Bible speaks of the time when the flood came in the days of Noah. And Jesus utters these words from His own lips, in Matthew chapter 24, verses 37 and following. Jesus Christ believed in the flood, and Jesus said

that the last days were going to be like the days that were before the flood—“as it was in the days of Noah.” (Matthew 24:37)

Now, what were the days of Noah like? Well, all of this is by means of introduction, but the days of Noah were days of apostasy, and the days of Noah were days of anarchy, and the days of Noah were days of apathy. Those were the days of Noah.

A. The Days of Noah Were Days of Apostasy

They were days of apostasy. I read here in the first three verses of Genesis chapter 6 how the sons of God took the daughters of men, and there was an intermarrying between the sons of God and the daughters of men. Now theologians—some theologians—say that these sons of God were demon spirits that actually took human wives, and their offspring were giants, Nephilim, mighty men of renown—grotesque, half-demon, half-human persons. Others say that the sons of God were the descendants of the godly line of Seth who intermarried with the ungodly line of Cain, and that there was no longer separation, and there was an unholy mixture. And I do not have time or space in this message to go into that, except to say this, that it was a time of apostasy; it was a time of unholy alliances.

B. The Days of Noah Were Days of Anarchy

But not only was it a time of apostasy; it was a time of anarchy. I want you to notice verses 4 and following—the Bible says, “*There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown.*” (Genesis 6:4) But mighty to do what? Renowned in what? Well, look in verse 5, and you’ll see: “*And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth,*”—why, these were mighty men to do wickedness. They were renowned for their sin and for their lasciviousness. And then it goes on to say that—“*...every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*” (Genesis 6:5)

Now that word *imagination* is an interesting word. The scholars tell us that it comes from a root, a Hebrew root word, which means “to shape, as a potter would shape things with his hands.” That is, there were new philosophies that were being spawned. There were new ideas that were being molded. Actually, men were fashioning—they were molding—wicked philosophies. And with these wicked philosophies, they were espousing filthy causes. What they were doing was trying to reshape and remold society. They were trying to get perversion and vice and immorality to become the acceptable norm, to say what was good was bad and what was bad was good, and to get the people of that day to be molded into their mold. And so it was a day of anarchy. And the same sins that produced the flood are reaching to heaven in our day and in our age. For Jesus said, “As it was in the time of Noah, it will be in the end of the age.”

(Matthew 24:37)

C. **The Days of Noah Were Days of Apathy**

But not only was there apostasy and anarchy in the time of Noah, but there was apathy. Jesus there, in the scripture that we referred to in Matthew chapter 24, verse 38, said that just before the flood—I mean, to the very day that the flood came—they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage, and knew not until the flood came. (Matthew 24:38) That is, in spite of the preaching of the prophet Noah, they just simply yawned in the face of God. Oh, these were days when nothing seemed to shake them! They were just as assured as they could be that tomorrow was going to come just like yesterday had come.

Well, in the context of these days, the Bible says, in verse 8, there was a man named Noah—Captain Noah—and he “*found grace in the eyes of the LORD.*” (Genesis 6:8) And that’s the reason I’ve entitled our message today “Captain Noah and the Good Ship Grace.” Now the ark is a wonderful object lesson, and there are perhaps hundreds and even thousands of things that we could say about the ark this morning, but I’ll be content if God the Holy Spirit will help me to put three of them in your heart today.

First of all, I want you to see this ark and its symbolism. I want you to see how the ark is a symbol of the Lord Jesus Christ, and I want you to see the symbolism of the ship. And then the second thing I want you to see is the salvation through the ship. I want you to see how the ark is a symbol of the Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore what Noah did is a wonderful picture of what we must do if we want to be saved through the Lord Jesus Christ. So the symbolism of the ship, the salvation through the ship, and then I want you to see the security in the ship: I want you to see that we are as secure, and even more secure, in the Lord Jesus Christ than Noah was in the Good Ship Grace. A very simple outline—and I think all of us can stay together as we study this together, because there are some marvelously wonderful truths that we’re going to see together.

I. **The Symbolism of the Ship**

Now the ship—the ark, if you will—was a magnificent Old Testament type of the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter tells us that in 1 Peter chapter 3. I’m not reading into this. The apostle Peter himself tells us that Old Testament ark was a prophecy. Peter uses the word *type*—a type of the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 3:20–21) And I had a good time just thinking and studying how this ark, here in the Old Testament, pictures and portrays the Lord Jesus Christ, because it’s a reminder that all of the Bible is about Jesus—all of it—the Old Testament, the New Testament. Jesus is the hero of the Bible.

Now, let’s notice several things about this ark as we are talking about the symbolism of the ship:

A. The Substance of the Ship

Let's begin reading here in verse 12 now: *"And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth. Make thee an ark of gopher wood."* (Genesis 6:12–14)

Now, let's just stop right there and talk about the substance of the ship—the substance of the ship. It was made of gopher wood. And what is gopher wood? Most scholars and commentaries tell us that gopher wood is cypress. And cypress, you know, is a wood that does not easily rot, sort of an indestructible wood, and it has become a symbol of the humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ. You see, in the Bible wood is a symbol of humanity. And here I think, if the ark is a symbol of the Lord Jesus Christ, the very fact that it was made of cypress wood speaks of the indestructible humanity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

You know, a righteous man is spoken of as *"a tree planted by the rivers of water."* (Psalms 1:3) And the Lord Jesus Christ Himself is prophesied in Isaiah chapter 53 *"as a root out of a dry ground."* (Isaiah 53:2) And in another place He is prophesied as *"a rod out of the stem"*—out of the stump—*"of Jesse,"* (Isaiah 11:1) and so forth. All of these are figures of the Lord Jesus Christ, who was God's mighty tree, who, though, was cut down in His prime, cut down in His youth. And so we see something of the Lord Jesus Christ right here in the substance of the ark.

B. The Safety of the Ship

But not only the substance of the ship; I want you to notice the safety of the ship. Look again in verse 14, the last part—and the Bible says, *"And [thou] shalt pitch it within and without with pitch."* (Genesis 6:14) Now, what is pitch? That's just sticky tar. And God said to Noah, "Now, Noah, when you make this boat, not only do I want you to make it out of cypress—very durable wood that can take the water—but I want you just to go on the outside of it; I just want you to cover it all over on the outside with pitch. Then I want you to go on the inside, and all over on the inside I want you to put pitch." And of course, that was there to caulk the seams, to keep the water from coming in, because you don't want the ship to leak—certainly not a ship that has such a precious cargo.

But now the interesting thing about this word pitch—it's the Hebrew word *kopher*—is that it is translated over seventy times in the Bible and other places "atonement"—"atonement." Now this is very important. What God said to Noah is, "Noah, I want you to put atonement on the outside of the ark and atonement on the inside of the ark." It's a wonderful, beautiful prophecy of the blood atonement of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now, just keep your bookmark there in Genesis chapter 6 and turn with me to

Leviticus chapter 17, and I'll show you what I'm talking about. Leviticus chapter 17, verse 11—here our Lord is speaking of the blood atonement, and He says, in Leviticus chapter 17, verse 11, *“For the life of the flesh is in the blood...”*—that's the reason the Bible says, *“Without shedding of blood is no remission [of sin]”* (Hebrews 9:22) —*“For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls:”*—now that's exactly the same word that we just found over here in verse 14 that is rendered “pitch.” And I could just as well read it, “I have given it to you upon the altar to make a pitch for your souls”—*“for it is the blood that maketh an atonement”*—or “a pitch”—*“for the soul.”* (Leviticus 17:11) The words *atonement* and *pitch* both mean “covering”—“covering.” It's the blood that covers our sins. Oh, thank God, this is what He's talking about! It is a covering, a seal.

You see, what did the flood represent? What did the waters of that flood represent? God's judgment. God was judging the world. And what was this atonement, therefore? To keep the waters of judgment out, you see. Oh, thank God, Noah was safe inside, because not one judgment could come through God's atonement. I believe that's what He's talking about here, right here in the very first part of this book.

I think I've shared with you before the story of the little girl who was asked by the Sunday School teachers, “Is there anything that God cannot do?” and the little girl said, “Yes, there's one thing God cannot do. He cannot see my sin through the blood of Jesus Christ.”

Thank God for the atonement. Thank God for the covering. Thank God that not one drop of water, not one drop of judgment, can come to anyone who is in the Lord Jesus Christ. The judgment cannot penetrate.

C. The Size of the Ship

But not only do I want you to see the substance of the ship, and not only do I want you to see the safety of the ship, but I want you to see the size of the ship. Continue to read here in verse 14: *“Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark”*—just underscore that: *“rooms shalt thou make.”* And then verse 15: *“And this is the fashion which thou shalt make it of: The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits.”* (Genesis 6:14–15) Now, folks, it was a large ship: three million cubic feet of space inside the Good Ship Grace. “Rooms shalt thou make in it.” (Genesis 6:14) What is the lesson here? It was amply sufficient for all that it was intended to do.

Now what I'm trying to say here is this, dear friend, that the size, the immensity, of this great ship is just God's way of saying to you today, I believe, “There's room at the cross for you.” There is room. There is plenty of room for those who will come. If you want the Lord Jesus Christ today, I say, “Come and take,” because

*Out of His infinite riches in Jesus,
He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again.*

—ANNIE J. FLINT

Thank God for the size of the ship.

D. The Shape of the Ship

Let's go on and notice the shape of the ship in verse 15. And He says, "*And this is the fashion which thou shalt make it of: The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits.*" (Genesis 6:15)

Now, notice not only the cubic volume but the length, the height, and the breadth. Now this was not built like an ocean liner. The pictures that you see in the children's storybook of a boat with a prow, that it comes to a point—that's not what it was at all. It was built like a box—built like a box. As a matter of fact, it was shaped like a coffin. That was the shape of the ship. It was shaped as a coffin. The ancient people used to make their coffins out of cypress wood, and I believe that it is suggestive of a coffin, because, you see, if the ark represents the Lord Jesus Christ, He was born to die. And not only that, when we receive Him as our personal Savior and Lord, we die with Him. We're crucified with Christ; we are buried with Christ. This ark is a picture of the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. But we die with Him, that we might live with Him. Jesus didn't come to give us death; He came to give us life—and life abundant, full and free, John 10:10 tells us. (John 10:10)

E. The Structure of the Ship

But not only do I want you to notice the shape of it; I want you to notice the structure of it. Look in verse 16: "*A window shalt thou make to the ark, and in a cubit shalt thou finish it above; and the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof; with lower, second, and third stories shalt thou make it.*" (Genesis 6:16) That was the structure of it.

And in the first place, I want to talk about the door and the window. God was to control the door; Noah was to control the window. It was God, as we're going to see, who shut the door. They entered into the door, which again is illustrative of the Lord Jesus Christ, who said, "*I am the door: by me if any man enter in, [he'll] be saved.*" (John 10:9) And that, again, pictures the Lord Jesus Christ. But there was a window. And Noah could look out of the window, but the window was on top. And when Noah looked out, he looked up. You see, God closed Noah in, and God shut Noah in, that Noah might look up to God. He was closed in to look up. He wasn't to have his eyes on all of the death and the degradation and the putrefaction that was going on. He had a view of heaven.

The Bible says that we are to "*set [our] affection on things above, not on things [of] the earth.*" (Colossians 3:2) But, you see, if that ark pictures the Lord Jesus Christ, it

was in the ark, and through the ark, and by the ark that he knew the Lord. You see that he worshipped the Father. Jesus said, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”* (John 14:6) I want to tell you, the Lord Jesus is God’s window to heaven. I want to tell you, it is through the Lord Jesus that you can worship, that you can praise, that you can look up to Him and *“set your affection on things above.”* (Colossians 3:2) Oh, how God’s people today aboard the Good Ship Grace ought to be heavenly minded!

And incidentally, there were three stories—one, two, three stories—in the ark. I believe that speaks to me of the body, soul, and spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ. It speaks to me of the triune God: God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit.

F. The Sustenance on the Ship

Well, there’s the structure of the ship, and then there was the sustenance on the ship. If you will, look here in chapter 6, and let’s look in verse 21: *“And take thou unto thee all food that is eaten,”*—notice that: *“all food that is eaten.”* Not just the black-eyed peas, but the strawberries—*“and thou shalt gather it to thee; and it shall be for food for thee, and for them.”* (Genesis 6:21) Oh, the sustenance of the ark! You see, not only did Noah find shelter; he found sustenance. For Jesus not only saves; bless God, He satisfies, amen? You know, *the Captain sets a good table aboard the Good Ship Grace.*

I had the privilege one time to sail a ship and be in the Mediterranean on a very lovely ship. And one night, because I was leading a group of people, I received a beautiful invitation at my cabin, and it said, “The captain has requested your presence at the table.” My goodness, I was going to get to have dinner that night with the captain of the ship. And we sat down, and there was the captain, and he was all dressed in his white suit with scrambled eggs on his shoulders. And it was something to see as we sat down there and ate with the captain. He had the finest manners, very impeccable, spoke English with that Grecian accent that he had. And then they started to serve the food. And, first of all, there were the appetizers that came along, and then there was the prime rib, and then there was the lobster, and then it ended up with the Baked Alaska. It was some kind of meal! I said, “Boy, I’d like to sit at the captain’s table every time.” That was something to sit at the captain’s table.

Friend, I want to tell you, when you sail the Good Ship Grace, every meal is a banquet. Did you know that? I mean, dear friend, the Lord Jesus Christ, He *“daily loadeth us with benefits.”* (Psalms 68:19)

G. The Satisfaction in the Ship

Not only do we find in this ship a salvation; we find sustenance. And in that sustenance, we find satisfaction. I want to tell you, I am so happy today to be a Christian. I am so glad that the Lord Jesus Christ saved me, and I’m so glad that we can sit down to a

gospel banquet. You notice what he says here. Look. He says, “Just take it. It shall be for food to them. All manner of food that is eaten, thou shalt gather it for thee, and it shall be for food for thee and to them.” (Genesis 6:21)

H. **The Schedule of the Ship**

Well, not only the sustenance of the ship, but number eight: I want you to notice the schedule of the ship. Turn to chapter 8 and verse 4. You know, some ships don't arrive on time. This one arrived right on the dot. I want you to see when it arrived. Genesis chapter 8, verse 4: “*And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat*”—“on the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month.” (Genesis 8:4)

Now, why this? Why did God put that in there? Is that just some trivia, or is that important? I believe it's very important. Oh, listen, friend. Do you know what day that the ark rested on Mount Ararat, and what month? Well, it was the seventh month. The Jewish calendar begins in October, the legal calendar. And if you count seven months from October, you're going to come to the month of April, and then at the seventeenth day, let me ask you this: Do you know what the seventeenth day was? Well, the Passover was April 14, and three days after Passover is the seventeenth day. The Passover is April 14. Do you know—do you know—when this ship landed? The same day that later on would become three days after Passover. And do you know what that day is? It's the day that Jesus Christ came out of the grave. Did you know that? It is the day that Jesus was raised from the dead. Jesus died on the Passover day. And three days after Passover, on the seventeenth day of the month of April, Jesus Christ came out of the grave.

Now Peter links the ark with the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And the Bible says here that the ark rested upon Mount Ararat, which means “Mount of Glory”—“Mount of Holiness,” really. And here He is—here He is—resting upon the Mount of Holiness. You see, the Lord Jesus Christ took the brunt of the storm, and the waters of God's judgment beat upon God's ark. But on a specific day, it rested upon the mount of God's holiness. And because it rested, we rest with Him.

Friend, I want to tell you that Jesus Christ, the resurrected Lord, is our Sabbath. People say, “Why don't you keep the Sabbath day, the Saturday?” Friend, I keep the Sabbath seven days a week, 365 days a year, resting in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is my rest, the resurrected Lord. We rest in Jesus because He was raised from the dead the seventeenth day. He passed through the waters of judgment and stood in resurrection upon the earth on the seventeenth day of the seventh month.

And so we've noticed about eight things that remind us of the Lord Jesus Christ. And I'm just simply saying that I believe that this ark was a symbol of the Lord Jesus Christ. And I don't believe I'm reading into it—some of the reasons I have given, perhaps, are

my imagination—but I am not reading into it when I tell you that the ark is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. I'm not reading into that, because Simon Peter said that, friend, just clearly and plainly. He uses the word *type*—that it is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ.

II. The Salvation Through the Ship

But not only do I want you to notice the symbolism of the ship, but I want you to notice the salvation—the salvation—through the ship, because, you see, it was the ark that saved Noah. Correspondingly, it is Jesus that saves us.

Now, let me just say before I get into this next point that God has only ever had but one way of salvation. Don't get an idea that people were saved in the Old Testament one way, and saved in the New Testament another way, and perhaps, in the Tribulation, they'll be saved another way, and if people are saved in the Millennium, perhaps they'll be saved another way. Friend, God only ever has but one plan of salvation. Do you want me to tell you what it is? It's found in Ephesians chapter 2, verses 8 and 9. Mark it down. Many of you know this verse by heart. But listen to it—Ephesians chapter 2, verses 8 and 9 and 10. Let's put all three verses together: *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”* (Ephesians 2:8–10) That's Ephesians 2, verses 8 through 10.

Now if you were here several months ago, I gave you three prepositions. I said if you would remember these three prepositions, you'd keep your theology straight concerning salvation from henceforth and forevermore. Don't forget these three prepositions—three little words: *by*, *through*, and *unto*. They're found in Ephesians 2, verses 8 through 10: *by*, *through*, and *unto*—*by*, *through*, and *unto*. Are you ready for them? *“For by grace are ye saved through faith...unto good works.”* (Ephesians 2:8–10)

Now, just get that into your heart and in your mind, and nobody will ever confuse you. Some false cultist, some legalist, will not confuse you. It is *by* grace, *through* faith, *unto* good works—*by* grace, *through* faith, *unto* good works. Now, listen. Here's the way—here's the way—you're saved.

A. By Grace

First of all, it is by grace. Have you ever noticed there in verse 8 the Bible says that *“Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD”*? (Genesis 6:8) How was Noah saved? By grace. It wasn't in the goodness of Noah, but in the grace of God. Salvation is not in the merit of man, but the mercy of God. I've told you before, salvation is not a reward for the righteous; it is a gift for the guilty. You're not saved by good works. You're not saved by joining the church. You're not saved by keeping the Ten Commandments. You're not saved by obeying the Golden Rule. You're not saved by getting baptized. You're not

saved by reading your Bible. You're not saved by giving your money.

*These for sin cannot atone;
Thou must save, and Thou alone.*

—AUGUSTUS TOPLADY

“For by grace...” You say, “Well, I believe it’s a little grace and a little works.” Then you’re lost. It’s all grace and no works. You’re not saved by works. The Bible says, in the book of Romans chapter 11, *“And if by grace... [it is] no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. [And] if it be of works...it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.”* (Romans 11:6) Did that confuse you? Listen. *“If by grace,”*—Romans 11:6—*“[it is] no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace.”* The minute you add works to it; you destroy the concept of grace. You see, *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and...not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works.”* (Ephesians 2:8–9) Baptism doesn’t save you, a spoonful or a tankful. Giving your money doesn’t save you. Being a good boy doesn’t save you. Salvation is in the grace of God.

“For by grace are ye saved” (Ephesians 2:8) —G-R-A-C-E—God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense. Jesus died for you on the cross. *“God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”* (Romans 5:8) Salvation is the gift of God. Until you understand that, you’ll never be saved. The Bible says, *“If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.”* (Galatians 2:21) Calvary was a blunder if you could be saved by good works. You’re saved by the grace of God.

B. Through Faith

Noah found grace. Verse 8 tells us: *“Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.”* (Genesis 6:8) But wait a minute. God extended that grace to Noah. But Noah had to reciprocate with faith. And so, in Hebrews chapter 11, verse 7, Noah is listed in the hall of fame of those who believed God, and the Bible says that Noah did what he did by faith and became an heir of righteousness. (Hebrews 11:7) You see, it is *by grace, through faith*. It is not faith that saves us; it’s grace that saves us. It’s faith that brings us in contact with that grace. *By grace, through faith*. (Ephesians 2:8)

Now, look in Genesis chapter 7, verse 1: *“And the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark.”* (Genesis 7:1) There was God’s invitation. There was the ark. There was the warning of the flood. The ark is prepared. Doubtless, they had some sort of a gangplank so Noah and his family and those animals could enter up into that ark. And now God says to Noah, “Noah, come.” And at that moment, Noah had to make a decision whether or not he was going to believe God and trust God and commit himself to that boat.

And that’s what faith is: not just believing there is an ark, but committing yourself to it. You say, “I believe there’s a Christ. I believe He died for my sins.” You can believe

that and go right to hell. I want to know, have you entered into Christ by faith? You see, God said to Noah, “Noah, come.” And I believe Noah said, “Just as I am, I come to thee. I come.” And up that gangplank he went, and Noah put his hand of faith in God’s hand of grace. And Noah was saved because he committed himself to that ark. You can believe every word of this message that I preach today, and you can believe in the grace of God. You can believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross in agony and blood for your sins. But I want to know, are you going to take that step of faith? He entered into that ark. Salvation is by grace, through faith; and without faith, of course, you’re lost.

Now I’m sure it was hard for Noah to have faith, because there were many things that told Noah that there was not going to be a flood. You know, nobody else believed in a flood. Very few people—only eight people—were saved in Noah’s day. Noah was definitely in the minority.

But, you know, if you preach it long enough, some people get to questioning. And I just imagine they had a convocation, and they said, “You know, we’ve got to do something about this country bumpkin of a preacher named Noah. We’ve got to decide whether or not there really is going to be a flood.” So they brought a convocation to listen and sort of a symposium. You know, a symposium is where people get together and pool their ignorance. And they brought this symposium, and they said, “Now we want to look at it logically and rationally and coolly and calmly. Is there going to be a flood?”

And so they said, “Well now, who should speak? Well, we ought to have a scientist. Surely we ought to have a philosopher, and we ought to have a theologian. I mean, after all, if you get a scientist, a philosopher, and a theologian together...” Now I’m using a little imagination here. So they’ve got a scientist there—a Dr. Francis Formaldehyde. “And, Dr. Formaldehyde, would you please address this august and distinguished body and tell us whether or not this story of a flood, you know, can we believe this? Or, is this just some religious fanaticism?” Dr. Francis Formaldehyde says, “Well, I’ve been studying at the university for many years, and, of course, I know meteorology, and I know the cosmology of the universe and so forth. I can tell you that so far, scientifically, we’ve never had any record of such a thing as a flood, and I don’t see how it’s scientifically possible. To tell you the truth, sirs, the whole thing smacks of superstition to me. I would say that the dictum of science certainly is against a flood.”

“Well, thank you, Dr. Formaldehyde. We want to hear from the philosopher, Dr. Flavius Fluffyhead. Would you come, please, and tell this convocation if there’s going to be a flood.” Well, Dr. Fluffyhead, you know, bumps his fingers—they always bump their fingers, you know—and he says, “Well, I want to say that we, from a philosophical point of view, don’t really believe there could be such a thing as a flood, because, you see, if

there's a God—and there may be some philosophical arguments for the existence of God; some people do believe in God—but if there is a God, and if He did create the world, then for Him to turn around and destroy the world that He created would mean that somehow things had gotten out of control. And that must not be much of a God if He allowed things to get in the mess that they are in. And it would seem that philosophically the whole thing just doesn't make sense. No, philosophically, I'd say this: There can't be a flood."

"Well, let's hear from the Rev. Dr. Sounding Brass, the theologian. Dr. Sounding Brass, you've graduated, you're from the seminary, and you know all the ancient Semitic languages. Would you come and tell us: Is there going to be a flood?" Dr. Sounding Brass says, "Gentlemen, these other men have been dispassionate, but I'm angry. This man named Noah has slandered the character of God. He's made God look like He's some sort of a wrathful and vengeful brute. I want to tell you that God is a God of love, infinite love, and there can be no such thing as a flood. That would mean that God did not love this world. And certainly God's not going to destroy the world with a flood; you can rest assured. And if Mr. Noah did hear God say anything about a flood, I can assure you it wasn't literal water that God was speaking about."

And so, you know, boy, they all feel so much better: "I mean, after all, you know, we've got science, and we've got philosophy, and we've got theology." And so they all relaxed.

What I'm saying is, today, in the world that we live in, friend, sometimes it's kind of hard to walk by this book, right? Because everybody else, you know, says, "You know, you don't have to believe that"—"you don't have to believe that." But, you see, how was Noah saved? He was saved by grace, through faith, unto good works.

C. **Unto Good Works**

Now once Captain Noah got aboard that ship, I want to tell you, there was a lot of work to be done. If you've ever tried to sail a ship, there's a lot of work to be done. But, you see, dear friend, we work not for salvation, but from salvation. It is by, through, and unto—unto good works. And indeed, he served the Lord. Indeed, he was a good captain. Indeed, he helped feed the animals. Indeed, he helped serve the tables. Indeed, he did all of these things, but not in order to be saved, but because he was saved.

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

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Amen? But we work not in order to be saved but because we have been saved.

III. The Security in the Ship

Well, thirdly and finally, I want you to notice not only the symbolism of the ship, and the salvation through the ship, but I want you to notice the security in the ship. Look, if you will, in chapter 7, verse 1, one more time: *“And the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark.”* (Genesis 7:1) I like that word *come*.

Now, suppose I said to you—I go behind that door there, or that door there, and I say to you—“Come”—what does that mean? That means “I’m in here. You come in here where I am.” But if I say, “Go,” that means “You go in there; I stay in here.” Now, listen, friend. God didn’t say to Noah, “Noah, go into the ark.” He said to Noah, “Noah, come into the ark.” That meant that Noah went in where God went in. Now, keep that in mind. And then I want you to skip down to verse 16. Look in verse 16. We’re in chapter 7, verse 16: *“And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded [them]:”*—and now notice this—*“and the LORD shut him in.”* (Genesis 7:16) Now Noah didn’t close the door. God closed the door. God shut him in. You see, dear friend, God said, “Noah, you come in here where I am.” And then Noah was sealed in.

Now, what does that remind me of? Well, the Bible tells us, in the book of Ephesians, that after we have believed, we are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. (Ephesians 1:13) We are sealed into Christ just as Noah was sealed into that ark. Now I want to ask you a question: When Noah was in that ark that was atoned within and without, made of indestructible gopher wood, and God was in there with him, how safe was he? Well, he was just as safe as the ark was safe. He was just as safe as God is safe. Do you want me to tell you when I’ll go down? I’ll go down when Jesus goes down, amen?

See? I am in Jesus. You see, the Bible says we’re *“made...accepted in the beloved.”* (Ephesians 1:6) Who is the beloved? Jesus is the beloved. We’re in Him. Second Corinthians chapter 5, verse 17: *“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.”* (2 Corinthians 5:17) We are in Christ. That’s where we are. Christ is our ark of safety. We came in through the door of salvation of the gangplank of faith into the ship of grace. God shut the door, and that’s where we are.

Now, friend, that’s how safe I am. I’m as safe as that ark, you see. I am in there, locked in, sealed in with God. That’s the reason why we call that the security of the believer. Jesus said, *“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.”* (John 10:27–28) You see, it’s not a matter of you holding on to Him; it’s a matter of Him holding on to you.

Have you ever heard anybody get up in an old-fashioned testimony meeting and say

something like this: “And you folks pray for me that I’ll hold out faithful to the end”? Have you ever heard that? Surely you have! Now if they mean by that, “You pray for me that I’ll be a good Spirit-filled Christian all the way to glory,” I think that’s wonderful. But if they mean by that, “You pray for me that I’ll keep on being saved by my holding on to God,” I think that’s pathetic. Suppose God had said to Noah, “Now, Noah, when you build this ship, I want you to put eight broomsticks on the outside, drive them up hard into that cypress wood, and get a stepladder, and when it starts to rain, you go up the stepladder, get hold of one of those broomsticks, you’ll hang on with your feet dangling, and if you can hang on till the water goes down, you’ll be saved.” Can you imagine that: a slimy peg, the boat rocking and reeling? I can imagine after about fifteen minutes Noah looks over to Mrs. Noah and says, “Honey, you pray for me that I’ll hold out faithful to the end.” But he never would have made it; I’ll guarantee you.

No. Listen, friend. It’s not a matter of you holding on to God; it’s a matter of being in the ark. It’s a matter of being in Christ. You see, that’s where your security is. You know, some people say, “Oh, you Baptists believe in ‘once saved, always saved.’ ” Yes, we do. We believe it because the Bible teaches it. “Oh,” you say, “well, I believe I’m going to be secure when I get to heaven.” You do? Well, I feel sorry for you. You see, there are a lot of people who think that their security is in heaven. They think one day they’re going to bounce into heaven, slam the door behind them, wipe their brow, and say, “Hot dog! I made it!”

Well, listen, friend. How do you know you’re going to be secure when you get up there? I read in the Bible where the angels fell from heaven—the angels fell from heaven. Listen. *Security is not in a place; security is in a person, and His name is Jesus.* Do you know that? Listen, friend. I’d rather be a saved sinner than an innocent angel. The angels fell from heaven. But listen. We are secure in the Lord Jesus Christ. We are in the ark and God shut the door. And oh, what a marvelous, wonderful lesson there is about the security that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ!

Now I mentioned that because there are some of you here today who would say, “Brother Rogers, I would really like to go up that gangplank; I would really like to receive Christ as my personal Savior; I would like to sail upon the Good Ship Grace and dine at the Captain’s table. I would like to enter into a new world, but I’m just afraid I can’t hold out. I don’t want to be a hypocrite. Well, friend, I appreciate your honesty and your sincerity. But may I tell you with all of the emphasis and emotion of my soul that if you will commit yourself to Jesus Christ, God will shut you in—God will shut you in. God will shut the door behind you. This is what we call the eternal security of the believer. You can sail with Captain Noah upon the Good Ship Grace. *“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them*

me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."
(John 10:27–29)

Conclusion

Well, let me just conclude the message today by giving a word of warning and a word of encouragement.

A. A Word of Warning

First of all, this word of warning: There are those of you today who may take this message as information and just go your way. And you'll go out to dinner today, perhaps you'll watch your favorite television program tonight, and you'll go on eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, and you'll not take this message seriously. I don't know what the day was like when the day dawned that the flood came. Perhaps it was bright and sunny, or perhaps the people were awakened from their beds with an ominous clap of thunder. And they looked out, and perhaps blue and white lightning flashed across the sky. I don't know. But I know up until that point everything went on with a daily round of life. Then it got silent, and there was an ominous feeling. The wind picked up and began to moan like a funeral dirge. And then this cloud began to boil, and the angry lightning flashed across the bosom of the sky. Drops of water started to splash upon upturned faces. And there's an indication in the Bible that it had never rained until this time, but there was a mist that watered the earth. (Genesis 2:6) And the rain started coming down in sprinkles and then torrents. And then the earth rocked and reeled, and great fissures opened up in the earth. And the earth belched out oceans of water, and the water started to rise. And people saw that ark as it started to rock and it floated. And they swam and made their way to it, and they clawed upon it, and they beat upon it, and they said, "Noah, open the ark." But Noah couldn't do it. It was out of Noah's hands.

The Bible speaks of our Lord as *"he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth."* (Revelation 3:7) There will come an end to the age of grace. There will come a time, dear friend, when it will be too late to say, "God, have mercy." I'm not trying to be sensational when I tell you to *"seek...the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near."* (Isaiah 55:6) The Bible says, *"Behold, now is the accepted time."* (2 Corinthians 6:2) The Bible says, *"To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."* (Hebrews 3:15) The Bible says, *"Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth."* (Proverbs 27:1) And, "Oh, God, give me the strength, and God, give me the mind, and God, give me the power to cause you not to put off your salvation." One day, it will be too late to say, "God, have mercy." One day, that door will be irrevocably shut for you. That's a word of warning.

B. A Word of Encouragement

Let me give you a word of encouragement to those of you who are saved. I know it's sometimes kind of tough serving the Lord. I think of how much ridicule Noah must have taken. Crazy Noah, they called him. It would be like building a supermarket in the swamp. "Here he is building a ship on dry ground, Crazy Noah." And you think of the money that he spent, and the labor that he spent, and the time that he spent, and the ridicule that he suffered. It may have been that Noah put everything that he owned into that ark, and when he drove that last nail in, that was the last thing he had on this earth. But I want to tell you, dear friend, when Noah stepped out of that ark, he owned the world—the world. He owned it all. "*Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.*" (Matthew 5:5) I mean, he put everything into that ark, but he got far more out of it than he ever put into it.

And he never regretted what he did. Oh, they laughed at him. He went in a minority, but friend, he came out the majority. Did you know that? The saints are going to rule this world.

It pays to serve Jesus.

It pays every day.

It pays every step of the way.

—FRANK C. HUSTON

And, weary pilgrim, don't you worry: This world is in our God's hands. He knows what He's doing. And I want you today, precious friend, when the Lord says to you, "Come," I want you to say, "Just as I am, I come. I come." Now, you put your feet upon the gangplank of faith, and enter into the door of hope, into the ark of safety, and sail with Captain Noah upon the Good Ship Grace.

Unsinkable Saints

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: March 9, 1997

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 6:5–16

“But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.”

GENESIS 6:8

Outline

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Conclusion

Introduction

I asked our television audience to be finding Genesis chapter 6. I hope you have found it. And when you've found it, look up here. This is the story of the great flood and Noah's ark. Now, can we believe this story, or is this simply folklore? Folks, you can believe it. As a matter of fact, archaeologists tell us, as they study the history of great civilizations, every one of them has somewhere in the background a story of a great flood. Now, of course, sometimes the stories are garbled and mixed up, because we have the true account in the Bible, but they all tell us there must have been sometime somewhere in this earth a cataclysmic flood. But I don't depend upon archaeologists; I depend on the Lord Jesus Christ, who confirmed this story. The Lord Jesus told us, in Matthew chapter 24, verse 37, that "as it was in the days of Noah, it's going to be just before He comes back again." (Matthew 24:37) And I want to say to you that the days of Noah have returned to us right now.

Now, let's begin reading here at Genesis chapter 6, and I want to begin reading in verse 5. Look at it: *“And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth,*

and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.” But now here’s our verse—look at it: *“But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.”* Now, ladies and gentlemen, that’s the first time the word *grace* is used in the Bible. *“But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD. These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God. And Noah begat three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth. Make thee an ark of gopher wood.”* (Genesis 6:5–14)

And I’m going to stop reading right there, but God said, “Noah, I’m going to destroy the world because of its violence, because of its wickedness, because of its vileness. Make an ark, an ark of safety.” (Genesis 6:12–13)

Now Jesus said, “As it was in the days of Noah, it’s going to be just before I come.” (Matthew 24:37) Now, what were the days of Noah? Well, number one: They were the days of apostasy from the faith that had been delivered to the prophet Abel and to Adam. This faith was fading and receding from the earth, and people were believing ungodly philosophies. But not only was it a day of apostasy; it was a day of anarchy. Over and over in the scripture that we just read, violence filled the earth. And it was a day of wicked ideas. As a matter of fact, the Bible tells us, look in verse 5—look at it here: *“And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth,”*—now, watch this—*“and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”* (Genesis 6:5) Now the word *imagination* here does not mean “daydreams”; it means “wicked schemes.” It speaks of philosophies. There were philosophers and idea people and politicians who were trying to remake and remold society in that day. And I’m telling you, we have that today in a way that we never had before, don’t we?

You know, somebody was talking about a well-known politician, and they said, “When it comes to a press conference, how can you tell whether he’s telling a lie or not? How can you tell whether he’s lying?” “Well,” they said, “he’s really a good liar, so it’s hard to tell whether he’s lying or not. But we’ve watched him enough. If he puts his finger up here beside his nose, he’s telling the truth. If he reaches up and holds an earlobe, he’s telling the truth.” They said, “Yeah, but how do you know when he’s lying?” They said, “When his lips are moving.”

We’ve come to a day when a man’s word means absolutely nothing, whether it’s a

treaty between nations, or a marriage contract, a business contract, or a political speech. “The imagination of his heart was wicked continually before the *LORD*.” (Genesis 6:5) And it had reached such a level that God says, “I’m sorry that I made them. I’m going to have to judge the earth.” And the same sins that produced the flood in Noah’s day, those same sins have reached up to heaven today. And God is going to judge the world one more time. It was water the first time; it will be fire the next time.

But what did Jesus say that the days of Noah were like also? He said they were marrying and giving in marriage, eating and drinking. That is, they were going on with the same old round of life. And the problem in our society today is that we’re standing right on the threshold of imminent judgment, but nobody seems to care. We just yawn in the face of God. Well, in these days, in these dangerous days in which we live, we need, and thank God we have, God’s amazing grace, the grace of God. I love verse 8, where verse 8 says, “*But Noah found grace*”—Noah found grace; Noah found grace before God—“*in the eyes of the LORD*.” (Genesis 6:8)

There are three things I want to lay on your heart this morning, as we look in this chapter, about the grace of God that brings salvation—God’s marvelous, infinite, wonderful grace. You know, God wants us to be saved so much that He gives illustrations all over the Bible. Did you know that the Old Testament is one great illustration book of the wonderful, saving, amazing grace of God? And you’ll never see salvation pictured more clearly than you do in Noah’s ark. And I want you to see it. I want you to see the spiritual salvation that comes to all of us who need to flee the wrath of God that is coming on this world.

I. Grace Provides a Savior

First of all, grace provides a Savior—grace provides a Savior. Just write it down somewhere on a slip of paper: “Grace provides a Savior.” Now Noah needed to be saved, and so God told Noah, in verse 14, “Prepare an ark.” Now, folks, that ark is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. “Pastor, are you sure?” Yes, I’m sure. Simon Peter himself said, in the New Testament, that the ark was a type, a picture, of the Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 3:20–21) And so if that ark is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, if grace provides a Savior, let’s look at that ark, and let’s see what it’s like. We stopped reading in verse 14. Let’s start reading again in verse 14. God says to Noah, “*Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch.*” (Genesis 6:14)

A. The Security of the Ark

Now, think with me for just a moment about the security of this boat. God said, “Make it of gopher wood.” Gopher wood is literally cypress, and that means that it is incorruptible. It won’t rot; it won’t decay. And then God says, “*Pitch it within and*

without.” (Genesis 6:14) What is pitch? It is gooey resin; it is tar. God said, “Now, Noah, take this boat, make it of incorruptible wood, make it of cypress.” And then He said, “Get you a big brush and just paint it all on the outside with pitch, with gooey tar.” And then He said, “Noah, get on the inside and paint it from top to bottom with pitch.”

Now, here’s an interesting thing, folks. This is not the normal word for pitch. It’s a word that is translated over seventy times in the rest of the Bible “atonement”—“atonement.” It’s the same word: *kopher*. And what He says is, “Put atonement all over the outside of it. Put atonement all over the inside of it. This wood, just seal it.” Now, what was that tar for? What was that resin for? What was that for? It was to keep the water out. See how smart I am? It was to keep the water out. Well, what is the water? The water was God’s judgment. And not one drop could come through, amen? Are you listening? This ark is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is what? He is the atonement for our sin, and friend, when you are in Jesus, not one drop of judgment can get to you. That’s right. You ought to say *amen*; it’s a good place for an *amen*. All right, not one drop of judgment.

A Sunday School teacher was asking the class, “Is there anything that God cannot do?” And a little girl said, “Yes, Teacher, there’s one thing God cannot do.” The teacher said, “There is? What is that?” She said, “God cannot see my sin through the blood of Jesus Christ.” Yes, not one drop—not one drop—of judgment can come through.

B. The Sufficiency of the Ark

So think, first of all, about the security of the ship. And then, secondly, I want you to think about the sufficiency of the ship. Continue to read in verses 14 and 15. He says, in verse 14, “Make rooms in it”—“make rooms in it.” And then, in verse 15, “*And this is the fashion which thou shalt make of it: The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits.*” (Genesis 6:14–15) Friend, there are three million cubic feet of space in the ark. And this ship was sufficient for all that would come aboard. He said, “Make rooms in the ark.” Now, come up close. I want to tell you something else. Not only is this ship secure, but this ship is sufficient. And I’m going to tell you today that God sent me here to tell you there’s room on that ark for you. He’s made a room for you. There is room at the cross for you. Thank God for the sufficiency of this boat.

C. The Shape of the Ark

Then the next thing I want you to notice is the shape of it. Look again, if you will, in verse 15. (Genesis 6:15) He speaks of the length; He speaks of the width; He speaks of the depth. But notice He doesn’t say that it has a prow; He doesn’t say that it has a stern. As a matter of fact, it’s built like an ancient coffin. Very interesting. The ancients used to build their coffins out of cypress wood, because cypress wood would not decay.

And they tell us now, archaeologists tell us, these are the dimensions of a coffin. Why? Because we're buried with Christ when we come into His death. And when Noah came into that ark that pictures the Lord Jesus, "*we are buried with him by baptism.*" (Romans 6:4)

And so that ark—the very shape of it—it didn't have a prow; it didn't have a stern. Do you know why? It didn't have a helm. There was no way that it could be guided. There was no helm, no human hand upon it. Look, if you will, in verse 16: "*A window shalt thou make in the ark, and in a cubit shalt thou finish it above; and the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof; with lower, second, and third stories shalt thou make it.*" (Genesis 6:16)

Now here's the ark—here's the ark—it's like a great coffin. It doesn't have a prow. It doesn't have a stern. It doesn't have a helm, because it's under control of Almighty God. It is keeping the judgment waters out. And God says, "Put a door in the side." And God says, "Noah, I'll take care of the door. Put a window in the ceiling. You take care of the window." What's all this about? Well, that door is the door that God sealed. And when God sealed it, nobody could open it. But the window Noah could open, and he could look up.

You see, what are we? We are in Christ, sealed by the Holy Spirit of God, and it is in Jesus that we know God the Father. Is that not true? When we come into Him, we are closed in, to look up. You know God through Christ! And when God shut the door and opened the window, He said, "From now on, Noah, you're to be heavenly minded"—"you're to be heavenly minded." The way that we look into heaven is through Jesus Christ, the ark of safety.

D. The Sustenance of the Ark

And then look, if you will now, in verses 17 through 21. I'll just fast-forward down to verse 21: "*And take thou unto thee of all food that is eaten, and thou shalt gather it to thee; and it shall be for food for thee, and for them.*" (Genesis 6:21) Think not only about the security of the ark, and the sufficiency of the ark, and the shape of the ark, but think of the sustenance of the ark. He says, "I'm going to feed you in here, Noah. You come in to me, and I'm going to take care of all of your needs."

When you come to Jesus, not only do you have security, but you have sufficiency. You have shelter and substance in the Lord Jesus. And I'm here to tell you—you listen to Adrian this morning—I'm here to tell you, I've been on this road for a long time, and I am glad to testify that not only does Jesus save; Jesus satisfies. Isn't that true? I mean, those of you who know the Lord Jesus, doesn't the Captain set a good table? Does not the Captain set a good table? And He says, "You just take aboard this ark everything that you will need to sustain life."

E. **The Schedule of the Ark**

Now, think not only of the sustenance of this wonderful Good Ship Grace, but also think of the schedule of it. Notice in chapter 8—just go over to chapter 8 and verse 4: *“And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat.”* (Genesis 8:4) Now, why is that in the Word of God? You know, you might just read that and just blow past it, but it speaks of when the ark came to rest, when the ark arrived at its destination place after having been steered and guided by God through that flood.

Now the first month in the Jewish civil calendar is October. The seventh month is April. Now if you start in October and count to the seventh month, as the Bible said, the ark rested on the seventh month—that’s the month of April. Now the seventeenth day of the month, that’s when it says it rested: on the seventeenth day of the month. Do you know what day April 17 is? Folks, that’s three days after Passover; that’s the day that Jesus came out of the grave. That’s when the ark rested on Mount Ararat: three days after Passover. Jesus rested and stood as that ark stood upon Mount Ararat. Jesus stood in resurrection after having taken all of the floodwaters of God’s wrath for me and for you upon that cross. Isn’t the Bible wonderful? Isn’t the Bible a wonderful book? Another place for an *amen*. Isn’t the Bible wonderful?

Okay now, listen, folks. Thank God for this book; thank God for this ark. You see, thank God for God’s amazing grace! Verse 8 says, *“But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.”* (Genesis 6:8) And what does grace do? Grace provides a Savior. Grace provides a Savior. Friend, there’s an ark of safety for you today, and His name is Jesus—His name is Jesus. Say it: “Jesus.” Say it again: “Jesus.” He’s the ark of safety. He is the ark of safety. Grace provides a Savior.

II. **Grace Provides Salvation**

The second thing I want you to see today: Not only does grace provide a Savior, but if grace provides a Savior, then grace provides salvation. That follows, doesn’t it? Why do we have a Savior? So we can be saved! Now, how do you get on board the ark? How are you saved? Well, I’m going to show you something in this passage that will remind you of the great passage on salvation that’s found in Ephesians 2, verses 8 through 10. Now I think most of us know Ephesians 2:8–10. Now here’s what it says: *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are”—what?—“his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”* (Ephesians 2:8–10)

Now, folks, those are great verses. If you will keep those verses in your mind—and there are three prepositions in those verses—and if you’ll keep those three prepositions

in your mind, you'll never get mixed up. You'll never get confused about how to be saved, and the relationship of faith and works, and see how God's grace is so wonderful, so amazing, and so magnificent. What are those three prepositions? "*For by grace*": The first preposition is *by*. "*For by grace are ye saved through faith*": The second preposition is *through*. *By grace, through faith*. Now in verses 8, 9, and 10: "*Unto good works*"—"unto good works." All right now, here it is. Now, watch it: *by grace, through faith, unto good works. By, through, unto—by, through, unto. By grace, through faith, unto good works.* Have you got that? Can you remember that? Ephesians 2:8, 9, and 10. All right, by grace, through faith, unto good works. Say, "By grace." Say, "Through faith." Say, "Unto good works." Say, "I understand it." Good. (Ephesians 2:8–10)

A. We Are Saved by Grace

All right now, listen—listen. This is God's Word. This is how you're saved. Now, remember that God showed grace to Noah. So how was Noah saved? By grace. I mean, he was saved by grace. This ark shows us that salvation is by grace.

Now, look, if you're in chapter 6 and verse 8, look at it again—Genesis chapter 6 and verse 8: "*But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.*" (Genesis 6:8) Look, if you will, in verse 18: "*But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee.*" (Genesis 6:18) Now I love this, and if you want to put a scripture by this, just put Romans chapter 3, verse 24, by this, where Romans 3, verse 24, says that we are "*justified freely by his grace.*" (Romans 3:24) We're "*justified freely by his grace.*" The only way that anybody has ever been saved in the history of the world is by grace. Do you agree with that? I hope you will. God only has one plan of salvation from beginning to end, and that is grace. What is grace? That means that God just saves us apart from any works of our own, by any effort, by any good deeds. You're not saved by keeping the Ten Commandments, you're not saved by giving your money, you're not saved by being a good boy or girl, you're not saved by the sweat of your brow, but by the grace of Almighty God. Grace—G-R-A-C-E—simply means "God's Riches At Christ's Expense." It's by grace, folks, that you're saved: by grace, by grace.

B. We Are Saved Through Faith

But now wait a minute: by grace, through faith. You have got to get on board the Good Ship Grace. If you don't get on board, you're going down. You will not be an unsinkable saint. Now in chapter 7 and verse 1: "*And the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and thy house into the ark.*" (Genesis 7:1) Noah had to take that step of faith. Noah had to come into the ark. And that one step of faith is all it took to put Noah in the ark. God said to Noah, God said to Noah's family, God said to his sons and his daughters-in-law, to his wife, "Come into the ark." And Noah said, "Just as I am, I come. I come." That's what we

sing in our invitation:

*Just as I am, without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me.
O Lamb of God, I come to thee, I come.*

—CHARLOTTE ELLIOTT

Now when he came, he came by faith. Just put your bookmark there and turn to Hebrews. Turn, if you will for a moment, to the book of Hebrews chapter 11, and look at verse 7. If you don't think that God put the plan of salvation in Noah's ark, you'd better read verse 7. Look at it now—Hebrews 11, verse 7: *“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith”* (Hebrews 11:7)—*“which is by faith.”* *“Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.”* (Genesis 6:8) And, how did Noah respond to that grace? It is by grace, through faith. Have you put your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? You need to do so.

C. We Are Saved unto Good Works

Now, go back to our story again in Genesis, the early chapters, and notice we said it was what? What was the first preposition? *By*. Don't forget on me now. What's the second preposition? *Through*. What's the third one? *Unto*. Unto what? Was Noah saved by good works? No! He was saved to do good works. Now, look, if you will, in chapter 9 of Genesis, and look, if you will, in verse 1: *“And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.”* (Genesis 9:1)

Now, you see, we're not saved by good works; we're saved to do good works. Good works are the fruit of salvation, not the root of salvation. He says to Noah, “Now, Noah, I've brought you through this flood. Be fruitful and multiply.” We're not saved by faith and works; we're saved by faith that works. “Be fruitful now, and multiply.” (Genesis 9:1) The good works that we do are not in order to be saved; they're simply because we have been saved.

And so what have we said about unsinkable saints? We've said that grace provides a Savior, and grace provides salvation, right? Right. Noah was saved by grace, through faith, unto good works. That ark was a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. Grace Provides Security

Now here's the third and final thing I want you to see: Not only does grace provide a Savior, and not only does grace provide salvation, but folks, grace provides security—grace provides security. Do you think that Noah was safe in that ark? Well, you don't even have to think about it. You know that he was safe in that ark. Remember, I just read to you in Genesis chapter 7 and verse 1 where God said to Noah, “Noah, come

thou into the ark.” (Genesis 7:1) Now He didn’t say, “Noah, go into the ark.” He said, “Come into the ark.” Now if I stand outside a room and I say to you, “Go into that room,” that means that I’m out here. You’d go in there where I’m not. But if I stand in a room and I say, “Come into the room,” that means “Come in where I am,” right? He didn’t say, “Go into the ark.” He said, “Come into the ark.”

What does that mean? God was in the ark—God was in the ark. God is in Christ. Christ is the ark of safety. You want me to tell you when I’m going down? I’m going down if Jesus goes down. You want me to tell you when I’m going to lose my relationship with God the Father? I’m going to lose my relationship with God the Father when Jesus ever loses His. He can’t lose His.

How safe are you? When you’re in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are as safe as you can possibly be, because you are in Christ. Look in chapter 7 and verse 16: “And they went in”—“And they went in.” (Genesis 7:16) They went in. They’re in Christ. Security is in Christ. Now, folks, the Bible tells us clearly and plainly—and I love it—in 2 Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 17—here’s what it says—listen to it: “*If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature*”—“*If any man be in Christ.*” (2 Corinthians 5:17) You know, when God put Noah in the ark, the Bible says that God shut the door. You know what the Bible says about those of us who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? “*After that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.*” (Ephesians 1:13) Not only did God shut the water out; God shut Noah in. You say, “What if I lose my salvation?” How could Noah have lost his salvation? God shut the door. Noah may have fallen down several times inside that ark, but he couldn’t fall out of it.

Are you listening to me? There are a lot of folks who get the idea that, boy, you know, one of these days I’m going to be secure; I’m going to be secure when I get to heaven. I’m going to get to heaven, slam the door behind my back, wipe the sweat off my brow, and say, “Oh, boy, I made it! Now I’m secure.” Now, wait a minute. If you don’t believe in security down here, what makes you think you’re going to have security up there? I read in the Bible where angels fell from heaven. *Security is not in a place; security is in a person, and His name is Jesus—His name is Jesus.* They were in the ark. And I submit to you that Noah was as safe as that ark was safe because Noah was in the ark. It had atonement on the outside, it had atonement on the inside, it had sufficiency on the inside, and God shut the door!

Now, folks, I want to tell you something: Not only are we saved by grace, but we’re kept by grace. I mean grace provides a Savior, grace provides a salvation, and grace provides a security. It’s amazing grace.

You know the kind of thing some folks believe in, the kind of salvation some folks believe in? Can you imagine the story this way? If God said to Noah, “Now, Noah, there’s going to be a rough flood coming here. You’ve got this ship built, so I want you

to take some broomsticks and make some pegs on the side of the ark, and one peg for you to hold on to, and one peg for Mrs. Noah to hold on to, and one peg for Ham, and one for Shem, and one for Japheth, and one for their wives. And when it starts to rain, Noah, get a stepladder; get up there and get a hold of those pegs, and hold on with all your might, because it's going to be a terrible flood. And just hold on. And, Noah, if you can just hold on until all the floodwaters go down, Noah, you'll be safe."

You think that's much salvation? You can see Noah holding that slimy peg and saying to his wife, "Sweetheart, pray for me that I'll hold out faithful to the end." That's the salvation a lot of folks think they have. They think that they are kept by holding on to Him. Friend, we are kept because He holds us.

Jesus said, *"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one."* (John 10:27–30) Why have I been kept all of these years? Because I've been a good boy? No. I've got a great Savior. God's amazing grace!

"Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD," (Genesis 6:8) and grace provides a Savior. That ship was a picture of Jesus, and grace provides salvation. The Bible says that Noah was justified by faith when he entered the Good Ship Grace, and grace provides security. You see, if you're saved by works, you have to be kept by works; but if you're saved by grace, you're kept by the grace of God.

Now, folks, I want to tell you something. God destroyed the world the first time by water. How's God going to destroy the world the second time? Would you take your Bibles and turn to the New Testament, and look with me, if you will, in 2 Peter chapter 3—2 Peter chapter 3—and begin reading in verse 3. Peter's talking about the end days, and he says, *"Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts..."*—and every time you find a person that scoffs at God's Word, you're going to find a person who's walking after his own lusts. *You find a man who mocks God's Word; I'll show you a man with the devil's initials carved on his heart.* You show me a woman who scoffs at God's Word; I'll show you a woman covered with the slimy fingerprints of sin—*"scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation."* "Ho hum, same old thing." Verse 5: *"For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished."* That's the Old Testament story. Now, listen to this: *"But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men."* (2 Peter

3:3–7) Water, the first time; fire, the second.

You say, “Well, Pastor, it’s been a long time.” Well, listen to what Peter said: *“But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”* (2 Peter 3:8) You say, “Well, it’s been two thousand years since Jesus went away.” That’s right. We’re about to enter our third millennium. It’s only been two days in the eyes of God—only two days. A thousand years is a day.

Now, listen to me: *“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”* (2 Peter 3:9) Why has this world not yet suffered a baptism of fire and judgment? Because God’s waiting for somebody in this building to be saved. God wants you saved. The Lord doesn’t want you to perish.

Did you know why Methuselah lived to be 969 years old? Because God said, “When Methuselah dies, the flood will come.” I can show you from the Word of God that the flood came exactly the day that Methuselah died. And the reason that Methuselah died old was not that he had good genes, but that God had great mercy. God kept letting him live—God kept letting him live—because God did not want anybody to die and perish in that flood. So God kept giving one more opportunity and one more chance.

“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise,”—verse 9—*“as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”* (2 Peter 3:9) But now, notice verse 10: *“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night...”*—you ever have a thief call you up and say, “I’m coming tonight?” You say, “Well, I don’t think He’s coming today.” Well, that’s a good sign that He might, because Jesus said, “In such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh”—*“the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat”*—when Peter wrote this, people didn’t know anything about nuclear fission. They said, “That’s ridiculous: dirt burning, the elements burning, air burning.” Not ridiculous today—*“the elements shall melt with fervent heat,”*—the word *fervent* literally means “fever heat; internal heat; nuclear combustion”—*“the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.”* (2 Peter 3:10)

Now here’s the question for all of us today. Listen to it: *“Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?”* (2 Peter 3:11–12)

Conclusion

What's all of this saying? Listen, folks. Listen to me. God wants you saved today. And God says, "Don't yawn in the face of God and say, 'Well, it's been two thousand years; the judgment is not coming.'" As sure as I'm standing here, the judgment is coming. The earth is going to melt with fever heat, and you'd better be in the ark of safety, whose name is the Lord Jesus Christ. And you'd better know the grace of Almighty God—God's amazing, wonderful grace.

I can imagine a little boy back in Noah's time coming home to his dad and saying, "Daddy, listen. You know where I've been? I've been over there to Mr. Noah's place, and Daddy, Mr. Noah is building a boat. You won't believe how big that thing is. And, Dad, Mr. Noah has been preaching. Every now and then, he'll put the hammer down, and he'll turn around and preach to those people who are watching. And Mr. Noah says that he has it from God that God is sick and tired of the way that people are living, and God's going to judge this world, and God's going to send a flood. And, Daddy, Mr. Noah says that everybody's got to get on board that ship, because if they don't get on board that ship, they are going to drown."

"Ha, ha," this father, he begins to laugh, "ha, ha, ha." And the little boy has a tear in the corner of his eye, and the daddy sees it. "Oh," he says, "I'm sorry, Son. I wasn't laughing at you, Son. If I was laughing at anything, I was laughing at myself. You see, Son, let me tell you something. Noah has been building that boat for a long time. When I was a little boy, I went out to see Noah building that boat. Son, he told me the same story. It scared the wits out of me. He told me that same old story about a flood, when I was your age, Son. That's why I was laughing. I was really laughing at me. And, Son, here's the funny part. I went home and I told my daddy, just like you told me. You know what my dad said? My dad said, when he was a little boy—ha, ha—he went out there, and that crazy old man told him the same story. When your granddaddy was a little boy! Son, don't let that old religious fanatic scare you. Go in the house, Son, and eat your supper.

"As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be." (Matthew 24:37) *"There shall come in the last days scoffers...saying, Where is the promise of his coming?"* (2 Peter 3:3–4) You say, "Well, I don't want to give my heart to Jesus; I want to save my life. You're the one that's going to lose it. I believe, when Noah put that last nail in the ark, it was probably the last thing he ever had. He went into the ark a pauper, but when he came out of the ark, he owned the whole world. *"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."* (Matthew 5:5)

Noah's Ark

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: March 26, 2000

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 6:12–22

“And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth. Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch.”

GENESIS 6:13–14

Outline

Introduction

- I. Noah's Ark Pictures Our Savior
 - A. The Security of the Ship
 - B. The Sufficiency of the Ship
 - C. The Shape of the Ship
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 - E. The Sustenance of the Ship
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- II. Noah's Ark Pictures Our Salvation
 - A. Noah Was Saved by Grace
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- III. Noah's Ark Pictures Our Security

Conclusion

Introduction

Well, this morning we talked about the days of Noah, and we were in Genesis chapter 6. And if you'll go right back there tonight to Genesis chapter 6, we're going to be talking not so much about the days of Noah, but Noah's ark, which was a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, don't think for any moment that the story of Noah's ark is a fable or a legend, like Paul Bunyan and his great blue ox. It is a true story. As a matter of fact, if you are a student of history, you will find out that all of the great civilizations have a flood story. Now the one in the Bible, obviously, given by divine inspiration, is the true story and the accurate record. But the fact that all civilizations have a flood story tells us that this roots back to fact. But we don't need what any other civilization has to say if we have the

Bible. May I say, concerning the flood, that the great proof that it happened is that Jesus believed it. In the scripture that I gave you this morning from the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus said, “As it was in the days of Noah...” (Matthew 24:37) And Jesus spoke of the flood. Now what Jesus has to say means more to me than what any theological professor or professor of history, archeologist, paleontologist, or geologist would have to say. I stand with Jesus. And Jesus believed there was a literal flood.

Now we talked this morning about the days of Noah. And just to recapitulate, let me tell you the three marks of the days of Noah. They were days of apostasy. The faith had disappeared from the earth. They were days of anarchy. There was violence upon the face of the earth. And they were days of apathy. In spite of the apostasy and anarchy, Jesus said, *“They were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage...and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away.”* (Matthew 24:38–39) That is, they were going on and on the daily round of life, discussing the events of life, the social affairs of life. And then the flood came suddenly and cataclysmically.

And I don’t want you to have that apathy tonight. So many times when we read these stories, we just kind of nod our heads with a nonchalant assent and yawn in the face of God and go our way.

I. Noah’s Ark Pictures Our Savior

Noah’s ark is a picture of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Peter tells us that. And we’ll get to the passage in Peter later on, but let me show you how the ark is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. Chapter 6, beginning in verse 12: *“And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.”* Now watch this: *“Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch. And this is the fashion which thou shalt make it of: The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits. A window shalt thou make to the ark, and in a cubit shalt thou finish it above; and the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof; with lower, second, and third stories shalt thou make it.”* (Genesis 6:12–16)

Now here I want you to see something of a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ and how God has provided in Christ a Savior for all of us. God wants us to be saved so much that He gives many, many illustrations in the Bible.

A. The Security of the Ship

First of all, think of this ship and its security. It was made of gopher wood. Now most of us don’t speak of gopher wood today. What if I said cypress? It’s the same wood. It’s made of cypress, which, as you know, is almost indestructible; or that is, it is

incorruptible. And Jesus was human, and the wood of this ship speaks of the humanity of Jesus. Isaiah says He'll be like a shoot out of a dry ground. (Isaiah 53:2) A tree represents a righteous man. And God said, concerning a righteous man, "*He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water.*" (Psalms 1:3) And Jesus, God's righteous tree, was cut down in His youth.

And this passage of Scripture says that they were to put pitch on the ark. Look in verse 14—it's made of wood: "*And [thou] shalt pitch it within and without with pitch.*" (Genesis 6:14) Now what is pitch? Well, pitch is a gummy tar, a rosin, if you will, made out of an oily substance that was very much like goo and glue put together. And this pitch would be smeared all on the outside of the ark, and then it would be smeared all on the inside of the ark, because this ark made of gopher wood has to float.

Now the interesting thing about this word *pitch*, it's the Hebrew word *kopher*. It is translated in the Bible more than seventy times "atonement"—the same word. And *atonement* and *pitch* are the same word. It all depends on how you use it.

Over in the book of Leviticus chapter 17, verse 11, when the Bible speaks of the blood, it says it will be "*atonement for your souls.*" (Leviticus 17:11) You could read it "pitch for your souls." And so, if you look at this ark, which pictures the Lord Jesus Christ, made out of this cypress wood, on the outside is atonement, and on the inside is atonement.

What does the water represent? The water represents the judgment of God, the wrath of God. What does that atonement do? It keeps every drop of wrath and judgment out and keeps God's people safe within. It covers those who are on the inside from the wrath of God. Thank God for the blood atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. God's judgment will not penetrate the atonement.

B. The Sufficiency of the Ship

And notice not only the security of this ship, but notice the sufficiency of it. It is an incredibly large boat. Verses 14 and 15 tell us of the size. (Genesis 6:14–15) I told you this morning it is considerably longer than a football field: 450 feet long, three million cubic feet. And there was sufficient room for all who were to come aboard this ship. And I want to tell you tonight, if you're not saved, there is room at the cross for you.

C. The Shape of the Ship

But I'm thinking of the security of the ship. I'm thinking of the sufficiency of the ship. I want you to think of the shape of the ship. I want you to look, if you will, in verse 15 and see how God gave a shape for this ship: "*And this is the fashion which thou shalt make it of: The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits.*" (Genesis 6:15) That is, it's not pointed. It's square at both ends. Actually, it's the shape of a coffin. The ancient people used to make their coffins

out of cypress wood, using the same shape as this ship. And what God is saying is this, that Jesus is for us a coffin. We are buried with Christ. We die with Christ that we might live with Christ.

This ship had no prow and it had no helm. It was not pointed at one end and square at the other. Because it had no course of its own, it was guided by no human hand. There's no wheel where Noah could steer the ship. Noah was committed to that ship just as I am committed to Jesus when I die to myself and am hid with God in Christ.

D. The Structure of the Ship

Now, notice not only the shape of the ship, but notice the structure of it. Look again in verse 16, if you will. It's going to have a window: *"A window shalt thou make to the ark, and in a cubit shalt thou finish it above; and the door of the ark thou shalt set in the side thereof; with lower, second, and third stories shalt thou make it."* (Genesis 6:16) Now Noah was in control of the window, but God was in control of the door. Noah could go to the third story, look out the window, and look up into heaven. But Noah could not and should not open the door until the flood was over. And so Noah was closed in, in order that he might look up.

Well, what does this tell us? It tells us simply that we know God through Christ. The way that I look into the face of God is from my position in the Lord Jesus Christ. When God shut the door and locked the door and said, "Noah, you can open the window," God is saying to Noah, "Noah, you need to be heavenly-minded." All of this ark is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ.

E. The Sustenance of the Ship

And then think not only of the structure of the ship but the sustenance of the ship. The captain set a good table. Look, if you will, in verse 17. God says, *"And...I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die. But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee. And of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort shalt thou bring into the ark, to keep them alive with thee; they shall be male and female. Of fowls after their kind, and of cattle after their kind, and of every creeping thing of the earth after its kind, two of every sort shall come unto thee, to keep them alive. And take thou unto thee of all food that is eaten, and thou shalt gather it to thee; and it shall be for food for thee, and for them. Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he."* (Genesis 6:17–22)

What God is saying is, "Noah, you're going to be on this ship, but you're not going to starve. You just load it down." It's like a great big cruise ship, and God is loading it down with good things that would satisfy. And I stand here tonight to testify that I am satisfied

in Jesus.

F. **The Schedule of the Ship**

But think not only of the security of this ship, and think not only of the sufficiency of it, and think not only of the shape of it, think not only of the structure of it, think not only of the sustenance of it, but think with me a little bit about the schedule of this ship. Go to chapter 8 now, and begin in verse 4 and look with me: *“And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat. And the waters decreased continually until the tenth month: in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, were the tops of the mountains seen.”* (Genesis 8:4–5) Now, let me tell you what this is all about. This ship was on a schedule, and it arrived right on time.

The first month of the Jewish calendar is October—the Jewish civil calendar. The seventh is the month of April. The seventeenth day of April is three days after the Passover. Now, think with me. When did Jesus rise from the dead? Three days after the Passover. Now it’s an incredible thing, but you have here a wonderful picture of the Lord Jesus who passes through the water of judgment and stands in resurrection upon the earth the same day of the month that the ark rested on Mount Ararat. Do you think that happened just by chance? Not I. And so this ark is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ.

II. **Noah’s Ark Pictures Our Salvation**

But not only do we see Jesus pictured by the ark; we see salvation that is so clearly pictured by the ark, because what good is the ark if no one gets on it, and if they’re not saved by it? Now if you were to look for the classic passage on salvation, it would have to be Ephesians 2:8 and 9, is that not true? Well, let’s add 10 to it: *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”* (Ephesians 2:8–10)

If you were in church about three weeks ago, I spoke to you about salvation, and I said there are three prepositions. If you’ll keep them in your mind, you will stay orthodox concerning the faith and concerning salvation. Those three prepositions are these: *by*, *through*, and *unto*. *“For by grace...through faith...unto good works.”* Remember that? Anybody here remember that? Let me see your hand. Wonderful! Boy, that’s incredible! We are saved *by* grace: *“For by grace are ye saved through faith... For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.”* (Ephesians 2:8–10) Now I want you to see how that works out here in this story.

A. Noah Was Saved by Grace

First of all, how was Noah saved? Well, go back and look, if you will, in chapter 6 and verse 8. And I love the story because it so points out what I have to say. Look in verse 8—chapter 6, verse 8: *“But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.”* (Genesis 6:8) Did you know that’s the first time the word *grace* is ever used in the Bible? We sang tonight “Amazing Grace.” *“Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.”* (Genesis 6:8)

Now, what is grace? Grace is what makes God love us when there is no loveliness about us. As a matter of fact, grace is what makes God love us when we were enemies and rebels to God. Romans 3, verse 22: *“Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference.”* (Romans 3:22) It just comes when we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. And God counts us righteous. And you don’t add works to it. If you try to add works to it, if you think baptism or giving money or witnessing or Bible study or prayer or anything else saves you, or helps save you, you have destroyed the concept of grace. Romans 11:6: *“And if by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.”* (Romans 11:6)

B. Noah Was Saved Through Faith

So how was Noah saved? By grace. And then what? Through faith. Now in Genesis chapter 7 and verse 1—look at it: “And the Lord said to Noah, ‘Go into the ark, you and your whole family, because I have found you righteous in this generation.’” Actually, let me read it to you correctly: *“And the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation.”* (Genesis 7:1)

Now the way was prepared, but Noah had to come. How did Noah get on the ark? He stepped on by faith. And one step is all it took. God said to Noah, “Noah, come.” And Noah said, “Just as I am, I come. I come.” You say, “Pastor, are you sure it was by faith?” Yes. The Bible tells us, in Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 7, *“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.”* (Hebrews 11:7)

Now, are you getting the picture? How was Noah saved? He found grace, and then he put his faith in God’s grace. The Bible makes it very clear. He *“became heir of the righteousness which is by faith”*—Hebrews 11 and verse 7. (Hebrews 11:7)

C. Noah Was Saved unto Good Works

But not only was he saved by grace through faith, but he was also saved unto good works. Turn over to chapter 9 and look with me in verse 1—Genesis chapter 9: *“And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.”* (Genesis 9:1) Now Noah, after he comes through the flood, after

Noah is saved, then he begins to be fruitful and to be full of good works. Now the good works were not the root of his salvation. They were the fruit of his salvation. And so how was Noah saved? He was saved by grace, through faith, unto good works.

III. Noah's Ark Pictures Our Security

One last thing before we finish this little study tonight. We've talked about how Noah's ark pictures the Lord Jesus. And we've talked about how Noah's actions picture salvation. But now I want you to see, not only do we have a Savior, and not only do we have a salvation, but I want you to see the security that is pictured in Noah's ark. Again, go back to Genesis chapter 7 and verse 1: *"And the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark."* (Genesis 7:1) Now it's very clear that God did not say, "Noah, go into the ark." God said, "Noah, come into the ark." Now, what is the difference? Well, had God said, "Noah, go into the ark," God would have been outside the ark and sent Noah into the ark. If God had said, "Noah, come into the ark," that means that God is in the ark, and Noah is to come in where God is. And so God invited Noah into the ark. And then the Bible says, "And God shut him in," in Genesis chapter 7 and verse 16. (Genesis 7:16) Who shut the door? God shut the door.

Now the Bible says, in the book of Ephesians, that after we believe we are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. (Ephesians 1:13) Now God was in the ark, and had the ark gone down, Noah would have gone down, but God would have gone down also. God is in Christ and I am in Christ. And, friend, my security is in the Lord Jesus Christ. So many people have the idea that somehow they're saved by grace and kept by works. But, friend, if you're saved by grace, you're kept by grace.

I've often used this illustration. God did not say to Noah, "Now, Noah, put some pegs on the outside of the ark: one peg for you, and one for Mrs. Noah, and one for Shem, and one for Ham, and one for Japheth. And when it starts to rain, get a stepladder and get up there and hold on to those pegs. And if you can hold out faithful until the end, you'll be saved."

Now that would be ridiculous, but that's the kind of faith some people have. They think that they are kept by their holding on to God. It's not so. I can see Noah holding that slimy peg, saying in the midst of that storm to his wife, "Sweetheart, pray for me I'll hold out faithful to the end." Well, I will promise you he never would have made it.

God put him in the ark. God shut the door. God shut the storm out. God shut Noah in with Himself. God sealed the door. And there was atonement on the outside and atonement on the inside. And how safe was Noah? Noah was as safe as God is safe. Do you know when I will lose my salvation? I'll lose my salvation when Jesus loses His relationship with the Father, because I am in Christ.

Some people have the idea that they're going to be secure when they get to heaven.

They're going to step into heaven, slam the door behind them, and say, "Phew! Ha! I made it! I'm safe!" Well, friend, what makes you think you're going to be safe in heaven if you're not safe down here? The angels fell from heaven. Salvation is not in a place; *security is not in a place. Security is in a person, and His name is Jesus.* And if you're not safe down here, there's no reason that you should believe that you're going to be safe up there. Jesus said, in John chapter 10, verses 27 and 28, "*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.*" (John 10:27–28)

Conclusion

Thank God. Thank God for the ark of safety, which is the Lord Jesus Christ. And thank God that if you will come by faith to Him, your sins will be forgiven; you will be kept safe from the wrath of God, the flood waters of His wrath. And one day, you'll stand before Him in perfect holiness, because He will keep you forever and ever and ever.

The Coming Kingdom of Christ

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: October 22, 1995

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 10–11

“And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.”

GENESIS 11:6

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Babylonian Beast
 - A. His Arrogance
 - B. His Ability
 - C. His Ambition
- II. The Babylonian Builders
 - A. Their Disobedience
 - B. Their Depravity
 - C. Their Defiance
- III. The Babylonian Blunder
- IV. The Babylonian Burial
 - A. The Coming of the Savior
 - B. The Confusion of the Speech
 - C. The Collapse of the System

Conclusion

- A. Separation
- B. Anticipation
- C. Jubilation

Introduction

Would you take God’s Word, please, and turn to Genesis chapter 10, and in just a moment we’re going to begin reading in verse 8. And we’re going to be reading primarily from Genesis chapter 10 and chapter 11. You say, “Well, Pastor, what does that have to do with the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and the coming kingdom of Christ?” Well, stay tuned and you’ll find out, because this scripture is of great prophetic significance.

You know, *the Bible is not merely up-to-date; it’s centuries ahead of time*, and it tells us back here in the dawn of civilization what is going to transpire and what is going to take place. Now what we’re going to study today is the story of a colossal and an

amazing building project. As a matter of fact, this is Satan's civic masterpiece: a great tower that was built by these people after the flood. It was a high-rise, but it was a high-rise to hell. What it was, was a center of world religion and world government. It has great, great prophetic significance for you. *If you want to know what's going on, lay down your newspaper; pick up your Bible.*

Now, look, if you will, in verse 8: *"And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the LORD: whereof it is said,"*—here's a proverb—*"Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD. And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel."* Now, just underscore that: *"the beginning of his kingdom was Babel."* (Genesis 10:8–10)

Now, let's go to chapter 11, and I'm going to read the first nine verses of chapter 11: *"And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven"—literally, "whose top unto heaven." "May reach" is supplied by the translator—"and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of the earth."* (Genesis 11:1–9)

Now what you have here is a history and a prophecy because Genesis is the seedbed of all Bible prophecy, and these stories literally happened. But God records them in the Bible because they are a preview and a prefiguring of what is to come. And you'll see very clearly that this man Nimrod is a picture of the beast who is going to come, the Antichrist who is going to come. And this city that was built, Babel, which was really Babylon, as we will see, is the cradle and the grave of all false religion.

I preached a few Sundays ago that we don't need religion; we need Jesus Christ. Most people have too much religion and not enough Jesus. There are two great cities in the Bible: one is Jerusalem and one is Babylon. Jerusalem is the Holy City. Babylon is the hellish city. There are two great leaders in the world: Christ and Antichrist. And there is a battle between Babylon and Jerusalem, Christ and Antichrist. And, folks, we're right

in the middle of it. And we dare not be ignorant. Now I want you to see the coming kingdom of Satan, and I want you to see the coming kingdom of Christ.

I. The Babylonian Beast

First of all, I introduce you to someone that I want to call the Babylonian beast—the Babylonian beast. Go back now to chapter 10, and here’s a man named Nimrod. Look, if you will, in verse 8: “*And Cush begat Nimrod.*” (Genesis 10:8) Now these are people that actually lived back in the dawn of civilization. A man named Cush had a son, and he named his son Nimrod.

A. His Arrogance

Do you know what the name *Nimrod* literally means? It means “Let us rebel.” This man was a rebel by birth: “Let us rebel.” Now, look again, if you will, and it says here, “*He was a mighty hunter before the LORD.*” (Genesis 10:9) Do you see that in verse 9: “*a mighty hunter before the LORD*”? That doesn’t mean that God just merely saw him do it. But it means that he was in the face of God. As we would say today, “In your face.” That’s what he’s saying to God. He’s not a hunter of animals, not a hunter of deer and antelope. He’s a hunter of the souls of men, and he is a rebel against Almighty God. It speaks of arrogance.

Now, put in your margin right by that—2 Thessalonians chapter 2, verses 3 and 4—and I want you to see how there is coming another Nimrod in the last days, in the days in which I believe we are living. And the apostle Paul is speaking of the coming kingdom of Christ, and he says, concerning the coming kingdom of Christ, “*Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come...*”—that is, the Day of the Lord—“*that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first,*”—the word “*falling away*” is the word we get our word *apostasy* from; there’s coming an apostasy first—“*and that man of sin be revealed...*” (2 Thessalonians 2:3)

Now Jesus is the Man of Sorrows. The Antichrist is the man of sin—“*that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.*” (2 Thessalonians 2:3) Jesus is the Son of God, but there’s coming an apostasy. There is coming a man of sin. He is “*the son of perdition,*” which means “unmitigated wickedness.”

And now, let’s see what this man of sin is going to be. Notice in verse 4. This is 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, verse 4. He’s one “*who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God,*” (2 Thessalonians 2:4)—now, learn what the word *antichrist* means. *Anti* means “against,” and it also means “instead of.” The prefix *anti* means “against,” and it means “instead of.” The Antichrist will be against the true Christ. He will present himself instead of the true Christ. It’s very important that you understand this. The word *anti* means “against,” and it means “instead of”: “*who opposeth,*” that is, “against,” and who “*exalteth himself,*” that is, “instead of.”

Notice this: This man of sin *“who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.”* (2 Thessalonians 2:4) And so here is a rebel against the true God, way back in Genesis. He is a hunter of souls in the face of God.

B. His Ability

Now, notice not only his arrogance, but I want you to notice his abilities. You're back in Genesis chapter 10 now, and look in verse 9: *“He was a mighty hunter before the LORD:”—*underscore the word *mighty*—*“wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD.”* (Genesis 10:9) Notice back up in verse 8: *“And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one”;* (Genesis 10:8) *“mighty”* in verse 8, and *“mighty”* twice in verse 9. He is called *“mighty,” “mighty,” “mighty.”* Now our Lord is holy, holy, holy. But this man is called *“mighty.”* That is, he is not an ordinary man. Three times it is mentioned by divine inspiration that this rebel in the face of God, this Nimrod, this founder of Babel—the cradle of all false religion—is called *“mighty,” “mighty,” “mighty.”*

Now with that in mind, again, 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, verse 9, where the man of sin, the lawless one, the son of perdition, is mentioned, notice how he is described; notice his might. This is 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 and verse 9. It speaks of this man, and it says, *“Even him...”*—that is, the man of sin—*“Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders.”* (2 Thessalonians 2:9)

Get ready—get ready. There is coming to this earth such devilish deception. Jesus said, *“It will be so strong, if it were possible, Satan would deceive the very elect.”* (Matthew 24:24) Don't you think that intellect would keep you from being deceived. Don't you think that your good intentions keep you from being deceived. Only the Holy Spirit of God will help you to see clearly and straightly in these days in which we live. Satan is coming. He's going to take a man and put into that man such incredible power. He will be Satan in human flesh, as Jesus Christ was God in human flesh. Listen to that verse: *“Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders.”* (2 Thessalonians 2:9) You say, *“Well, I saw it. It must be true—it must be true.”* And you will be deceived if you do not have a spiritual anchor.

C. His Ambition

You see this man Nimrod. The first thing you see about him is his arrogance. The second thing you see about him is his ability. And here's the third thing I want you to see about him: his ambition. Look, if you will, in verse 10: *“And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel.”* (Genesis 10:10) This is the first man who ever said, *“I'm going to be king.”* *“The beginning of his kingdom”*: He didn't just want to build a city; he was not just an entrepreneur trying to build a high-rise. This was the beginning of his kingdom. He wanted to rule. Now, remember what 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 and verse 4 says of

the coming Antichrist: He *“opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.”* (2 Thessalonians 2:4)

Learn this about the devil—learn this about the devil: The devil is not against religion; he uses religion. The temptation in the Garden of Eden was not for Adam and Eve to fall down; it was to fall up. He said, “You can be like God. You’ll be like God.” (Genesis 3:5) Satan has always wanted to be like God. He always puts that into the hearts and minds of people. As a matter of fact, all of New Age religion is based upon the lie there in Genesis chapter 3: “You can be like God. You are your own god.” And here was a man Nimrod who said, “I want to be worshipped like God. I’m going to exalt myself above God.” It’s the spirit of Satan. It’s the spirit that’s in this world today that speaks of the so-called divinity in man. Learn this about Satan: Satan does not want casualties; he wants converts. Satan wants worship.

So you see this Babylonian beast—this Babylonian beast—Nimrod. *Now the evolutionists say, “We have come from the beast.” They’ve got it backward, friend. We’re headed toward the beast.* I mean, there is coming—there is lurking in the shadows of this world, a beast, the Antichrist, the man of sin, the son of perdition, who is Satan’s superman. He may be alive on Planet Earth right now.

II. The Babylonian Builders

Now, move to the second thing: Not only the Babylonian beast, but I want you to notice the Babylonian builders, these people who said, “We’re going to build this city.” Begin in verse 1 and notice some things—chapter 11, verse 1.

A. Their Disobedience

First of all, notice what I’m going to call their disobedience. *“And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land Shinar; and they dwelt there.”* (Genesis 11:1–2)

Now what they did was to say, “We’re going to centralize power.” Now God had told them to replenish the earth—if you go back to Genesis chapter 9—after the flood. Look in Genesis 9, verse 1: *“And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.”* (Genesis 9:1) God did not tell them to gather up in one place. God’s plan was not for a centralized, one-world government. But this is what they wanted to do. They were looking somehow to centralize and consolidate the governments of this world. A one-world government is what Satan is after. We’re headed toward a one-world government—a new world order, it’s being called today—and a new world order, a one-world government, will be a disaster. Why? Because that one-world government will be headed up by someone. Power corrupts. Total power totally corrupts.

All the liberals today and all of the humanists today—they all have a running romance with big government. Have you noticed that? They all believe in big government, you see? They have failed to understand that freedom is always in direct reverse proportion to the size and the power of government. The more government, the less freedom. There's coming an enforcer in this world, one of these days, that's going to turn this world into a worldwide system, the kingdom of Babylon, the kingdom of Antichrist.

Now many of today's liberals are one-worlders first; they are Americans second. Now this is not by chance. This is well thought out. Have you ever heard of the humanists? Do you know who the humanists are? Now, don't get the words *humanist* and *humanitarianism* confused. The humanists are a small cadre of highly intellectual and highly motivated persons who are steering this world toward a one-world government. And many of our national and international leaders are avowed, card-carrying humanists.

The *Humanist* magazine said back as far as 1966 this—quote: “Internationally, what do the humanists propose? Nationalism rooted, as it is, in arbitrary geographical units must be superseded by a globalism based on the oneness of man. There must be a worldwide organization to which national sovereignty could be relinquished in all international affairs.” That is, “Give up America as a sovereign nation and be a part of a world nation. Let our boys fight under the banner of the UN, no longer under the command of American commanders.” An editorial in the *Humanist* said this—quote: “If there is one principle upon which all humanists are united, it is the continued commitment to a world order based upon world law.” So what we have to do is lay down our arms; set aside our laws; let people at a conference in Beijing, China, and other places, tell us how we're going to raise our children, how we're going to have families, what we're going to do; put our troops under the control of somebody or something else; and join up with atheists, bandits, cutthroats, and murderers, and all of the rest of it, and have a global village. Now, folks, it is coming. It is coming everywhere—monetarily. It is coming organizationally. It is coming militarily. It is coming philosophically. It is coming. It roots back in the same thing that motivated old Nimrod so long ago.

B. Their Depravity

I wish I had more time to talk about that. But notice their disobedience, and notice their depravity. Look in verses 3 and 4: “*And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered upon the face of the whole earth.*” (Genesis 11:3–4) That's exactly what God said to do—be scattered, replenish the earth (Genesis 9:1)—but they said, “We're not going to do this.”

Now what you have here—listen to me, folks; listen to me, brothers and sisters—what you have here is the beginning of all organized forms of false religion and apostasy. They said, “Let us build a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven.” (Genesis 11:4) If you have the King James Version like I’m reading from, you notice the words “*may reach*” are italicized. That is, they are not in the original, only supplied there by the translator to make it read more smoothly. In this case it doesn’t make it read more smoothly. What it literally says is, “We’re going to build a tower, whose top unto heaven.” That is, the top of this tower was given to the heavens. It was a place for worship. They would go up on top of these towers to worship their false god. It was dedicated to the worship of the stars. This is the beginning of astrology.

Zodiacs have been found on top of these ancient ziggurats. That’s what these towers were called in Babylon, where they there worshipped the stars. The very name of the place, *Babel*, means “gate to God.” *El* is the Hebrew word for God. For example, *Bethel* means “the house of God.” *Israel* means “prince of God.” *Emmanuel* means “God with us.” Babel was “the gate to God.” They said, “This is the gate to God. We’re going to show people how to get to God.” Of course, we know that there’s only one gate to God, and His name is Jesus. Jesus said, “*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*” (John 14:6)

But here is New Age religion. *Learn this about New Age religion, folks. It ain’t new. It’s one of the mustiest things around. It goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden*, when Satan first came. And we have a world today that is getting ready for the coming kingdom of Antichrist, and the spirit of antichrist is already in the world.

Now this was the beginning of astrology. Are you so foolish as to pick up your newspaper and read the astrological comments concerning you, so they say? You, my friend, are practicing witchcraft when you do that. You say, “Pastor, that makes me angry.” Well, come up to me after the service and apologize, and I’ll forgive you. Now, listen to me—listen to me. I say, listen to me. Astrology is idolatry. The word *astrologos* means “astrology.” *Astra* is “a star.” *Logos* is “the word.” It’s “the word of the stars.” That’s why they call it astrology. You have substituted the word of the stars for the Word of God. Rather than getting into the Bible, you’ve gotten into New Age religion. *The purpose of the stars is to declare the glory of God, not the destiny of man.* (Psalms 19:1)

Put this in your margin: Isaiah chapter 47. God is speaking about Babylon and Babylonian religion—Isaiah 47, verses 12 to 15: “*Stand now with thine enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries...*”—now what He’s doing here, let me say this: He’s showing Babylon that all of her New Age religion will not save her. This is a challenge that God has given to Babylon that had its inception here at Babel—“*Stand now with thine enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, wherein thou hast*

laboured from thy youth;”—that is, way back to the Tower of Babel you’ve been doing this—*“if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail. Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee. Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: there shall not be a coal to warm at, nor fire to sit before it.”* (Isaiah 47:12–14)

Now, what is God saying? God is saying these things are wrong. Deuteronomy chapter 18, God knew. God knew of the abomination of the Canaanites. God knew of all this New Age garbage that was not new way back in that time. And this is what God said in Deuteronomy chapter 18, verses 9 and following: *“When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abomination of those nations.”* Now, notice God calls it a national abomination. *“There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or daughter to pass through the fire,”*—that is, they were murdering their babies. Sound familiar?—*“or that useth divination,”*—that is, they were going to fortune-tellers—*“or an observer of times,”*—that, friend, is astrology—*“or an enchanter, or a witch”*—that’s a channeler; that’s all New Age religion—*“or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits,”*—Shirley MacLaine or anyone else—*“or a wizard, or a necromancer”*—that is, contact with the dead. *“For...”*—listen in verse 12—*“For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD.”* (Deuteronomy 18:9–12) Can’t you read, my precious friend? Actually, the seedbed of all Satanic, demonic religion, all false religion, is found in Babylon. It’s the seedbed of all it.

Now Babylon, from the outside, may seem beautiful, but take your Bibles now, keep your thumb where we are in Genesis chapter 11, and turn with me to Revelation chapter 17. In case you get carried away with New Age religion and cultism, listen to Revelation chapter 17. John the apostle has a vision: *“And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters:”*—in the Bible, an impure woman is a symbol of false religion. The many waters, we’re told, speak of peoples, nations, and kingdoms—*“with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication...”*—now, how can the kings of the earth commit fornication? This is the marriage of church and state. This is a world-church and a world-state—*“the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.”* This wine has been bottled and fermented for over six thousand years. It goes all the way back to the Tower of Babel. *“So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.”* Seven is the number of perfection. Ten is the number of completeness. The heads speak of wisdom.

The horns speak of power. *“And the woman”*—she speaks of false religion—*“was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: and upon here forehead was a name written,”*—watch it—*“MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH...”*—Babylon is the mother of all false religion. We heard the Bully of Baghdad, old Saddam Hussein, talk about “the mother of all battles.” Friend, out of that area comes all filthiness of false religion—*“MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.”* (Revelation 17: 1–6)

It doesn't mean he thought she was wonderful. He says, “I just stood back, and I could not take it in.” You talk about a classic story of “Beauty and the Beast.” Here is the Babylonian mother and the Babylon monster. The Babylonian mother is false religion, the Babylonian monster is the beast, and they come together. Now outwardly, she is beautiful, but beneath her smiles is a heart that is wicked, unspeakably wicked. Her hands drip with blood, and her intoxicating wine has been brewing for six thousand years.

C. **Their Defiance**

Well, go back to Genesis chapter 11. We've talked about these people and their disobedience. We've talked about their depravity. I want you to see their defiance. Look, if you will again, in verses 3 and 4: *“And they said one to another...”*—now, folks, I want to remind you. Listen. We're not just talking about ancient history. We're talking about what is happening in our world today. This is history and prophecy at the same time—*“And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top...unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.”* (Genesis 11:3–4)

Now I want you to notice the personal pronouns. There are six times they use pronouns like *they*, *us*, and *we*. Six is the number of man. This is religion with man at the center and man in the circumference—that is, humanism and New Ageism. Rather than saying, *“Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name,”* (Matthew 6:9) they're saying, “Our brothers who are on the earth, Hallowed be our name. Let us make for us a name.” Now they are in sheer defiance against God.

I heard a lady speaking the other day on a talk program here in Memphis, and she was talking about—are you ready for this term?—the gospel of self-effort: another contradiction of terms. But she was talking about, “Well, it's fine if they're preaching the gospel of self-effort.” You see, these are the Babylonian builders who are trying to make

for themselves a name. And so what they do is they pool their ignorance, as we're going to see.

III. The Babylonian Blunder

We've talked about the Babylonian beast and the Babylonian builders. Let's talk about the Babylonian blunder. What is their blunder? Well, look again, if you will, in verse 4: *"And they said...let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name."* (Genesis 11:4) And go back to verse 3: *"And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar."* (Genesis 11:3)

Now when God builds His church, does He build it of brick or stone? He builds it of stone. Stone is not handmade. The Bible says we are built up as living stones, (1 Peter 2:5) but these people took mud with their own hands, and they fashioned brick. And then they put that brick together with slime that oozed out of the ground there in the plain of Shinar. And there they began to build this high-rise to hell, fashioned from their own wit, their own wisdom, their own ingenuity. And you notice as verse 3 begins, *"And they said one to another..."* (Genesis 11:3) They don't consult God. What they do is they pool their wickedness, and they pool their ignorance. They have dethroned God. They have enthroned their own intellect.

Now you say, "Well, that's them." Well, folks, we're still trying to do it with brick and slime, only our slime and brick today are computers. We are traveling down the information superhighway, getting the idea that somehow we are going to build our utopia. And we've substituted our own wit and wisdom for God, and we're trying to build a golden age with minds and machinery and money, and it can't be done.

Now, what were they trying to do? They said, *"Let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven."* (Genesis 11:4) What they were saying is this: "We're going to start here, and we're going to build toward heaven." Now that is completely, totally, antithetically contradictory to all that God does. What is the difference between man-made religion, New Age religion, humanism, and the true salvation that comes from God? Man tries to build from earth to heaven. True salvation reaches down from heaven to man. That's the difference. You could just sum it all up in that: whether it begins with man and builds toward heaven, or whether it begins in heaven and reaches down to man. You see, God, moved in mercy by the pitiful plight of simple man, said, "I will go down," and God became a man to lift us to heaven. And the Bible says we must be born again. (John 3:7) Literally, that says in the Greek language, we must be "born from above"—"born from above."

Now the New Agers say man needs a boost from beneath. God says man needs a birth from above. Here was the Babylonian blunder. They just took their own wit, their own wisdom, their own words. They pooled their ignorance; they pooled their

wickedness. They began to make brick and slime to build a tower. And, folks, the world is full of that today. You would be amazed at how many people are New Agers who don't even know they are New Agers. As a matter of fact, these are not just stupid people, or dumb people, in the vernacular.

Nesbitt says this: "Ninety-five percent of the readers of the *New Age Journal* are college educated with average household incomes of 47,500 dollars. New Agers represent the most affluent, well-educated, successful segment of the baby boom." Did you know that many of the Fortune 500 companies, when they bring the sales agents in, or their personnel in, or their executives in, to give them a sharpening course, do you know who they bring in to lecture? A New Ager. It's an amazing thing.

David Jeremiah reminds us of this: "Corporations spend an estimated four billion per year on New Age consultants." A California business survey of five hundred companies found that more than fifty percent had used consciousness-raising techniques. He mentioned such companies as TRW, Ford Motor Company, AT&T, IBM, and General Motors, who have all signed on New Age trainers. It's an old lie repackaged. It is human wit, human ingenuity. It is finding the god, the power, within yourself. And it engenders an independence from Almighty God. Folks, it is here. It is with us.

IV. The Babylonian Burial

Now I have talked to you about the Babylonian beast, and he pictures the Antichrist that's going to come. And he may be alive and well and in the world today. I've talked to you about the Babylonian builders, how they, in defiance against God, are trying to build a new world order. And it is coming. One day, it will be here, and this will be an amalgamation of the new world order and a one-world church. And everybody will say, "Isn't it wonderful?" I've talked to you about the Babylonian blunder, against the idea that man can lift himself by his own bootstraps, and by his brick and slime build his tower to heaven, and in that he inculcates all false religion. Now I want you to see what I'm going to call the Babylonian burial. I want you to see what's going to happen to it. You say, "Pastor, I thought you were talking about the coming kingdom of Christ." I'm getting there. I'm almost there.

I want you to notice now, beginning in chapter 11 and verse 5: "*And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.*" (Genesis 11:5–6) You know, the Bible says in the last days knowledge shall increase, (Daniel 12:4) and friend, we're seeing it. We are amazed at what is happening, what comes out of the imagination of man. And we're being told today what man can imagine, man can achieve. And for the first time we're really believing it. Well, God

says, in verse 7, *“Go to, let us go down.”* Now, who’s God talking to? This is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit in counsel together, and God says, *“Let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech.”* (Genesis 11:7)

A. The Coming of the Savior

How did this tower of blunders end in Genesis? And what does it prophesy? Or what’s going to happen in our day? Well, it climaxed, it ended, with the coming down of Almighty God to earth. The thing that we’re waiting for is the coming of the Savior. The only hope—the only hope—for this world is the coming of Jesus Christ. And when Jesus Christ, the true Christ, comes, He is coming to destroy the kingdom of Antichrist. As I’ve told you before, 777 is going to deal with 666. And you can put it down and be certain: There’s coming a time when lawlessness comes to its climax—that in heaven God is going to say, “It is time; let us go down.”

B. The Confusion of the Speech

Now not only the coming of the Savior, but the confusion of the speech. Notice again in verse 7: *“Let us go down, and there confound their language.”* (Genesis 11:7) Now these people had one language at this time. They all spoke the same language. But God always, when He judges, sends confusion into the camp of the enemy. When God’s people pray—even in this day if we will pray—we don’t have to go to war against the enemies; God goes to war against the enemies. When we pray, God sends confusion into the camp of the enemies. And so God confounds the speech.

They can’t understand one another. They are building this tower, and a man says, “Hand me a brick.” He says, “What did you say?” He says, “What did you say?” “Uh, what did you say?” He says, “What did you say?” And the boss says, “Will you two quit babbling?” And they say, “What did he say?” And nobody understands anything. The whole thing begins to get confused, and it really would be comical. And the Bible says, in Psalms chapter 2, *“He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the LORD shall have them in derision.”* (Psalms 2:4)

C. The Collapse of the System

And we’re going to see the false unity of the ecumenical movement, and the United Nations, and all of this. It’s going to come apart, and then there’s going to be the collapse of the whole system. And so the Bible says, in verses 8 and 9, *“So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city.”* (Genesis 11:8) And there they sat in the crumbled ruins, in the unfinished tower of their high-rise to hell, their tower of blunders.

Conclusion

Well, what does this mean to us? Go to Revelation chapter 18, and I've got about three minutes to share this with you—Revelation chapter 18. There are three things I want to lay on your heart:

A. Separation

The first—listen here very carefully. Those of you in the balcony, you teenagers, listen to me very carefully. The very first word is the word *separation*. Begin with me—Revelation 18, verse 1: *“And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.”* (Revelation 18:1–3) Now here's God's Word to you. Are you listening? Folks on television, are you listening to this? *“And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.”* (Revelation 18:4)

If you're practicing any kind of the occult, any kind of New Age religion, any astrology, any dabbling with witchcraft, get out, and get out quick. For God says, concerning Babylon, *“Her sins have reached unto heaven,”*—she was going to build a tower to heaven. God says, *“It's her sins that have reached to heaven”—“and God hath remembered her iniquities.”* (Revelation 18:5) So the first thing I say to you is separation. Get out. Get clean. Repent. Renounce. Get rid of all of that.

B. Anticipation

The second thing I want you to see is anticipation. Jesus Christ is coming, and He's coming soon. Look in chapter 19: *“After these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.”* (Revelation 19:1–3) What is happening is this. Friend, we need to anticipate the time. The time is coming soon when our Lord is going to step down from glory, and God is going to come down, and He's going to judge Babylon.

C. Jubilation

So there's separation, anticipation, and here's the part I love: jubilation. Look in chapter 19, verse 5: *“And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his*

servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great. And I heard as it were”—oh, I love this—“the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.” (Revelation 19:5–8)

Now if you can't understand everything I've said today—and I don't think any of us understand all of this perfectly—just understand this, folks: There's only way to God, only one gate to God, and it's not Babylon; it's Jesus. And understand this, that the devil's tower of blunders, his high-rise to hell, his gate to God, is really the door to disaster. And you need Jesus. You need to be saved. And in these days, if you don't get saved, Antichrist is going to come, and you'll buy his lies, you'll take his mark, you'll take his brand. You'll be condemned and lost forever. These are days to get right with God.

The New Age Is Not New

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: April 2, 1989

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 10–11

“And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.”

GENESIS 11:4

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Conclusion

Introduction

Take God’s Word tonight and turn with me, please, to Genesis chapter 10. The title of our message tonight is “The New Age is Not New.” In just a moment, we’re going to begin reading Genesis chapter 10, verse 8. Before we begin to read, may I tell you that I love the book of Genesis, because the book of Genesis is a seedbed. What I mean by that is in Genesis you find the seeds of all Bible doctrine and all Bible prophecy. And anything good that’s going to happen, or anything bad that’s going to happen, you find the seed there in the seedbed of Genesis. And in the book of Genesis you are going to find the nucleus, the beginning, and the genesis of something that we call today in this age the New Age movement.

Genesis chapter 10 and verse 8 says, *“And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the LORD: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD.”* (Genesis 10:8–9) That is, he was so famous that his name became a proverb in that day and in that age. They just spoke

of him that way. And notice verse 10 says, *“And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel...”* (Genesis 10:10)

And then I want you to fast-forward to Genesis chapter 11: *“And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech. So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.”* (Genesis 11:1–9)

Now, what do we mean by New Age? It’s a term that we hear very much. It’s almost becoming as popular as the term born again became after Jimmy Carter became president of the United States. Marilyn Ferguson, who is one of the leading propagandists and exponents of the New Age movement, has written a book called *The Aquarian Conspiracy*. And in that book I suppose that she, as well as anybody, tells what the New Age is, and I’m going to quote from her.

She says, “A leaderless but powerful network is working to bring about radical change in the United States.” Now she says it has no leader, but I would disagree with her. I believe that Satan himself is the leader working behind the scenes. “Broader than reform, deeper than revolution, this benign conspiracy...”—benign means “harmless,” and there I would disagree with her also, but she does say that it is a conspiracy—“this benign conspiracy for a new human agenda has triggered the most rapid cultural realignment in history.” She is probably correct when she says that. It is the most rapid cultural realignment that has ever taken place in history. “The great shuddering, irrevocable shift overtaking us... It is a new mind—the ascendance of a startling worldview.”

Well, she says it’s new. But I’m going to tell you, it is not new. The New Age is one of the moldiest things around. It’s musty. You see, here in the book of Genesis, we find a man whose name was Nimrod, and he was the founder of the New Age, as I will show you. He was a type, a prophecy, of the Antichrist.

I. The Founder of the New Age Movement

Now, let's go back and look at the scripture that I read to you in Genesis chapter 10 here, verses 8 through 10. You're going to find a man whose name is a very interesting name: Nimrod. Now today we call hunters by the name Nimrod. But the word *Nimrod* literally means "rebel"; that's the Bible meaning of the name. You know, in the Bible, in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, Bible names had a meaning. And this man's name is very significant; it means "rebel." And he stands for, typifies, and prophesies the ultimate rebel that's going to come into the world.

Now, just put your bookmark there, as I'm going to do, in this passage, and I want you to go to 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, and I want you to see how Paul describes the Antichrist that will certainly come. And I want you to see then, as we go back to Genesis, how this man Nimrod will typify this Antichrist. Now I'm reading here in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, and I begin in verse 3: "*Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first,*"—that means the apostasy is coming first—"*and [the] man of sin be revealed...*"—now the Bible calls this Antichrist the "*man of sin.*" History began with the sin of man, and it ends with the "*man of sin*"—"*[the] man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;*"—Jesus is the Son of God. The Antichrist is "*the son of perdition,*" which means "wickedness." Then he's described as one—"*who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.*" (2 Thessalonians 2:3–4)

So that tells you that the word *anti* means "instead of" and "against." "He opposes"—that is, he's anti God; he's against God—and he "*exalteth himself above all that is called God*"—so he's there instead of God. And the prefix *anti* can mean "against" or "instead of." Antichrist means both. He's against God, and he is there instead of God—"*or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.*" (2 Thessalonians 2:4)

And then the apostle Paul said, "*Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?*" (2 Thessalonians 2:5) And then he goes on, if you'll go down to verse 9, to describe this Antichrist who is going to be destroyed when Jesus comes. It says, "*Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan*"—that is, he's going to receive his power from the devil. He's going to be energized by Satan. And he's going to have the power to do miracles, because the Bible says he comes—"*with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish...*" (2 Thessalonians 2:9–10)—those who don't know the Lord Jesus Christ, they'll be deceived. He'll be able to make them think that good is bad, and bad is good. He will be able to make them think that sweet is sour; sour, sweet; up is down; and down is up. He'll make you cut your mother's throat with a smile on your face and feel

that you've done God a favor. He's coming—*“with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.”* (2 Thessalonians 2:10)

Now I could say more about that one, but I want you to see that the Bible says that there is coming such a man onto the stage of world history. And I believe right now that he may be alive, waiting in the wings, ready to appear, because I believe that the Rapture of the Church could be at any moment. Now, look back to Genesis, if you will, with me, and I want you to see how this man Nimrod is a picture of that man who is going to come.

A. His Arrogance

First of all, notice, in verses 8 and 9, his arrogance. Notice the Bible says, *“And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the LORD”*—*“He was a mighty hunter before the LORD.”* (Genesis 10:8–9) Now again, his name means “rebel.” And when it says, *“He was a mighty hunter before the LORD,”* that may also mean, “He was a mighty hunter against the LORD.” Here is one who comes in arrogance against God. Again, he typifies the Antichrist that way.

B. His Abilities

But not only by his arrogance, but I want you to notice his abilities. Notice here in this passage of Scripture, verses 8 through 10, that three times he's called *“mighty.”* Now I remind you that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God. Nothing in the Bible happens by happenstance. In verse 8, he is called *“a mighty one.”* (Genesis 10:8) In verse 9, this rebel is called *“a mighty hunter.”* (Genesis 10:9) In the last part of verse 9, again he is called *“mighty.”* He is a picture of Satan's superman, *“even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders.”* (2 Thessalonians 2:9) Three times he's called *“mighty,”* because he is, my dear friend, the imitator of the almighty and the thrice-holy God. So he's called *“mighty,” “mighty,” “mighty.”*

C. His Authority

So you see his arrogance. You see his abilities. Now I want you to see his authority. Notice again in verse 9: *“He was a mighty hunter before the LORD.”* (Genesis 10:9) “Well,” you say, “what did he hunt?” Now when we think of hunters, we think of people who hunt animals. Even the ancient rabbis, as they studied this passage of Scripture, said, “It wasn't animals that this man hunted; it was people.” It was the souls of men. He was one who learned how to track down, incarcerate, control, and subjugate men by a combination, as we're going to see, of force and falsehood. He was a mighty hunter. Everybody knew about him. They talked about him. They said, *“Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD.”* (Genesis 10:9) That would not have impressed humankind if he had just been out shooting animals in that day. But we're going to see

that he was a man who had great authority.

D. His Ambition

Notice not only his arrogance, abilities, and authority, but notice his ambition, in verse 10: *“And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel...”* (Genesis 10:10) Here was a man who wanted to rule. Here was a man who wanted to be a king. He wanted a kingdom over which to rule. So does Antichrist. Do you remember that the devil came to Jesus and showed Jesus all of the kingdoms of the world and said to Jesus, “I will give you these kingdoms if you’ll”—do what?—“bow down and worship me”? Jesus said, *“Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only.”* (Matthew 4:10; Luke 4:8) But there’s coming one who will be a worshipper of Satan and to whom the kingdoms of this world will be given over—that is, the Antichrist. He will have a kingdom, and the Bible teaches that in the last days virtually all of the world will worship the beast. And so here you see what I’m going to call the founder of the New Age movement. His name was Nimrod.

II. The Faith of the New Age Movement

Now I want you to see something else. Not only do I want you to see the founder of the New Age movement, but I want you to see what I’m going to call the faith of the New Age movement. The New Age had its beginning in Genesis 11. You’re going to find out what old Nimrod did, and you’re going to see here the seedbed of all false doctrine, all false religion, and all iniquity of whatever form it might be.

Now I’m reading here again in Genesis chapter 11: *“And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.”* (Genesis 11:1) Now so far, nothing wrong with that, but now notice: *“And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there.”* (Genesis 11:2) Right away we have problems. You say, “What are the problems?” Well, go back to Genesis 9, verse 1: *“And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.”* (Genesis 9:1) “Don’t just congregate in one spot.” But here’s what they did: They found a place in the plain of Shinar, and they settled there. (Genesis 11:2)

A. Disobedience

Now this was disobedience. What they were trying to do was to centralize power. You’re going to find out that there’s a biblical principle against the centralization of power. It’s contrary to God’s plan. Because of the evil in the hearts of men, a one-world government will always be a disaster. I’m going to show you that the New Agers are incurable one-worlders. They want the centralization of people and power. Of course, we know that there’s an old cliché that is certainly old but certainly true, that power corrupts and total power totally corrupts. But you are going to find that the New Agers

have a running romance with one-world government.

B. Depravity

And so you see here, first of all, in verses 1 and 2, their disobedience. (Genesis 11:1-2) But then I want you to see their depravity. Begin to read in verse 3 of chapter 11. Now, notice they don't go to God; they don't go to Jehovah. This comes out of their own minds. Here's a scheme that they have cooked up: "*And they said one to another,*"—that is, they put their heads together, and they said—"Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." (Genesis 11:3-4)

Now what they were trying to do is to build a civic masterpiece. They were going to build a tower. I call it the high-rise to hell. They were going to build "*a tower, whose top*"—the King James Version says—"*may reach unto heaven.*" (Genesis 11:4) They were not that stupid. That isn't what it literally says. If you'll look at your Bible, you'll see that there are some italicized letters there, if you have a King James, like I'm reading from. And look in verse 4: "*And they said, [Come], let us build us a city and a tower, whose top,*"—now, look at the next two words—"*may reach*"—those are italicized. That means they were supplied by the translators to make it read more smoothly. But what it literally says is this: "*And they said, [Come], let us build us a city and a tower, whose top...unto heaven.*" (Genesis 11:4) That is, the top of this tower was dedicated to the heavens. It was "unto heaven," just like you might sing a song "unto God." The top of this tower was dedicated to the heavens. It was dedicated to a religion. They weren't trying to build a skyscraper to glory. Oh no. But they built a tower to heaven, a symbol of unity, and the top of that tower was dedicated to the heavens.

And they called it Babel. Look again in chapter 10 and verse 10: "*And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel.*" (Genesis 10:10) Look again in chapter 11 and verse 9: "*Therefore is the name of it called Babel.*" (Genesis 11:9) Now, what does *Babel* mean? *Babel* means "the gate to God." Anything that has the ending *el*, that's the Hebrew name for God. One of the Hebrew names for God is *El*. We see it in many ways. For example, there's a Hebrew name which means "the house of God." Who knows what it is? *Bethel*: "the house of God." Or there's one that means "prince with God." What is that? *Israel*. Jacob was named *Israel*, which means "prince with God." There's one that means "God with us": *Emmanuel*. The *el* means "God." You see, now here they take the word *Babel*, and they mean "gate to God."

Now we know there's only one way to God, one gate to God, and His name is the Lord Jesus Christ. Later, the name *Babel* came to mean "confusion." And what it means, totally now, is "confusion about the way to God." And that's what happened right

here, is confusion is brought into the world about the way to God.

Now, learn this: *The devil is not against religion. The devil is into religion up to his ears. He damns far more people by false religion than he ever does by atheism.* And so what he says is, “Here, I’m going to show you the gate to God.” Here’s a tower—here’s a one-world organization dedicated to the heavens.

Now, what does that mean? What did they do up there? Well, this is the beginning of the ancient practice of astrology. This is what they did: They had the astrological charts and signs on the top of these towers in Babylon. These towers were called ziggurats—not cigarettes, but ziggurats. And on the top, they had their astrological platforms and their astrological observatories where they would study the stars and make their charts. Archaeologists have found the zodiacs on top of these ancient towers.

Now, look with me, for example. You see, where do we get the name *Babylon* from? Well, we get the name *Babylon* from Babel. And Babylon is the hellish city. You see, in all Scripture there are two great symbolic cities. One is Jerusalem, the holy city, and the other is Babylon, the hellish city. And Babel, or Babylon, is the cradle and the grave as we’re going to see—and, thank God, the grave also—of all false worship, idolatry, and apostasy.

Now, keep that in mind, and look with me in Isaiah chapter 47. Let’s go to the book of Isaiah, and I want you to see a development that came from what we’re studying right now, because all you’re seeing now is the beginning of this city and the beginning of this worship. But let’s go and look and see how it comes down and out. Isaiah chapter 47, and begin with me in verse 12. God now is bringing His judgment and His anger against Babylon, which is the outgrowth of Babel, and here’s what God says to them. And by the way, everything I’m going to read to you is encapsulated in the New Age movement. *“Stand now with thine enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, wherein thou hast laboured from thy youth;”—*that is, all the way back to Nimrod—*“if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail.”* (Isaiah 47:12)

Now what God is doing is taunting them. He’s saying, “See if your New Age movement is going to save you.” Isaiah says, *“Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee. Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: there shall not be a coal to warm at, nor fire to sit before it. Thus shall they be unto thee with whom thou hast laboured, even thy merchants, from thy youth: they shall wander every one to his quarter; none shall save thee.”* (Isaiah 47:13–15)

Now, what is God doing here? God is saying that the Babylonian religion that came out of this event in Genesis so long ago, that developed full-blown into the city-state of Babylon, is absolutely powerless against the judgment of Almighty God. Now what is

happening here is they set up their astrological platform. He talks here in this passage about the stargazers and the monthly prognosticators. I hope there's none of this congregation, or none who are listening to me by radio, who are so foolish as to dabble with astrology. Don't think that that's just some light-hearted thing. Don't think that's just some game. Do you know what God calls it? God calls it an abomination. Did you know that?

Put in your margin Deuteronomy chapter 18, verses 9 through 12. And here's what God warned when the Jews coming out of Egypt were getting ready to go into Canaan and into this area that is influenced by Babylon. He says this in Deuteronomy chapter 18, verses 9 and through 12: *"When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations."* (Deuteronomy 18:9) Now God calls it abomination. And then listen to what He says: *"There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination..."*—do you know what divination is? That's going to a fortune-teller or trying to have somebody tell your fortune by a Ouija board at a slumber party, girls, or anything else. God says, "Don't let anybody be found who does that"—*"...or an enchanter,"*—that's somebody who casts a spell—*"or a witch"*—that's somebody who practices the occult and magic. *"Or a charmer,"*—that's somebody who puts you into a trance—*"or a consulter with [mediums],"*—that's channeling—*"or a wizard,"*—a male witch—*"or a necromancer"*—that's somebody who tries to contact the dead: séances. *"For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD..."*—did you see that?—*"all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee."* (Deuteronomy 18:10–12) Actually, what was practiced in Babel so long ago is the seedbed of all occult, demonic, and apostate religion.

But, dear friend, what we're seeing here in these last days is a revival of an old thing that is now called the New Age. Now God prophesies that there's going to be a revival of what happened in Babel so long ago. Remember how I told you that Babel is both the cradle and the grave of the occult? Go with me to Revelation chapter 17 here for just for a moment now. Let's get into the New Testament, and look with me at the story of "Beauty and the Beast." Here's a Babylonian beauty and a Babylonian beast, in Revelation chapter 17. John the apostle is looking out into the future. John the apostle is looking into the days that are yet to come, and he says, *"And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters."* (Revelation 17:1) Now the Church, the true Church, is called what? A bride. Now the devil's imitation, therefore, is called a harlot. Just as you have the holy city, Jerusalem, and the hellish city, Babylon; just as you have the true Christ, Jesus, and the

Antichrist, the beast; you have to have the true bride, the Church, and then you have the false bride, the great harlot. God said, “John, I’m going to show something. Come here, and I will show you the judgment of the great harlot that sitteth upon many waters.” (Revelation 17:1)

Now the many waters, as we see in other places in the book of the Revelation, represent people and nations and tongues and languages. Revelation 17, verses 2 through 4: *“With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication.”* (Revelation 17:2–4)—now remember, God said that “all that do this are an abomination to me.” (Deuteronomy 18:12) And by the way, dear friend, false religion is called spiritual fornication—*“and upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON...”*—now what you saw in the book of Genesis, you see in full fruition in the book of the Revelation—*“and upon her forehead was a name written,”*—God says, “I’ll tell you who this Babylonian beauty is”—*“MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great [wonder].”* (Revelation 17:5–6) All right, so what you have here is a woman and a beast. Notice in verse 7: *“And the angel said unto me, [Why dost thou wonder?] I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carried her, which had the seven heads and the ten horns.”* (Revelation 17:7)

So here’s a woman riding upon a beast, a Babylonian mother and a Babylonian monster. Now she may be a beauty outwardly, but beneath her smiles, her heart is as black as pitch, and her hands drip red with blood, because she is the mother of all false religion. And she has a cup in her hand, and she has been brewing an intoxicating wine for over six thousand years. It all began right back here in the book of Genesis.

C. Defiance

Now, go back to Genesis chapter 11. I’m talking to you about these people in Genesis chapter 11. And though we took a little Bible trip, we’ve come right back where we were. I’ve talked to you about their disobedience. God said, “Fill the earth.” They settled down. I’ve talked to you about their depravity. They said, “We’re going to build us a tower dedicated to the heavens.” And this was the beginning of astrology. This was the beginning of the zodiac. This was the beginning of the worship of the stars. By the way, dear friend, the purpose of the stars is to declare the glory of God and not the destiny of man. Do you know what *astrology* means? *Astra* means “stars.” *Astrology* means “the

word of the stars.” *Never let the word of the stars replace the Word of God.* Now you see not only their disobedience, not only their depravity, but I want you to see their defiance.

Go back now and look in verses 3 and 4—I’m in Genesis chapter 11: “*And they said one to another, [Come], let us...*”—underscore that—“*let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, [Come], let us*”—underscore that—“*build us*”—underscore that—“*a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven. And let us*”—underscore that—“*make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad.*” (Genesis 11:3–4) Six times: “*us,*” “*us,*” “*us,*” “*us,*” “*us,*” “*us.*” Six is the number of man. Six times they say: “*we,*” “*us.*” It’s religious humanism, with man at the center and at the circumference. They don’t take God into consideration. This is not built upon divine revelation or the Word of God. It is as if they had prayed, “Our brothers upon the earth, Hallowed be our name. Our kingdom come, Our will be done.”

Now, how does this New Age movement work out in our day and in our age? Are your children affected by it? Norman Geisler, who is a professor at Dallas Theological Seminary, has done some work in this area. And he’s pointed out some things I want to share with you. I want you to listen to these words: “For my ally is the Force, and a powerful ally it is...Its energy surrounds us and binds us. Luminous beings are we, not this crude matter. You must feel the Force around you; here, between you, me, the tree, the rock, everywhere, yes. Even between the land...”

Sounds like something ol’ Buddha might say. But that was Yoda, the Jedi Master in *Star Wars*. Many of your children sat and watched. You see these same kinds of things coming through in movies like *Poltergeist*, *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*, *The Dark Crystal*, or *Solarbabies*. Many of you, last year, saw actress Shirley MacLaine come on prime-time television and do something based on her best-selling books *Out on a Limb* and *Dancing in the Light*. All of this was New Ageism and the occult come full bloom.

Many of you, when you were back in the sixties, listened to the Beatles. And you baby boomers were enamored with the Beatles. Ex-Beatle George Harrison in 1993 was interviewed, and he got a little frank, and he talked about his best-selling record, “My Sweet Lord,” and he said—and I quote: “I wanted to sneak up on the audience a bit by gradually changing the background chant of hallelujah to Hare Krishna. After a while,” Harrison claims, “they are lulled into a sense of false security.” That’s his words. So the kids hear a record called “My Sweet Lord,” and it begins “Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, Hare Krishna, Hare Hare Krishna.” And this Eastern mysticism is being put into their minds before they knew what happened.

Many businessmen today are going to business seminars, and they are studying

success merchants like Napoleon Hill, Og Mandino, Clement Stone, Earl Nightingale, and others, who have been influenced by New Ageism, according to Norman Geisler. Business seminars like Werner Erhard's est. Now they don't call it that anymore. They call it "The Forum". Well, if you ever read a magazine on an airplane, as I do many times, you'll find something advertized called Silva Mind Control. Or another thing called Eckankar, or another called Personal Dynamics Inc., or Investment in Excellence. And all of these things, when you look into them, are a form of New Ageism, according to those who have studied them.

But the frightening thing is this, that in our schools, while Christianity is virtually outlawed, you're going to find out that in many places in America there is a form of New Ageism that comes right into the school system—yoga, meditation, imaginary guides, and exploration of inner space.

Let me read you something I clipped the other day that someone in Alabama wrote. You know we think of Alabama as being part of the Bible Belt, but this person talked about what was going on in their school there. And here's a parent who investigated. He found out that in a school district the educators were using a program for kids from kindergarten through the sixth grade, an Apple program, and here's the title of it: "Peace Harmony Awareness: A Relaxation Program for Children." And here's the purpose of the program: "to help children deal effectively with everyday stress so they will be able to enjoy more satisfying and creative lives." Sounds good, doesn't it? All right, and so here the little kids are going to learn peace, harmony, and awareness. The program is laced with meditation exercises with Zen and New Age content.

For example, you'll find this statement in that program for these children. Listen to it: "Children would find it interesting to know that the yogis can slow down their heart rates appreciably. These are new ideas for the Western world, and people are learning that they have more control over their bodies than was ever dreamed of before." See, this is yogi mysticism that's being put into the minds of little kids, kindergarten through the sixth grade: biofeedback. I suppose the most reprehensible program is lesson 11. The title of it is "The Secret Place." And I'm quoting, and here is the purpose, which has as its major concept, "Every person has inner wisdom that can be developed with patience. Learning to trust and use that inner knowing adds to self-confidence."

Now, how do you get this inner wisdom? Well, these little kids were told they were guided through guided imagery and imagination to an all-wise inner guide. Now, you think about that; there's an all-wise guide in your kids. You know what they call the inner guide? Mr. Rabbit. Isn't that sweet? And they are encouraged to ask this trustworthy and enlightened one for the answer to any question.

Now, another curriculum is for gifted children. And a major textbook being used is *Growing Up Gifted*, by Barbara Clark. And anyone can see that she's a thoroughly

convinced devotee to the New Age movement. She talks about what she calls integrative education. Now I want you to listen to what she says in this book. She calls for the development of transcendence, explaining, “This would be the level of interconnectedness, the state of oneness with the universe that would include and use all human functioning at its highest actualization.” She frequently states, “The thoughts of the East and the West are coming together in a climate of acceptance”—she’s talking about Western religion and Eastern mysticism—“coming together in a climate of acceptance. Coming together can be seen as the central theme of this book, the model on which its structure is based.” Now this is a public textbook. But coming together is the central theme. “Come now, let us build us a tower whose top may reach unto heaven, lest we be scattered abroad” (Genesis 11:4)—to bring together in a global awareness.

Now, she goes on to say in this book, and I’m quoting: “Lifestyles and belief systems change”—she’s teaching children, “Your parents may have been Christians and Bible-thumpers, but lifestyles and belief systems change”—“Dichotomies no longer exist.” That is, this is right and that is wrong. That’s a dichotomy. So she’s just using a high-sounding phrase to say that you can’t have a right and a wrong. “Dichotomies no longer exist, and time and space have another dimension. Reality is seen as an outward projection of internal thoughts, feelings, and expectations. Energy is the connector, the center, the basis for matter, and consciousness forms reality”—No, dear friend, God is the center. God forms reality—“Western pragmatists will join Eastern mystics. The more we are discovering, the more we can validate the ancient wisdom that has come to us from Chinese, Hindu, Egyptian, and other age-old teachings.” She’s right, all the way back to old Nimrod. You see, it’s a coming together, a syncretism of all of these things.

Now, let me tell you what the New Agers believe, and it’s as old as Babylon. But let me just give you some of their theology. And so I want you to get this.

First of all, what does a New Ager want? He wants global unity. All of them are going to talk about holistic this or global unity. They want a global unity that’s going to unite man with man; that’s the social utopia. Then they want a unity that unites man with nature; that’s ecological uniformity. And then man with God, that’s divine union. And so they’re going to bring about a religion, a synthesis, a syncretism, of man with man, man with nature, and man with God. Sounds pretty good, doesn’t it? That’s what the devil told Eve in the beginning: “You’ll be like God.” (Genesis 3:5)

Now to the New Ager, they don’t believe in a personal God. They are inspired by the spirit of Nimrod who himself wanted to be God and wanted to be worshipped. God is not the Heavenly Father. God is impersonal energy, “the Force.” There’s nothing that is not called God. Theologians call this view of God “pantheism.” And that’s the view of the New Agers: God is all, all is God, and God is in everything. Now then, what do they

think of man? Well, if man is a part of everything, and God is everything; then man is a part of God, and God is a part of man. That's the reason, when the New Age evangelist Shirley MacLaine got on television, she said, "I am God"—"I am God." And she went on to say, "The tragedy of the human race is that we have forgotten that we were each divine." There was another woman named Eve who bought into the same thing.

Now, what is salvation to a New Ager? It is the realization of your divine origin and nature. You see, to a New Ager, salvation is knowledge. And so, therefore, it follows that what man needs to be saved from is not sin but ignorance. He believes in a pantheistic universe. He's working toward the time when all good and evil, right or wrong, all opposites, are united into one all-embracing cosmic force, just like "the Force" in *Star Wars*.

Now, who is Jesus Christ to a New Ager? He will talk about Jesus Christ, but he doesn't believe in the Jesus that you believe in. As a matter of fact, he will separate Jesus and Christ. He will say, "Yes, Jesus existed, and Jesus had the spirit of Christ." But he would also go on to say that Krishna had the spirit of Christ. And Buddha was Christ, and Jesus was Christ. And it's a mishmash of all kinds of Babylonian baloney. But it all comes together.

Now I've got to somehow wrap this up, and I've got more, literally, than I can say to you, but I want to give you some buzzwords. I want to give you some things to think about, just to put up your antenna if you can, and just to get ready for some things. I want you to listen for these things.

Now if you hear these things, you're going to know probably it's a part of the New Age conspiracy. Think of words like this: Aquarian, Aquarian conspiracy, new consciousness, new Orientalism, cosmic humanism, mystical humanism, human potential movement, and holistic health movement. Let me give you some buzzwords: awakening, enlightenment, centering, consciousness, cosmic energy, force of life, global village, holistic, human potential, self-actualization, networking, planetary vision, spaceship earth, synergistic, transcendental, transformational, and transpersonal.

Now everybody who uses these words, of course, is not a New Ager. Many times we pass these things on, and sometimes they fit what we're trying to say, but it's a buzzword—just listen for it.

What are some of the symbols? You'll see these symbols on buildings. You'll see these symbols on automobiles and on bumper stickers. You'll see people wearing them around their neck. The rainbow. Any of you see an automobile going around with a little rainbow, even a little air freshener? Now the rainbow, of course, is a symbol of a covenant of God. But the New Agers have taken over the rainbow. These are symbols used in the New Age movement: the pyramid, the triangle, an eye in a triangle, Pegasus—that's the winged horse—concentric circles, rays of light, the swastika, the

yin and yang—that's that circle with what looks like two tadpoles on the inside—the goat's head, a pentagram, the number 666, or the unicorn. All of these are symbols that are used in one way or another in the New Age movement.

If you hear somebody speak of God as an impersonal force or an impersonal entity, or if He's identified with the world or with energy, you've probably stumbled into New Age ground. And all of the movements that deal basically with human potential are New Age. We're seeing a plethora of movies, songs, lectures, literature, business seminars, and other things that have come out, which claim that human beings possess unlimited potential.

There is also a lot of emphasis on sorcery—that is, any kind of romancing or interfacing with the occult, with witchcraft, black magic, séances, Ouija boards, or even visualizing—as many of these success motivation courses tell you to do—to visualize it so you may have it. Dear friend, if your vision is not from God, it may be occult.

Human goodness—all New Agers believe in human goodness. When they speak of Christ-consciousness rather than Jesus, beware. *“And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God.”* (1 John 4:3) It's the spirit of antichrist: any feeling or any movement that bases its truth or its ideas on human feeling.

For example, they asked Shirley MacLaine—by the way, as I told you this morning, I read in *Money* magazine about her lecture circuit. One of the editors from *Money* magazine went over to one of the lectures and sat in and said there were five hundred people who had flown in for three hundred dollars a head to hear her lecture. She was going just like this from lecture to lecture, and she was bringing in millions of dollars—but they asked her, “Why do you believe in reincarnation?” And she said, “Because I felt it was true.” Now, dear friend, there are spirits, demon spirits; the Bible calls them “lying spirits, doctrines of demons.” You test everything by the Word of God.

I'll tell you another great appeal of the New Age is world unity. The New Age movement believes in the unity of all religions and the eventual cooperation of all governments. Therefore, they are a strong force behind the world peace and ecumenical movements. Many good Bible-believing people find themselves holding hands with New Agers, looking for and trying to find world peace. And all they are doing is building a platform for the Antichrist. Pathetic, isn't it?

III. The Failure of the New Age Movement

Well, one last last thing. Go back to Genesis chapter 11. I've talked to you about the founder of the New Age, and his name was Nimrod. I've talked to you about the faith of the New Age. Let me just talk to you about the failure of the New Age. Look, if you will now, in Genesis chapter 11 and verse 7, and see what happened. Verse 6 says, *“And*

the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. [Come], let us go down...—who was God talking to? God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost were talking together—*“[Come], let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech. So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they [ceased building] the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound [their] language.”* (Genesis 11:6–9)

Now this gate to heaven was really the highway to hell. And what God did was to bring judgment. I want you to see, first of all, God said, *“Let us go down.”* (Genesis 11:7) This Babylonian religion in our last day is going to be ended the same way when God steps out of heaven, when the Lord Jesus comes again, when the triune God says, *“Let us go down.”* And what God is going to do is to throw all of it into confusion. As He threw it into confusion so long ago, He’s going to throw it into confusion in our day. In that day, he brought confusion by confounding their speech. Can you imagine what it would have been like building that tower? One man says, *“Hand me a brick.”* He says, *“What did you say?”* He said, *“What did you say?”* He said, *“What did you say?”* *“What did you say?”* *“What did you say?”* It must have been funny to be there, as they did not understand.

You know, the Bible says, *“He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the LORD shall have them in derision.”* (Psalms 2:4) I’m sure He was that day, as they were there trying to have unity. Of course, we know that there’s no real unity without the Lord Jesus. And the ecumenical movement, and the United Nations, and all of the rest of it is a surface unity without the Lord Jesus Christ. There was the coming, the confusion, and then the collapse. So the Bible says, in verse 8, *“So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city.”* (Genesis 11:8) It was left a colossal ruin. Why? I’ll tell you why: *“Except the Lord build the house, the workman worketh but in vain.”* (Psalms 127:1)

I’ll tell you, there’s only one thing that’s going to last, my dear friend, and it’s the kingdom of our Lord and His Christ. The kingdom of Antichrist is going to crumble, and the New Agers are going to sit and weep among the ruins of their crumbled tower of blunders.

One last last scripture: Turn to Revelation chapter 18 and see how verse 1 says it’s going to happen—Revelation chapter 18. Now, remember in chapter 17 we saw that Babylonian beast carrying that Babylonian harlot. But now what John sees is something better than that: *“And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was [made bright] with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen,”*—that tower is

coming down, my dear friend—*“and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. And I heard another voice from heaven, saying,”*—and He’s saying it to you now; I want you to listen—*“Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.”* (Revelations 18:1–4)

Did you hear that? *“Come out of her.”* (Revelation 18:4) Have nothing to do with Babylonian religion. Have nothing to do with the occult. Have nothing to do with the New Age. And because of that, notice what happens in Revelation 19, verse 1: *“And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia And her smoke rose up for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia. And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.”* (Revelation 19:1–6)

Conclusion

And, my dear friend, you’ve got Christ and Antichrist. You’ve got Babylon and the New Jerusalem. You have the great whore and the pure bride. You have life and death. Don’t be sucked in by the New Age movement.

The Rise and Fall of Babylon

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: April 5, 1981

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 10–11

*“And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech,
and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar.”*

GENESIS 10:10

Outline

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 - A. His Arrogance
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Conclusion

Introduction

And today, I want you to notice Genesis chapter 10, beginning in verse 8: *“And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the LORD: wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD. And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel.”* (Genesis 10:8–10) And we’re going to stop reading right there.

Now I have told you that the book of Genesis is the seedbed of all prophecy, and it is the seedbed of all theology. That is, we see in type, in picture, in foregleam, all of the great truths that we’re going to find in the rest of the Bible. That’s the reason we call it the book of Genesis. That’s the reason we call it the book of the beginning. And I don’t know whether you’ve enjoyed with me discovering the picture and the person of Christ in the book of Genesis, but I have. It’s been a thrill to me and a blessing to me to find

our wonderful Lord portrayed here right in the opening verses of God's Word in type and prophecy and picture, and it's just been a blessing to me.

But not only are you going to find a Christ picture, but also you're going to find Antichrist pictured, because, you see, the Bible teaches, in the last days there is coming a great world dictator who is called the beast, the man of sin, the Antichrist. Just as there's a Christ, there is an Antichrist. And just as Jesus is the Son of God, the Antichrist is the son of Satan. One is the seed of the woman, the Christ. The other is the seed of the serpent. Remember we've already studied that in Genesis chapter 3? One is the Son of God. The other is the son of perdition. One is God's Lamb. The other is the devil's beast. And one has a kingdom, which is the kingdom of God. The other has a kingdom, which is the kingdom of evil. One will rule over a city, which is the holy city, Jerusalem. Another will rule over a city, which is the hellish city, Babylon.

And our message today is entitled "The Rise and Fall of Babylon." And we're going to learn something about that mighty city called Babylon, which symbolically and cryptically and prophetically stands for the consummation and the distillation of all evil. And so we're going to call our message today "The Rise and Fall of Babylon." And pay attention, because this is not something that just happened in the dark, musty past, or something that's going to happen way off yonder in the future. It deals with realities that we're facing every day. And we're going to find out something about the person and work of the devil, as we study here in Genesis chapters 10 and 11.

So there are three things I want you to see as we study together. Our boys and girls are taking notes, and I want to tell you, boys and girls, it's going to be harder to take notes today than normal. But stay with us, and maybe, if you can understand it, then there may be a little hope for the adults who are here. As a matter of fact, I think you boys and girls may do a little better than some of these adults. But there are three things that we're going to study about this wicked city of Babylon, which was both the cradle and the grave of all false religion, and the devil's kingdom. First of all, I want you to see the ruler of Babylon. Secondly, I want you to see the rise of Babylon. And thirdly, I want you to see the ruin of Babylon—this city of sin—Satan's civic masterpiece.

I. The Ruler of Babylon

Now, first of all, remember that I told you that we are going to see a picture of the coming Antichrist. We're going to see in type and prophecy a beast who is lurking in the shadows, the Antichrist. Look, if you will again, in Genesis 10, verse 8. And I want you to notice four things about this man named Nimrod that makes him picture to me the coming Antichrist:

A. His Arrogance

First of all, I want you to notice his arrogance. Notice in verses 8 and 9: "*And Cush*

begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the LORD.” (Genesis 10:8–9) Now there are two things I want you to notice about those verses that we just read and concerning this man Nimrod. First of all, I want you to notice his name: Nimrod. Do you know what the name *Nimrod* means? It means “Let us rebel.” He was a rebel and a leader of rebels. And the Bible calls the Antichrist “the wicked one,” or “the lawless one.” That is, he is a rebel against God. And the Bible tells us that he “opposeth everything that God stands for.” (2 Thessalonians 2:4) And that is the reason we call him the Antichrist, because he is the rebel. He is against God.

Also, I want you to notice, as we look here at this particular passage of Scripture, it says, “*He was a mighty hunter before the LORD.*” (Genesis 10:9) Now look at that word *before*. That may also be translated “against the Lord,” and I believe that is the way it should be translated. Here was one who was against God with all of his might. Here was one who lived a life of arrogance against the Lord. And so here he reminds me of that coming Antichrist because of his arrogance.

B. His Abilities

But not only because of his arrogance, but because of his abilities. Look again in verses 8 and 9: “*And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth*”—underscore that. Then verse 9: “*He was a mighty hunter.*” Underscore the word *mighty* again. Then the last part of verse 9: “*Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD.*” (Genesis 10:9) Three times it is mentioned: “*mighty,*” “*mighty,*” “*mighty.*” This one was a mighty person.

And again, he prefigures Satan’s superman. And the Bible pictures the Antichrist as coming, in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, verse 9, “*with all power...and lying wonders.*” (2 Thessalonians 2:9) This Antichrist is going to have unbelievable power. He’s going to be charming, witty. He’s going to be forceful. He’s going to be intelligent. He’s going to have demonic power. And the devil is going to deliver unto the Antichrist supernatural power. Nimrod had it in the Old Testament. And I see not only, therefore, his arrogance, that he is a rebel against the Lord, but I see his abilities. He was a mighty, mighty, mighty person—not almighty—but mighty.

C. His Authority

The third thing I want you to notice about him is his authority: “*He was a mighty hunter before the LORD.*” (Genesis 10:9) Now, look at that word *hunter*. Don’t get the idea that he was hunting deer and ducks and elk and moose and that sort of thing. No, the ancient rabbis tell us—and correctly so—that this refers to a person who was a hunter of the souls of men, just as the Lord Jesus Christ is seeking the souls of men. And the Bible says that “*the Son of man [has] come to seek and to save that which was lost.*” (Luke 19:10) Here was the great burning ambition of this man: to subjugate the souls of

men. He was one who brought devastation and death and subjugation to the world of his days. And he did it, as we're going to see, by a combination of force and falsehood. And so we see his great authority. Here he is: one who subjugates people, one who has the ability to rule over people—a hunter, as it were, of the souls of men.

D. His Ambition

And so notice his arrogance. Notice his abilities. Notice, if you will, his authority. And then notice his ambition, if you will, in verse 10: *“And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel.”* (Genesis 10:10) He wanted to rule. This was his ambition. Now up until this time, we've not read anything about men having a kingdom and lording it over other men. But he wanted to rule. He wanted to be an authority. You see, this has always been the devil's desire. The devil says, *“I will exalt my throne above the stars of God...I will be like the most High.”* (Isaiah 14:13–14) The devil has always wanted to rule this world.

Remember what he said? Remember what the devil said to the Lord Jesus? The devil said to the Lord Jesus—he showed Him all of the kingdoms of this world, and he said, “All of these I'll give you if you'll bow down and worship me.” And Jesus said, *“Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only.”* (Matthew 4:10; Luke 4:8) And Jesus wouldn't do that. Jesus would not take the offer of the devil. But there's another coming who will, and his name is the beast and the Antichrist. And he may be alive and well today. I believe that the Antichrist is alive and living on Planet Earth today. That's my own personal opinion. I cannot prove that, but I believe that. I believe that he's lurking in the shadows, ready to take over.

Now the evolutionists like for us to believe that man sprang from the beast. Listen. *Man didn't spring from the beast; he's headed toward the beast.* The history of man is this, that it began with the sin of man; it will end with the man of sin. We are headed toward the Antichrist, and that's what human history—the time of the Gentiles—is going to be like. Of course, the Lord Himself will ultimately rule, so history will really rule with Jesus Christ on the throne. But here is one who wanted a kingdom. Here is a wicked man. Here was a man who was a rebel. Here was a man who had tremendous power. Here was a man who was a hunter of the souls of men, a subjugator. And here was one who wanted a kingdom over which he was going to rule.

I believe that Nimrod is put in the Bible to help us to understand what we read in Genesis chapter 3, verse 15, about the seed of the serpent. Here is the seed of the serpent. There's coming a man, ladies and gentlemen, who will one day be the devil incarnate, just as Jesus Christ is God incarnate. That was the ruler of Babylon.

II. The Rise of Babylon

Now the second thing I want you to see: Not only the ruler of Babylon, but I'd like for

you to see the rise of Babylon, because remember, when we talk here about Babylon, as we see this city-state beginning, remember that it is the inception of the city, and the nation, and the concept of Babylon that we see all through the Scriptures. Over and over and over again, we read about Babylon in the Scriptures. Beginning with Genesis chapter 10 and going all the way through Revelation chapter 18, over and over and over again, the Bible speaks of Babylon. Now if the Bible has that much to say about it, we'd better understand why; we'd better listen. So let's see something about the rise of Babylon. We're going to talk about the rise and the fall of Babylon. But let's talk just a moment about the rise: how it got started.

Now, remember the ruler, the evil person in whose demented brain this foul thing was hatched, was Nimrod, who's a type of the Antichrist. Now, look, if you will, in chapter 11, verses 1 and 2: *"And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there."* (Genesis 11:1–2)

A. Their Disobedience

Now, let's just stop here and tell you the very first thing that I see that these people did wrong was to disobey God. And they disobeyed God, as we see recorded in these first two verses. You say, "How did they disobey God?" They found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there. That was not God's plan for them at all. God said that they were to spread out over all of the earth; they were to replenish the earth. Remember this is after the flood, and the world has been destroyed by flood. And now civilization has grown up again, and God said to those who came out of the ark, "I don't want you just to stay in one place now. I want you to repopulate the earth. I want you to spread out all over the earth." Look in Genesis chapter 9, verse 1: *"And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth."* (Genesis 9:1)

Now God did not want them gathered and conglomerated in one spot. Why not? Because God knew the dangers of a one-world government. And that's exactly what Antichrist wants to set up, and that's exactly what we're headed for, ladies and gentlemen, is a one-world government. You say, "What is wrong with a one-world government? What was wrong with all of the peoples of the world coming to the plain of Shinar and just dwelling there in a city-state? What was wrong with that?" Well, it was a centralization of power. "Well," you say, "what's wrong with a centralization of power?" It is this, that wicked people cannot be given too much power. Have you ever heard the statement that power corrupts, and total power corrupts totally? That's exactly right. And when the Antichrist gets total power, he's going to have total corruption over the face of this earth. That's exactly what Nimrod wanted, in prophecy and type. He wanted to totally subjugate the world. And so he said to these people, "Now, let's gather together

here, and let's unify this world.”

Now, let me tell you today, we have some humanists... Do you know what a humanist is? I'm not talking about humanitarianism: loving mankind. There's nothing wrong with that. We ought to love this world because God loves this world. Some people confuse humanitarianism with humanism. Humanism is a godless religion. Actually, a better name for humanism is *atheism*, but they don't like that word. *Humanism* sounds good; *atheism* sounds bad. But we have a number of committed humanists in the world today. And let me tell you what these humanists believe. They believe in a one-world government. And many of them are Americans, and some of them hold high places of office in America. But they have a running romance with one-worldism and a one-world government—that is, a centralization of power.

Now, let me tell you something: Your freedom is related to the size of government, in reverse proportions. The greater the size of the government, the less your freedom. And we just need enough government to keep us strong, enough government to keep us safe, but then we need for government to keep its hands out of our personal lives and business. But I tell you, dear friend, we're seeing this growth of federalism and this growth of big government. And Big Brother seems to have his fingertips on everything, and the humanists love it.

I was interested to note in my study that in 1920, one out of every one hundred persons worked for the government. Today, one out of six people works for the government. That's right. I didn't believe it either. One out of six either works for the federal, the state, or the city government—one out of every six people. Government is growing and growing and growing, and with it there is this centralization of power. And, you see, what they want to do is not only federalize our government to a greater extent, but then they want to move our government into the society of the world's nations. What the Antichrist would really like to do is to have a great one-world government. And the humanists are playing right into his hands. A leading humanist has recently said, “A truly humanistic civilization must be a world civilization.” And an editorial in the *Humanist* magazine clearly stated, “If there is one principle upon which all humanists are united, it is the continued commitment to a world order based upon world law.”

Now the humanists are one-worlders first, and Americans second. And they call for general disarmament. That is, they want us to lay down our ability to defend ourselves. If all of the peoples on the face of the earth, they say, would generally disarm, then we would have what they call collective security. That is, when we're all just part of one great big world government, then there's nobody else to fight—that is, except Antichrist, dear friend. He will then have the world in his grip. And that's exactly what old Nimrod wanted so long ago. Rather than spreading out all over the world and replenishing the earth, it says that they dwelt in the land of Shinar, and they just decided they were going

to build them a city-state right there. So you see in verses 2 and 3 their disobedience. (Genesis 11:2–3)

B. Their Depravity

Now in verses 3 and 4, I want you to see their depravity: *“And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.”* (Genesis 11:3–4) Now, why do I call this their depravity? Well, it’s centered in this tower that they wanted to build: *“Let us build us a...tower, whose top may reach unto heaven.”* (Genesis 11:4)

Let me just slow down right there and tell you that these people were not trying to build a staircase to the stars. They were not that stupid. Some people think that these people must have been dumb and ignorant back in those days and that they thought that they could literally with bricks just build right on into heaven. No, they had better sense than that. They were more intelligent than you are. Man has not gotten more intelligent through the years. Don’t think of these as a bunch of hokey cavemen back there. They were stunningly brilliant. It is amazing what they knew. They were not trying to build a staircase to the stars. They did not think that they could pile brick upon brick until they could step into heaven.

Notice in the King James Version that there are certain words that are italicized: *“Let us build us a...tower, whose top may reach unto heaven.”* (Genesis 11:4) *“May reach”* is italicized. Just leave it out. It’s only put there by the translators to make it read more smoothly. It is not a part of the original, and the reason they put it in italics is so that you will know that it’s not part of the original. And what they literally said was, “Let us build us a tower whose top unto heaven.” That is, the top of this thing was dedicated to the heavens. What it was, was a temple tower. On top of this thing was a pagan temple. And this pagan temple was dedicated unto the heavens. That is, it was an astrological observatory. And there they would observe the stars. And the archaeologists have gone back and have found some of these other temple towers in the Mesopotamian area on the plain of Shinar. And they know what they were, because on the top were zodiacs. You have the beginning of the worship of the stars, the study of the stars. You have the beginning of the paganism and the idolatry and the devil worship of astrology. You have the beginning of it right here.

This is the reason I’m talking about their depravity. Astrology began right here in Genesis chapter 11. And if you’re a follower of astrology, buckle your pew belt, because I’m going to pay my respects to it in just a moment. It is the devil’s tool to keep people away from God.

Now it’s amazing what they call this city. Do you know what they called it? Babel. Do

you know what that means? It literally means “the gate to God.” You see, *El* is the Hebrew name for God. *Elohim*: That’s God, the mighty God. Jacob worshipped the Lord where? At Bethel. Do you know what *Bethel* means, the *el* on the end? “House of God.” Jesus’ name is called *Emmanuel*. What is that? “God with us.” And whenever you see this word *el* attached to something, it speaks of God. For example, Israel—what does *Israel* mean? Why was Jacob’s name changed to Israel? That’s “prince with God.” All right, here is Babel: *Bab*, meaning “gate.” It is the gate to God. That’s what they said it was.

Now, dear friend, what it was, was just simply the devil’s means to corrupt people and keep people away from Jesus, who is the gate to God. Jesus said, “*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*” (John 14:6) Jesus is the way to God; Jesus is the gate to God. Later on, this word, by a play on words, this word *Babel*, came to mean “confusion.” And so it means, on the one hand, “the gate to God.” On the other hand, it means “confusion.” Put them together and you have it exactly: It is confusion about the way to God. And that’s what the devil is about today. You see, the devil is not against religion; dear friend, the devil is in favor of religion. The devil is in religion up to his ears. But the devil wants you to be confused by religion about the way to God. And you see the inception of it right here. It is confusion about the gate to God, confusion about the way to God. And it is based in demonic religion. It is based in apostasy. It is based in witchcraft. It is based in falsehood. It is based in astrology and all of these things, which are confusion about the way to God.

Now I believe that all astrology, and all false worship, and all apostasy that is organized, have their beginning right here in this beginning of Babylon. Let me show you what God says about Babylon, over here in the book of Isaiah chapter 47. Turn to it with me for a moment—it will be worth turning to—Isaiah chapter 47. And I want you to see that astrology and witchcraft had their beginning right here in Genesis chapter 11.

Now it’s very obvious in Isaiah chapter 47 that God is speaking to Babylon. Just look in verse 1, if you doubt that. (Isaiah 47:1) And then go with me to verse 12—here’s the challenge that God said to those people of that day: “*Stand now with thine enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, wherein thou hast laboured from thy youth...*”—just underscore “*from thy youth.*” That is, from the very inception of this city of sin, from the very inception of Satan’s civic masterpiece, they were using sorceries; they were using enchantments—“*wherein thou hast laboured from thy youth; if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail.*” What He’s doing now is mocking them and telling them that their enchantments and sorceries are going to do them no good. “*Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee. Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall*

burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: there shall not be a coal to warm at, nor fire to sit before it. Thus shall they be unto thee with whom thou hast laboured, even thy merchants, from thy youth: they shall wander every one to his quarter; none shall save thee.” (Isaiah 47:12–15) This is God’s judgment upon Babylon. But I want you to notice the very fact here that God says that they were in the business of astrology from their youth.

Now, what’s wrong with astrology? Well, number one: It is idolatry—it is idolatry. The stars are not put there for you to find your destiny by. The stars are not there to discover the destiny of man but to give glory to God. Do you know what the word *astrology* means? *Astro* means “stars.” The last part of that word, *-ology*, comes from the Greek word *logos*, which means “word.” What is astrology? Astrology is literally “the word of the stars”—“the word of the stars.” Well, friend, you’ve got the Word of God, who hung the stars there. And, you see, when you’re looking to the word of the stars rather than to the Word of God, that is a rebellion against God; it is idolatry of the worst sort. And because of it, you will face the judgment of Almighty God.

God calls it an abomination. Just put in your margin there Deuteronomy chapter 18 and verses 9 through 12, and you’re going to find out why God destroyed the entire Canaanite civilization. Do you remember that God said that the Canaanites were to be dispossessed out of the land? They were to be judged. What was it that God had against the Canaanites? It was the demon worship that began here at the Tower of Babel: the rise of Babylon. Deuteronomy chapter 18, verse 9—here’s God’s warning to His people. He says, *“When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations.”* Now, notice there’s something that God calls an abomination. All right, you want to find out what it is? *“There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire,”*—in their wickedness, they were murdering their little babies. America’s doing the same thing—*“or that useth divination,”*—that is, a fortune-teller—*“or an observer of times,”*—that is, an astrologer—*“or an enchanter, or a witch. Or a charmer, or a consulter [of mediums], or a wizard, or a necromancer.”* That means “someone who tries to contact the dead through a séance.” *“For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of [this]...thy...God doth drive them out from before thee.”* (Deuteronomy 18:9–12) You see, God says, “If you dabble in this business, you are an abomination to God.”

I’m speaking to some people right now—this is an average audience—you checked this morning your horoscope. Some of you have belt buckles with the zodiac on it. Some of you have earrings. Some of you have little pieces of jewelry. Some of you say, “There’s nothing bad about that.” Friend, God says it is an abomination to God. You ought to get rid of all that paraphernalia; you ought to leave it alone. Stay away from it.

You say, “Well, I’m just curious. I don’t take it seriously.” Maybe you just dabble in adultery, too. Maybe you just dabble in murder, too. You don’t really take it seriously. Listen, my dear friend. It is wrong! Leave it alone completely. It had its beginning, it had its inception, here in the Tower of Babel. And the Bible says that these things happen from the very youth of this city, this city of sin, which is the devil’s masterpiece.

Now all false religion—all false religion, organized false religion—has come from what happened here in Genesis chapter 11. Turn to the book of Revelation chapter 17 and look in verse 5. (Revelation 17:3–7) John, in Revelation—and when we get to this in Revelation, we’ll study it more carefully—but John, in Revelation chapter 5, saw a woman who was a beautiful woman. Boy, she is decked in gold, and silver, and pearls, scarlet dress, as she’s riding on a beast. Now this beast has seven heads and ten horns. Well, he must have been some beast. And she’s riding.

Now she’s a very beautiful woman, and she’s riding this beast. It’s sort of “Beauty and the Beast.” And she looks very beautiful, but you’d better look at her very carefully, because notice how God describes her—Revelation chapter 17, verse 5: *“And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.”* (Revelation 17:5) Do you know what harlotry is, spiritually, in the Bible? It’s false religion. You see, Jesus Christ is our bridegroom, and we, the Church, are the bride. Now anytime we are not true to the Lord Jesus Christ, that is spiritual adultery. And all spiritual adultery, all false religion, all apostasy, had its beginning in Babylon. And so here the Bible calls that: *“MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.”*

What I’m trying to tell you, dear friend, is that these people were unspeakably wicked. They raised up here what they called the gate to God, but really it was the mouth of hell—the mouth of hell. And oh, my dear friend, today, you may be religious, you may be in the occult, or you may be just in some liberal Christ-denying religion, but if you’ve not come to God through the Lord Jesus Christ, you’ve been caught up in this Babylonian system. And oh, there are many people who have—many people who have—and they don’t even realize it, because they think that they are doing something good and wonderful.

C. Their Defiance

Well, I’ve noticed their disobedience: Rather than replenishing the world, they try to build a city-state. I’ve noticed their depravity: Here they are with a false religion. Now I want you to notice their defiance. Go back, if you will, to Genesis chapter 11, and look with me for a moment. Notice their defiance—verses 3 and 4: *“And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be*

scattered abroad upon the face of the...earth.” (Genesis 11:3–4) Six times: the number of man; six times, which is the number of man, we hear them use words like *we* and *us*. No mention of God here. This is humanism; this is the kingdom of Antichrist. These people have left God out of their plans, and they have made themselves the center and the circumference of their plans. It’s as if they had said, “Our brothers which are upon the earth, Hallowed be our name. Our kingdom come, Our will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. For ours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory.”

And we have people today who are living that way in open defiance of God: egomaniacs who are strutting to hell thinking they’re too good to be damned. And this is the rise of Babylon. And what we saw over here in seed form in the book of Genesis, we’re going to find in fruit form in the last days. You’re going to find this coming kingdom of Antichrist, and it’s going to be based in a one-world government, a world church; and it’s going to be based in man’s arrogance, as man wants to humanize God and deify man.

III. The Ruin of Babylon

All right now, let’s go on and see the final thing. Go back to Genesis chapter 11 and see not only the ruler of Babylon, and see not only the rise of Babylon, but I want you to see the ruin of Babylon. Look with me, please, as we continue to read here, in verse 6. I’m in Genesis chapter 11 and verse 6: *“And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down.”* (Genesis 11:6–7)

A. The Coming of the Savior

Now the first thing that I see in the ruin of Babylon was the coming of the Savior—the coming of the Savior. The triune God said, *“Let us go down.”* (Genesis 11:7) Man says, “We’re going to build up toward heaven.” God says, “I’m coming down to earth”—“I’m coming down to earth. Let us go down.” It is suggestive to me of that time when Antichrist is at the height of his arrogance, when Antichrist thinks that he has his kingdom just built just right. He’s ready to put the capstone on it all, and there will be a voice heard in heaven that, as the triune God—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—says, “Let us go down.”

Dear friend, we’re waiting for that time when God steps out of the heavens, and it won’t be long. I believe that Antichrist is just about to put the final touches on his kingdom. I believe, as I’ve said already, that the Antichrist is alive and living today. But I believe that the Church is going to be taken out. And when the Church is taken out at the Rapture, then Antichrist is going to feverishly begin to build his kingdom, put it together. And at the close of a seven-year period of tribulation, our great God is going to

say, “Let us go down.” And so the first step in the ruining of this kingdom of Babylon is what I call the coming of the Savior.

B. The Confusion of the Speech

And then not only was there the coming of the Savior, but there was the confusion of the speech. Notice, if you will, in verse 7 again. I read here in chapter 11: *“Let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech.”* (Genesis 11:7) There was a confounding of the speech as well as a coming of the Lord. Now, why did the Lord step down and confound their speech? I think it was God’s colossal joke.

Have you ever read there in Psalms chapter 2 where the Bible says, *“The LORD shall have them in derision”*? (Psalms 2:4) You know, I enjoy the sense of humor of God—really. Now here they are; they think they’ve got it all together. And I tell you, these were brilliant people. I mean, they really knew what they were doing. They’d already plotted the heavens. They’d already made out their zodiacs and everything. God just says, “I’m going to take one little ingredient out. They’d never thank me for the ability to communicate. They’re not using their speech to praise me with, to love me with, to worship me with,” so He confounded their speech. He gave them all different languages.

Now they are ready to put the final bricks on this tower, and one of them says to the other workman, “Hand me a brick.” He says, “What did you say?” He said, “What did you say?” “What did you say?” “What did you say?” “What’s the matter with you? Are you trying to get smart with me? Don’t you get smart with me.” And I mean, the whole thing—just one little thing. God was showing them how foolish their unity was. There was no unity at all. They had a false unity that was in their words and their work, but it was not a true unity. You see, only true unity is in the Lord Jesus Christ. “There’s one Lord, one God, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father over us all.” (Ephesians 4:5–6) And here now, you know, the Bible says, *“The LORD shall have them in derision.”* (Psalms 2:4) When our Lord steps out of glory, He’s going to turn the kingdoms of Antichrist into confusion.

C. The Collapse of Their System

First, there was a coming. Then there was a confusion. And then, dear friend, there was a crumbling—the collapse—of their system. The three things I’ve said: the coming of the Savior, the confusion of the speech, and the collapse of the system. Notice in verses 8 and 9, as we continue to read: *“So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth.”* (Genesis 11:8–9) That is, the whole thing collapsed. It was left to colossal ruin. It

reminds us one more time of what the Bible says: *“Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.”* (Psalms 127:1)

Now, listen to me. It may look like the Antichrist is getting the upper hand. It may look like there’s a gathering storm. And it may look like the forces of evil are getting so powerfully entrenched, as you see the World Council of Churches, as you see the UN, as you see the communist threat, as you see the power of the occult and the devil and demonism—you see it all. It looks like the time is ripe for Antichrist. And indeed it is. But I want to tell you, all who follow the way of Babylon are going to sit and weep among the fallen and crumpled ruins of this city of sin.

Before I close this message, turn to Revelation chapter 18—Revelation chapter 18. I want you to see the final prophecy in this book concerning Babylon. Read with me now the first four verses of Revelation 18: *“And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.”* (Revelation 18:1) I believe this angel coming down is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, who’s called the angel of Jehovah. *“And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.”* (Revelation 18:2) Babylon the great, this cage of demons, this demonic religion, it is destined to fall—it is destined to fall. Look in verse 4: *“And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.”* (Revelation 18:4)

That’s the reason I told you to get rid of all that occult business. You just get rid of that Ouija board. You just get rid of all that horoscope, all that junk. You just get it out. God said, *“Just come out of her, my people. Don’t partake of her sins. You are going to partake of her plagues if you do.”* (Revelation 18:4)

Babylon is destined to fall. Just as this ancient tower crumpled so long ago, we find that the final full-blown Babylon is coming down; it is crashing down. And I want to tell you something: You may not have ever realized this, but the first time that the word *alleluia* is used in all the New Testament is after Babylon falls—after Babylon falls. You won’t find the word *alleluia* used any other time. But it is after Babylon falls that the “Alleluia Chorus” begins. Look in chapter 19, verse 1: *“And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.”* (Revelation 19:1–3) And then again in verse 6: *“And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters,*

and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.” (Revelation 19:6)

Conclusion

Friend, if you think we’ve got reason to say *hallelujah* today, you ain’t seen nothing yet. You wait—you wait. *“The kingdoms of this world [will] become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ.”* (Revelation 11:15) And this tower of blunders that the devil has built is coming crashing down. Babylon is going to fall. We’ve seen the rise and the fall of Babylon. There’s Christ; there’s Antichrist. There’s the city of God; there’s the city of sin. You’d better choose sides carefully.

Humanism: Tower of Blunders

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: May 1, 1994

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 11:1–9

“And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.”

GENESIS 11:3–4

Outline

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Introduction

Take God’s Word and be finding the book of Genesis chapter 11, if you will, please. The passage that we’re going to look at tonight has great prophetic significance. The book of Genesis is one of the great, grand books of the Bible. Genesis means “beginnings.” We find here in the book of Genesis the beginnings of many wonderful things that we’re experiencing today and many terrible things that we’re experiencing today. Now some people want to know if the Bible is up-to-date. No, the Bible is not up-to-date; the Bible is ahead of time—and centuries ahead. And we’re going to find here in Genesis chapter 11 the story of an amazing building project. F. W. Boreham called this building project “the tower of blunders.” And you’re going to find out what these blunders were as we read together.

I’m going to read the first nine verses. It speaks of a time, and this is what it says of that time: *“And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and*

they dwelt there. And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of the earth.” (Genesis 11:1–9)

Now here was an amazing building project, and these who had come out of the ark had begun to replenish the earth, decided that they would rather build a city-state and a one-world government. And they decided that they would do that in opposition to the direct command of Almighty God. Now, what does that have to do with us tonight? I mean, what does Genesis chapter 11 and some tower built in the plain of Shinar have to do with you living in Memphis, Tennessee, tonight?

Well, friend, this is history, but it is more than history. It is prophecy, and it speaks of the dangers that we face today and the world that your children are growing up in. And you cannot afford to be ignorant of what is happening. The book of Genesis is the seedbed—both good seed and bad seed—of all that will happen in the world. And so this is history, but it is also prophecy.

Now we could almost say that these people in Genesis 11 were the original humanists. Now I don't know whether you know what humanism is, but humanism is the pervading philosophy of the media—Hollywood—today. Humanism is a philosophy that makes man the center and the circumference of everything.

Now the humanists are an actual organization. That is, there is an American Humanist Association, and they make their goals very clear and very plain. But there are a lot of people who are not members of the Humanist Association who are humanists at heart.

Now, simply defined, humanism is man's attempt to solve the problems of mankind, independent of God—man's attempt to solve humanity's problems, apart from God. Now one of the leading humanists has written this for you and for me to understand what humanism is all about—and I quote precisely: “Humanism is the viewpoint that human happiness is its own justification and requires no sanction or support from supernatural sources.” Plain English: “Be happy, and leave God out of it.” Listen to it

again: “Humanism is the viewpoint that human happiness is its own justification and requires no sanction or support from supernatural sources.”

Now these people who built this tower of blunders made five tragic mistakes. And those five tragic mistakes are being repeated in society today and in this city and in our world today like never before, I suppose, since Genesis chapter 11. What were these blunders that made this tower a tower of blunders?

I. It Was Begun with the Wrong Motive

Well, number one: It was begun with the wrong motive. Look, if you will, and see the motive, in verse 4: *“And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.”* (Genesis 11:4) Six times—the number of man—we read words like *they*, *us*, and *we*. Six is the number of a man. God is left out of this thing. That is, it was not for the glory of God but for the glory of man. That’s humanism. *“Let us make us a name.”* (Genesis 11:4)

It’s almost as if they prayed, “Our brothers, which are on earth, Hallowed be our name. Our kingdom come, Our will be done on earth, without any help from heaven. Because ours is the kingdom, and ours is the power, and ours is the glory, for ever. Amen.”

You say, is that really practical? One of the saddest days in human history was in 1945 when the charter of the UN was written. And do you know there’s no mention of God in the charter of the UN? Do you know why there’s no mention of God in the charter? Number one, they wanted to appease the communists; and number two, they wanted to appease the humanists. So they said, “We’re going to bring the peoples of this world together. We are going to have world peace through the United Nations.” And since 1945, there has never been a more comparable period of war than since the UN got together to bring world peace. Most Americans and most of the people in the world are self-centered rather than God-centered. We’re egomaniacs thinking that we can solve the problem ourselves.

II. It Was Built with the Wrong Materials

So why was this a tower of blunders? Verse 4—it was begun with the wrong motive: the glory of man rather than the glory of God. Number two: It was built with the wrong materials. Look in verse 3: *“And they said one to another...let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar.”* (Genesis 11:3)

Now you say, “They were kind of foolish, weren’t they? They thought they could build a tower that would reach to heaven with brick and slime.” Well, actually, they were

not trying to build above the clouds; they had better sense than that. Actually, what the scripture literally means is this: “We’re going to build a tower unto heaven.” That is, this tower is built unto heaven. It was a place that they might get on top of and study the stars and practice the Babylonian religion, which was astrology. It was a part of the occult. It was a part of a godless religion: “Let us build a tower unto heaven.” (Genesis 11:4) And that’s still going on.

As a matter of fact, I was in the airport in Detroit Friday, and I walked down there and I saw a table, and behind that table it said, “Help the children. A miracle for the children. Psychic fair”—“Psychic fair.” I said, “Joyce, let me go over and see what that is all about.” So I walked over and I said, “What is a psychic fair? Explain that to me.” “Oh,” they said, “well, it’s, you know, it’s just helping children to understand the mysteries of psychic phenomenon.” And I said, “Is that part of the occult?” And she said, “What?” I said, “Let me see that card.” And it talked about a certain woman who was a clairvoyant. I said, “Lady, don’t you know that’s of the devil?” I said, “Don’t you know that’s ungodly?” I said, “Don’t you have a Bible? Don’t you read your Bible? Don’t you know that God clearly forbids that?” I said, “Do you believe in this?” She said, “Well, I don’t know. I’m just kind of working here.” And another lady came, and she said, “Well, I believe in it.” She said, “Those folks back there in that room can tell you things that are true.” I said, “I believe that, but,” I said, “do you think everything that is true is right?” I said, “The Bible calls that an abomination.” I said, “If you go in there, you’re liable to get demon-possessed.” Well, they thought they had somebody demon-possessed, I think, standing in front of them. But I just thought I would give them a little warning, a little lecture, on my way to my airplane. But that’s a part of the world that they lived in. And you think, “Well, these people, that’s Genesis 11.” Well, friends, this is the nuclear age, and people are still following that business.

But now, how were they building this tower? They were building this tower with brick and with slime. That’s all the material they had. They were doing the best they could with what they had. Today, we’re using our minds, our machinery, and our money, but we’re still building a tower of blunders. We’re leaving God out of it. One scientist said, “The world picture of the nuclear age does not include God. The cultivated mind today finds no God in his reactor, and he finds none through his telescope. God is not among the rushing electrons, and he is not visible in outer space.” In other words, we just worship today at the shrine of our computers, and we’re just as foolish as these trying to build with slime and mortar. The trouble is that the superman makes the machinery, and the ape-man gets hold of it.

III. It Was Based on the Wrong Mentality

The third thing: Not only was it begun with the wrong motive, and not only was it built

with the wrong materials; it was based on a wrong mentality. Look in verse 3: “*And they said one to another...*” (Genesis 11:3) That is, they pooled their ignorance. “*They said one to another*”: There’s no word from God here. This is the wisdom of man rather than the wisdom of God, and “thus saith the mind of man” is substituted for “thus saith the Word of God.” There’s no seeking God. Now modern humanists don’t mind astrology, but they are practical atheists.

May I tell you the four pillars of modern humanism? And you’ll find these things in almost every one of our public schools.

A. **Atheism**

Number one is atheism. All humanistic thought is atheistic. Now, why don’t they call it atheism? Well, because *atheism* is an ugly word; *humanism* is a beautiful word. *Humanism* sounds so much like another word. What? *Humanitarianism*, doesn’t it? So if you say, “I’m a humanist,” well, that sounds nice. If you say, “I’m an atheist,” that sounds ugly. So the names have been changed to protect the guilty. But humanism is basically atheistic.

Dr. Corliss Lamont, who was a leading spokesman for humanism for over thirty years, in his definitive book *The Philosophy of Humanism* makes this statement—quote: “Humanism believes that nature itself constitutes the sum total of reality, that matter-energy and not mind is the foundation stuff of the universe, and that supernatural entities simply do not exist. This non-reality of the supernatural means, on the human level, that men do not possess supernatural and immortal souls; and, on the level of the universe as a whole, that our cosmos does not possess a supernatural and eternal God.” And then this man goes on to say, “For humanism, the central concern is always the happiness of man in his existence, not in some fanciful never-never land beyond the grave; a happiness worthwhile as an end in itself and not subordinate to, nor dependent on, a supreme deity, an invisible king, ruling over the earth and the infinite cosmos.”

All of this blather simply means there is no God. Now it’s couched in very beautiful words. “Well,” you say, “Pastor Rogers, whoever this Lamont guy is, he’s some yo-yo off the wall. Don’t be so concerned about him.” Well, I wouldn’t be if it were just one individual. But if you pick up the “Humanist Manifesto” and read it and see who has signed it, see the leading philosophers and educators, and see those who are judges and political leaders who have signed this, then you have a second thought. What the humanists believe is that the universe just happened; there’s really no God.

B. **Evolution**

So out of this atheism comes the next pillar, and that’s evolution. Now since they’ve explained away God, then they have to explain man’s existence independent of God. So here’s what Lamont goes on to say: “Biology has conclusively shown that man and

all of the forms of life were the result, not of a supernatural act of creation by God, but of an infinitely long process of evolution probably stretching over at least two billion years.”

Now, friend, I don't care how educated a man is and how many degrees he has after his name. Very frankly, that doesn't make sense. I reject evolution not merely on spiritual or religious grounds; I reject it on intellectual grounds and logical grounds.

“Well,” you say, “who are you? I mean, after all, you're a dumb Baptist preacher.” Well, I am a Baptist preacher, but you don't have to be a scientist to know that evolution doesn't make sense. You just ask one question, like: “Which came first, the chicken or the egg?” Now, how can you have chickens without eggs and eggs without chickens? Which one came first?

Somebody asked a little girl this question: “Which came first, the chicken or the egg?” She said, “That's easy: the chicken. God doesn't lay eggs.” Man, think about it.

You say, “You're just being silly.” Let me tell you, my dear friend, what a well-known biologist at the Smithsonian Institution said. He said—and I quote—this is not a Baptist preacher: “There is no evidence which would show man developing step by step from lower forms of life. He appeared suddenly and in substantially the same form as he is today. There are no such things as missing links. So far as concerns the major groups of animals, the creationists appear to have the better of the argument. There is not the slightest evidence that any one of the major groups arose from any other. Each is a special animal complex, related more or less closely to all of the rest, and appearing therefore as a special and distinct creation.” *They talk about the missing link. The chain is missing*—the chain is missing.

You say, “Oh, you just believe in God by faith.” Yes, I do, but *it takes more faith to believe the monkey story than it does the Word of God*. But now let me tell you what Sir Julian Huxley said—and your kids will study Sir Julian Huxley in school, one of the founders of the American Humanist Association. He said this—quote: “I use the word *humanist* to mean someone who believes that man is just as much a natural phenomenon as an animal or a plant; that his body, mind, and soul were not supernaturally created but are the products of evolution, and that he is not under the control or guidance of any supernatural being or beings, but has to rely upon himself and his own powers.”

Now you can understand why we're contending for family values: because man makes himself the sum, the substance, the center, the circumference. His own ideas tell him what is right and what is wrong. There are no fixed standards of right and wrong, but he does morality by majority.

C. **Amorality**

First of all, atheism; they call it humanism, but atheism. Second, evolution. Third, amorality. Or to put it another way, situational ethics. If man is an animal, as Sir Julian

Huxley says, and if he evolved from blind chance, he is now free to live like an animal. There are no fixed standards of right or wrong according to the humanists. Man is an animal. What does an animal live for? Self-preservation, self-propagation, and self-gratification. What are most Americans living for? Self-preservation, self-propagation, and self-gratification. That's what's wrong with us today.

The *Humanist* magazine said some years back—and I quote: “Darwin’s discovery of the principle of evolution sounded the death knell of religious and moral values.” That’s why evolution is so devilish. It is the death knell of religious and moral values. If evolution is true, then you make up your rules, and I’ll make up my rules, because there’s no fixed standard of right or wrong. Let me give it again—this is taken from the *Humanist* magazine: “Darwin’s discovery of the principle of evolution sounded the death knell of religious and moral values.” It removed the ground from under the feet of traditional religion. Code word: Bellevue Baptist Church.

What is the result of this tower of blunders? We have a generation today that’s plagued by sexual permissiveness, trial marriages, easy divorce, abortion on demand, sex education, coed college dorms, homosexuality as an optional lifestyle, free access to pornography, drugs, filth, *ad nauseum*. That’s the generation we’re living in, and it follows, like night follows day: no God, evolution, no values. There is the rejection of God and His authority to say what is right or wrong.

As a matter of fact, one of these who are crafting the sex education courses being taught in schools today, lecturing to high school students, actually had the temerity to say, as she pointed her finger to the sky, “There’s no one up there telling you what is right or wrong.” See, that’s the idea: “There’s no one up there telling you what is right or wrong.”

Again, let me quote Lamont: “For humanism no human acts are good or bad in or of themselves. Whether an act is good or bad is to be judged by its consequences for the individual and society. Knowledge of the good, then, must be worked out, like knowledge of anything else, through the examination and evaluation of the concrete consequences of an idea or hypothesis. Humanist ethics draw its guiding principles from human experience and test them in human experience.”

Where have you ever heard that before? You know the first time you ever heard that? Genesis 3, when Satan said to Eve, “Eve, God doth know that when you eat this fruit, then your eyes will be open, and you’ll be like God; you’ll know good from evil.” (Genesis 3:5) You know what Satan was saying to Eve? “Experience is the best teacher. The way to find out whether this fruit is good or bad is not to take His word for it, but to taste it. Eat it. If it’s bad, you’ll know it. If it’s good, you’ll know it. You don’t have to have Him telling you. You will be like God, knowing good or evil. You will make up your own mind; you will set your own standard by your own experience.” This is the

voice of the devil.

D. Deification of Man

The fourth pillar. First of all, no God. Secondly, evolution. Thirdly, no fixed values. Values clarification—it is going on right now in our schools—morality by majority. The fourth pillar: the deification of man. We've explained away God and God's rule; now man becomes his own god. Do you know what you can do on television today, radio today? You can blaspheme God and get away with it. But don't say anything about anybody's civil rights. It will get you just like that, isn't that right? You can blaspheme God and get away with it, but don't say anything about anybody's civil rights, because we've got a new god now.

You say, "Pastor, are you against civil rights?" No, not at all! I'm in favor of civil rights, rightly understood. But what I'm saying is this, that it's nothing to blaspheme God; it's nothing to ridicule God, to take God's name in vain over and over again.

Man has now become his own god. The New Age religion is based on all of this, that man is his own god. Again, let me quote the Humanist: "The watchword of humanism is happiness for all humanity in this existence as contrasted with salvation for the individual soul in a future existence and the glorification of a supernatural supreme being." That is, we're saying, "Forget God and forget heaven and be happy." "Humanism urges men to accept freely and joyously the great boon of life and to realize that life in its own right and for its own sake can be as beautiful and splendid as any dream of immortality." That is, "Live it up! Forget all this religion, this pie in the sky!" To put it down in plain English and bumper-sticker mentality: "Do your own thing." "If it feels good, do it."

IV. It Was Blighted with the Wrong Method

All right, we said they made some tragic mistakes. Number one: It was begun with the wrong motive. Number two: It was built with the wrong materials. Number three: It was based on the wrong mentality. "*They said one to another...*" (Genesis 11:3) Number four: It was blighted with the wrong method. Look in verse 4: "*And they said...let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven.*" (Genesis 11:4)

Their method was to build from the ground up. God's method is from heaven to earth. Actually, what they were doing is this: They were trying to build a one-world government. Now it's seen here very clearly in verse 4: "Lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the earth." (Genesis 11:4) What they were saying is, "We need collective security. And this civic masterpiece, this tower of blunders, this high-rise to hell, that we're building is what we're going to build our lives around." Or go back to Genesis chapter 9 and verse 1 and see what God had said: "*And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.*"

(Genesis 9:1) But they said, “We don’t want to do that. Rather than replenishing the earth, in direct contradiction to the will of God, we’re going to have a one-world government.”

Now, remember, this was before the earth was replenished, before the nations had been scattered abroad on the face of the earth, as God finally scattered them at the end of this chapter. And that just tells me something else about the humanists of our day that had their ancestors here in Genesis 11. Humanism always has a running love affair with big government; they have a romance with big government. Do you know where the world is headed? The world is headed back to Genesis chapter 11. The world is headed for a one-world government.

May I say this, that freedom has always been in inverse proportion to the size and power of government. The more government, the less freedom; the less character, the more government—the more government, the less freedom. Humanism in America has brought about a relentless expansion in government. In 1920, one out of every one hundred Americans worked for the government. Today, one out of six hold some governmental job. Government is growing and growing and growing. The secret behind the government of the United States of America, which has granted more freedom for the longest period of time—two hundred or more years—is self-government. A government of the people, by the people, and for the people. But, friend, that is an idea that is receding over the horizon, and the government is taking over everything.

Health care and education are at the forefront now of the humanist philosophy. They don’t believe that you have enough gumption, enough sense, to educate your own children, so the Department of Education is taking over so that they can make the public schools the Sunday School classes for the religion of humanism. The humanists, by and large, have a hostility toward Americanism and patriotism and free enterprise. They don’t want a strong America. They are calling for disarmament. They call it collective security.

Let me just show you what they say. They have said this as far back as 1966. Internationally, the humanists propose: “Nationalism, rooted as it is in arbitrary geographical units, must be superseded by a globalism based on the oneness of man. There must be a worldwide organization to which national sovereignty would be relinquished in all international affairs. The UN has the potential to be effective but cannot achieve the goal envisioned here until all peoples of the world are represented.” That is, that we, as Americans, need to sublimate our sovereignty and put ourselves under the leadership and the headship of some global organization. And we are now dancing with the idea of letting some other commander in chief take our American boys and direct them on foreign soil. And, friend, that is the beginning of a one-world government.

Lamont says, “A truly humanistic civilization must be a world civilization.” The humanists are one-worlders first, and Americans second. They are big government, global government. And you can put it down big and plain and straight: We are headed toward a globalism. And as much as I love George Bush, I cringed every time I heard him use the term a new world order. But we’re headed for it.

V. It Was Bossed by the Wrong Man

Number five: It was bossed by the wrong man. This tower of blunders, whose idea was it? Go back to Genesis chapter 10 and look, if you will, in verse 8: *“And Cush beget Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the LORD:”*—and the word *before* here can mean, “against” the Lord—*“wherefore it is said, Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD. And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel.”* (Genesis 10:8–10)

Who was the high muckety-muck? Who was the ruler? Who was the one who said, “We will build a tower; we will have collective security”? Who was it? A man named Nimrod. Do you know what the Bible name *Nimrod* means? It means “rebel”—“rebel.” A rebel built this city. Nimrod is a picture, a type, a prophecy of the Antichrist. He is a picture of the man that is coming who will lead the world as the world, one more time, tries to build its tower of blunders.

It’s an interesting thing. Look at the scripture that I just read to you. Look in verse 8: *“He began to be a mighty one.”* (Genesis 10:8) Underscore the word *mighty*. Look, if you will, in verse 9: *“He was...mighty.”* (Genesis 10:9) Look again in the last part of verse 9: *“the mighty hunter before the LORD.”* (Genesis 10:9) Three times he is called *“mighty,” “mighty,” “mighty.”* This was not a normal man. He is a picture, a type, of the Antichrist. The Bible speaks of the world ruler that is coming, who’s going to rule over this globalism, with these words in 2 Thessalonians 2, verse 9: *“Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders.”* (2 Thessalonians 2:9) There’s coming a world ruler. Nimrod is a type and a prophecy of this world ruler. Nimrod is a picture of the Antichrist to come. And *man did not spring from the beast, but he’s headed toward the beast.* And the spirit of antichrist is already in the world.

Conclusion

Now when this wickedness reached its climax, the Bible says that God came down. (Genesis 11:5) I’m looking for Jesus to come, and He is coming. I don’t know who said this, but I believe it. Somebody said, “When little men cast long shadows, you know the sun is about to set.” You figure it out.

How to Mend a Broken Faith

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: August 26, 2001

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 12:1

“Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee.”

GENESIS 12:1

Outline

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Introduction

Be finding Genesis chapter 12, and really, what we're doing tonight is almost an addendum to the message this morning, but we're going to be in the school of faith tonight, and that's a wonderful school, but sometimes we don't make very good grades. And I want to talk to you about "How to Mend a Broken Faith." Sometimes we don't do all that good in the school of faith. Now life is the classroom in the school of faith. Obviously, the Bible is the textbook in the school of faith. The faculty: the prophets and the apostles. But the dean of the school of faith would have to be Abraham, wouldn't he? Abraham is called in the Bible—you might want to put in your margin Romans chapter 4, verse 11—Abraham is called "*the father of all them that believe.*" (Romans 4:11) When we think of Abraham, we think of faith, and we can learn some incredible lessons about faith. And, by the way, when I'm talking to you about faith, I'm not talking to you about how many angels can dance on the head of a pin. I'm talking to you about something that is so important that I can hardly think of an adjective to describe the importance of faith. It is of monumental, inestimable importance.

Let me give you seven reasons why faith is so important, and all of this is just by way of introduction, but just to put this in your heart.

A. Faith Is the Distinguishing Mark of the Christian

Listen, folks. Faith is the distinguishing mark of the Christian. Did you know that the Christians were called believers before they were ever called Christians? Believers. That is the distinguishing mark of a Christian, that he's a believer.

B. Faith Is the Christian's Chief Duty

Number two: To exercise faith is our chief duty. Who said so? Jesus. Put in your margin John 6:29: "*Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.*" (John 6:29) "This is the work of God, that you believe." It's the chief duty.

C. Faith Is the Christian's Shield from Unbelief

Therefore, unbelief is the supreme evil. There is no greater evil than unbelief, to aim the gun of unbelief at Almighty God and to pull the trigger. You see, how did man get into sin to begin with? Eve did not believe God. She fell into sin because of unbelief. And *men don't go to hell today because they steal, or because they lie, or because they commit adultery, for those sins have been paid for* with the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible says, to the contrary, in John chapter 3, verse 18, "*He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed.*" (John 3:18) Think about it. *The reason that men and women go to hell today is they have not believed on the Lord Jesus Christ.*

D. The Christian Life Is Lived by Faith

And once you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, how are you going to live the Christian life? By trying? No. By trusting. The Christian life is lived by faith. Four times in the Bible, the Bible says, *“The just shall live by faith.”* (Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38) You find that in Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17; Galatians 3, verse 11; and Hebrews 10, verse 38. All of these say, *“The just shall live by faith.”* One, two, three, four times, God says it. Do you think He’s trying to tell us something? I’m telling you, the way to live the Christian life is by faith.

E. Success in the Christian Life Is Measured by Faith

Number five: Your success in the Christian life is going to be measured by your faith. Matthew chapter 9, verse 29: *“According to your faith be it unto you.”* (Matthew 9:29) Not according to your feeling, your fame, your fortune, your friends, your fate, but *“according to your faith be it unto you.”*

F. Faith Pleases God

Number six: Faith, above all things, pleases God. And if you please God, it doesn’t matter whom you displease. And if you displease God, it doesn’t matter whom you please, amen? And how are you going to please God? Well, the Bible says, in Hebrews 11 and verse 6, *“But without faith it is impossible to please him:”—*it doesn’t say, “hardly possible,” but *“impossible to please him”—“for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”* (Hebrews 11:6)

G. Faith Is the Only Way to Overcome the World

Number seven: The only way that you’re going to overcome this world is by faith. First John chapter 5, verse 4: *“And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”* (1 John 5:4) When we greet one another here in church, rather than saying, “How you feeling?” we ought to say, “How you *faithing*?” Amen? I, we, live by faith.

I. The Root of Biblical Faith

Now there are several things I want you to learn from Abraham in the school of faith, and the very first thing I want us to learn is what I’m going to call the root of biblical faith. Genesis chapter 12, verse 1—look at it: *“Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee.”* (Genesis 12:1) Now this is the preamble to his faith. This is the basis to his faith. God had spoken to him. The root of biblical faith is divine revelation; it is to hear from God. Notice how this says, *“And the LORD had said.”* (Genesis 12:1) Just underscore that.

A. Faith Is Not Rooted in Human Will

Friend, there are a lot of people who misunderstand faith and the source of faith. Faith

is not rooted in human will—faith is not rooted in human will. Let me show you something interesting. Go back to Genesis chapter 11. Now you're in 12, just turn left. Go one page. Look in Genesis chapter 11. You see there the building of the Tower of Babel, this colossal high-rise to hell. And notice how it describes what happened: *“And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there.”* Now, watch this and count with me: *“And they said one to another, Go to, let us”*—underscore the word *us*; that's one—*“make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us”*—underscore the word *us* again—*“build us”*—underscore the word again—*“a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name.”* (Genesis 12:1–4) *“Us,” “us,” “us,” “us”*: This is man's will. This is man's attempt to establish his own kingdom through his own will. As a matter of fact, in that one verse, in verse 4, you have four *us*'s right there. You have four *“let us,” “let us,” “let us,” “let us.”*

Now, go back over to where we were in Genesis chapter 12, and notice the difference. Look in these verses here. In chapter 12, verse 1, God says unto Abraham, *“Unto a land that I will shew thee.”* Underscore *“I will.”* Look in verse 2: *“And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee.”* (Genesis 12:1–3) Man says, *“I will,” “I will,” “I will.”* God says, *“I will,” “I will,” “I will.”* Man says, *“Let us.”* God says, *“I will.”* Now faith is not rooted in man's *I will*'s, but in God's *I will*'s. Not in man's *“let us,”* but in God's sovereign will.

Now, what were the people in Babel trying to do? Well, they were trying to make themselves a name. Look, if you will, in verse 4: *“Let us make us a name.”* (Genesis 11:4) They're trying to make themselves a name. They failed miserably. Can anybody here tell me the name of any of those people who built that tower? We know the name of one, whose name was Nimrod, who's a type of the Antichrist. The name is despised. They wanted to make a name. They failed miserably. God said to Abram, *“I will give you a name,”* (Genesis 12:2) and the name *Abraham* is revered throughout the entire world.

Now what I'm trying to say is this, that faith is not rooted in human will. Say, *“Human will.”* That's very important that you understand this, because we have so many people today, who have sort of a Tower-of-Babel mentality, trying to make for themselves a name, and they call it *“name it and claim it.”* You don't do that. You have to hear from God. Faith is not rooted in human will.

B. Faith Is Not Rooted in Human Worth

Secondly, faith is not rooted in human worth—in human worth. Look again, if you will, in verse 1: *“Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country.”* (Genesis 12:1) Now we're going to learn something right there. He was a pagan living in pagan

idolatry in an idolatrous land. And go back to Genesis chapter 11, and look, if you will, in verse 31 again, in this same chapter: “*And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son’s son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram’s wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan.*” (Genesis 11:31) Now they’re coming out of Ur, which was the center of idolatry.

Now on top of all of that—listen to me now—this pagan was seventy-five years old. When Abram first heard God, he was seventy-five years old. What does that tell us? Nobody’s too bad; nobody’s too old, amen? God chooses a man who is a raw pagan, and he became a believer. Faith is not rooted in human will; it is not rooted in human worth. Say, “Human worth.” It’s not rooted in your worth.

C. Faith Is Not Rooted in Human Wisdom

Now, thirdly, it’s not rooted in human wisdom. Look again in chapter 12, verse 1: “*Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee.*” (Genesis 12:1) There wasn’t something that Abram figured out. He went under sealed orders. What is faith? Faith is not positive thinking. It’s not following a hunch. It’s not hoping for the best. It’s not figuring out and then trying to make it work. It’s not a feeling of optimism. It’s not believing what you know isn’t so. Abraham, when he went out, did not know why, and he did not know where; he only knew whom.

D. True Faith Comes from the Word of God

Faith is not rooted in human worth. Faith is not rooted in human will. Faith is not rooted in human wisdom. True faith comes from the Word of God. Abraham had a word from God. That’s very important because the Bible tells us clearly and plainly that “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” (Romans 10:17) Faith, therefore, does not rest in a road map but in a relationship with Almighty God. You think of Abraham now. He’s seventy-five years of age, he’s well established, he’s rich, he has a beautiful wife, he’s living in comfort, and God says, “Get up and let’s go!” And he did not know where he was going; he did not know why he was going at this time. All he knew was that God had spoken. Now that must have been very exciting. If your life is dull and insipid, perhaps you ought to do what Abraham did and live by faith, and that will turn the monotonous to the momentous.

Listen to me now. What is faith? *Faith is believing the Word of God and acting on it.* That’s it. Faith is believing the Word of God and acting on it. Now if you believe the Word of God, that’s not faith yet. That’s the preamble to faith. That is the root of faith, but acting on it is faith. Believing the Word of God is mental. Faith is actual. Do you know the difference between belief and faith? *Faith is belief with legs on it.* The difference between belief and faith is the difference between knowing the Word of God

and knowing the God of that Word.

Dr. Warren Wiersbe, one of the finest Bible expositors alive today—and I hope God gives him many more years—and here's what he said: "Faith is not believing in spite of evidence; that's superstition. Faith is obeying God's Word in spite of circumstances or consequences." Now that's worth saying again. And it will be on the test, so listen to it now. All right, "Faith is not believing in spite of evidence; that is superstition. Faith is obeying God's Word in spite of circumstances or consequences." We do not live by explanations; we live by promises.

Now, what is the root of faith? "God said." Abram heard from God. Are you hearing from God? Do you have a quiet time? Are you connected to God? Is God speaking to you? If God is not speaking to you, you're not living by faith; it's impossible. You're going here and there, doing whatever you think you ought to do. Faith is hearing the Word of God and acting on it.

II. The Requirement of Faith

Number two: We've talked about the root of faith; let's talk a little bit about the requirement of faith. Look again in Genesis chapter 12, verse 1: "*Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee.*" (Genesis 12:1) Now what He said, in shorthand, is: "Get thee out unto. Come out of where you are, and go to where you need to be." As I told you this morning, real faith not only brings us out; real faith brings us in.

Now you cannot really have faith as you continue to live in the land of idolatry. You have to forsake. I'm talking about spiritually, a spiritual application now. You cannot live in your old way of life and think at the same time you can live by faith. It cannot be done. Remember the scripture that I gave you this morning from Deuteronomy chapter 6, verse 23? "*And he brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land.*" (Deuteronomy 6:23) God said to Abraham similarly, "Come out of Ur, that I might bring you in."

Now, do you want to have a life of faith? Have you forsaken idolatry? "Well," you say, "I'm not an idolater." Well, you may be. You say, "You mean I have idols in my life?" I don't know. I hope you don't, but you may. Anything you love more, serve more, fear more, trust more than God is an idol. And some love money more than God. Some fear man more than God. Some trust ability more than God. You see, you can't have faith unless you are willing to come out. And you have to turn from that idolatry, which is sin. Do you know the reason that many people don't have faith? They're not willing to leave Ur of the Chaldees. They try to have faith right where they are in their same old lifestyle, and they wonder why it doesn't work. There's nothing more damning, more

stultifying to faith than sin in the heart.

Let me give you some scriptures. I pray God that He will rivet these upon your soul. Hebrews chapter 3, verse 12: “[Beware], lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief.” (Hebrews 3:12) Unbelief never comes out of the head; it comes out of the heart. “[Beware], lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief.” You say, “I have intellectual problems.” No, you don’t; you have dirty, rotten sin. “[Beware], lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief.”

Notice Hebrews chapter 12, verses 1 and 2: “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.” (Hebrews 12:1–2) How do you look to Jesus? By laying aside every weight and the sin that doth so easily beset us. There’s no way that you can pray with unconfessed, unrepented-of sin in your heart and pray in faith.

Let me give you an illustration. You and your wife are at home, and you’re having one of those tremendous arguments; you’re at one another’s throats; you’re saying all sorts of mean and vicious things. And then you hear a cry from your upstairs bedroom, and you go up there, and your little baby’s up there burning up with fever, terribly sick, and you know that you need to pray, and there’s all this hate and animosity in your heart. You get down on your knees and try to pray. Don’t you feel like a couple of fools? You know you can’t pray in faith with that sin in your heart. I mean, there’s nothing more debilitating to faith than sin in the heart.

The Bible says, in 1 John 3, verse 21, “Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.” (1 John 3:21)

Now, listen. The root of faith is the Word of God, but the requirement of faith is that you come out of that land of idolatry; you leave it. God brought us out, that he might bring us in. I mean, many people say, “Well, I just doubt my salvation. I’m not sure I’m saved. I have doubt about my salvation. I have doubt. I have doubt.” And you talk to them about their theology and so forth, and they’ll nod their head, but they still have their doubts. If you stay there long enough, you’ll find out that that person that has that doubt has sin in his or her life: idols that they’ve not forsaken, things that they’re doing. What right would you have to have absolute assurance if you’re living with sin in your heart and in your life? And if you’re having trouble with faith, try repentance—if you’re having trouble with faith.

You ever notice how God puts certain things in order in the Bible? For example, He says, “Grace and peace be multiplied unto you.” (2 Peter 1:2) He doesn’t say, “Peace and grace,” but “Grace and peace.” Why? Grace comes before peace. He says, “Believe and be baptized.” (Mark 16:16) He never says, “Be baptized and then believe”;

that's never the order. Real baptism follows real belief. I was so grateful tonight to see a young lady who came for believer's baptism, because she'd gotten it settled, and she'd given her heart to the Lord Jesus Christ, and she wanted believer's baptism. To be baptized before you believe would be like having your funeral before you die.

Now, listen. Just as grace comes before peace, just as belief comes before baptism, repentance comes before faith. The Bible speaks of repentance and faith, not faith and repentance—repentance and faith. Are you listening? Say yes. If you're having trouble with faith, try repentance. The requirement of faith: When God says, "Get thee out; I'm going to bring you into the land of Canaan," you have to leave that idolatrous relationship and come to the Lord Jesus Christ. If you're having doubts, it just may be unconfessed sin in your heart and in your life.

III. The Reward of Faith

The third thing I want you to see: Not only the root and the requirement of faith, I want you to see the reward of faith. Look now, beginning in verses 2 and 3—we're still in Genesis 12. God says, "*And I will make of thee a great nation,*"—now watch this—"*and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:*"—I love it. "I'll bless you; you'll be a blessing"—"*and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.*" (Genesis 12:2–3)

Now by faith Abraham received a blessing. God is a rewarder of those that diligently seek Him. Remember the verse I gave you in Hebrews 11, verse 6: "*But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*" (Hebrews 11:6) You see, by faith man gives God pleasure, and by faith God gives man treasure. We please God when we believe God. And God said, "Abraham, I'm going to bless you; I'm going to give you a land." And God gave him the land. God said, "I'm going to make your name great."

But every blessing of God—every blessing, not some—every blessing of God—is appropriated by faith. I said earlier I'm going to invite some of you tonight to receive Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. How are you going to get saved? Acts 16, verse 31: "*And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.*" (Acts 16:31) You're saved by faith, and you live the Christian life by faith.

We're blessed by faith, but now notice. Abraham was blessed that he might be a blessing. Look again in verse 2: "*And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing.*" (Genesis 12:2) Now faith gives us the power not only to be blessed but to be a blessing. The problem with many people, they want faith sort of as a Midas touch so they can get what they want, and it's self-centered. God wants you to be a river of revival, not a reservoir of blessings. Now if

you begin to pray like this, “God, bless me, and make me a blessing,” then faith begins to flow through your life.

I’ve been to Israel many, many times. The two great bodies of water in Israel are the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. Those of you who have been with us to Israel have been up to the headwaters of the Sea of Galilee that come from Mount Hermon, snowcapped, over nine thousand feet tall. And the springs of Banias pour that crystal-clear water down into the Sea of Galilee. And the Sea of Galilee is a living, thriving sea full of fish and life. But then Galilee gives up its water, and it trickles down the Jordan to the Dead Sea. The Dead Sea is the lowest spot on Planet Earth, 1,300 feet below sea level, and 1,300 feet deep at its deepest spot. It’s just a pocket, a chasm, on the face of the earth. And it is so deep that all it does is receive, but it never gives up except by evaporation, that which evaporates. And the water in the Dead Sea is poisonous and leaden, and no life can be there. What’s the difference between those two seas? Well, they both receive the same water, but one receives and gives; the other just receives.

Do you want to be blessed? Did you know it is amazing how much God will let pass through your hands if you will receive and give? It’s amazing. And a lot of it will stick to you if you just let it come through. God says to Abraham, “Look. Trust me. Come out of this pagan idolatry. I’m giving you my word, and I will bless you, Abraham, and I will make you a blessing.”

Do you want to be a blessing? You think of how God used Abraham to be a blessing. Have you ever really thought about how God has blessed us with Abraham? Out of Abraham, we have the Jewish nation. Out of Abraham, we have the descendants of Abraham who gave us the Bible. We have the prophets, we have Moses, and in the flesh the Lord Jesus Christ, who according to the flesh is a descendant of Abraham, a man who believed God. There is no greater blessing than to be a blessing. I want to be a blessing. I’m blessed when I am a blessing, when I’m blessing other people.

IV. The Relapse of Faith

Now there’s no greater greatness than to make somebody else great, to bless somebody else. That’s the reward of faith. Now I wish I could stop there. In some ways I know maybe you say, “That would be a good idea, Preacher; go ahead and stop.” But I want to talk to you about the relapse of faith. I wish I could just tell you that Abraham never had a relapse in his faith, but he did have a relapse in his faith. His faith failed; his faith faltered.

You’re in chapter 12—go to verse 10: “*And there was a famine in the land...*”—now God had said to Abraham, “Come out of the Ur of the Chaldees and go into Canaan.” But now, notice this—“*And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land.*” (Genesis 12:10) That

is, in the land of plenty, in the land of Canaan, in the land that represents the fullness of the Spirit—corn and oil, wine, figs, grapes, pomegranates—there was a famine there in Canaan.

Now, why was that? Well, Abraham's faith was being tested. God tested Abraham several times. God did not test him in order to make him fall, but God tested him to reveal to him some weaknesses and some flaws, and Abraham was given a test. Sometimes I'll say, "Abram," and sometimes, "Abraham," because they are the same person. Later his name was filled out to Abraham. But Abraham was given a test. That test was a famine, and he failed the test.

Now, why did God test him? Well, a faith that can't be tested can't be trusted. First Peter 1, verse 7, speaks of the trial or the testing of our faith. (1 Peter 1:7) That word *trial* is the word that's used as an assayer, a metalsmith, would test metal, gold, to see how pure it is. And the miner brings his gold to be tested; God brings our faith to be tested.

Now there was a famine in the land of Canaan, the Promised Land. There was a famine on the man of God, and he was exactly where God had sent him, where God had told him to go. What's the lesson for us? Well, sometimes we have the idea that when we serve God, when we obey God, when we live by God, then we're going to be free from all testings and all trials; it's going to be all honey and no bees. But that is not true. There can be trials and heartaches in the land of milk and honey. You know that to be true, don't you? Trials and heartaches in the land of milk and honey.

You know, sometimes in our prayer life we like for God to say *yes* or for God to say *no* so we get it settled. Sometimes God doesn't say anything. You know, people get married sometime, and they think they are on the Love Boat, and it's all going to be sweet and wonderful and all romance. And then, in their marriage, they have testings and trials, and they wonder what has gone wrong. Maybe nothing has gone wrong. Sometimes you join a church like Bellevue. You say, "Oh, Bellevue's such a wonderful church! I'm going to be a member of Bellevue!" And then you find out that all the sinners are not out there, amen? Might be one sitting next to you right now—probably one in your seat—and you know, sometimes we get these romanticized ideas about what it's going to be like.

A wise man once said about Noah's ark, "Have you ever thought about what Noah's ark must have smelled like on the inside?" He said, "You couldn't stand the stench on the inside if it weren't for the storm on the outside."

I'd still rather be in with all the problems that we have—to know the Lord Jesus Christ.

So here's a relapse of his faith. There's a famine, and Abram does something that he's not supposed to do. He goes down to Egypt. Now, how did his faith falter? I want to

give you some steps, because the same thing may happen to you.

A. A Sinful Compromise

First of all, there was compromise. Look again in Genesis chapter 12, verse 1. God said to Abraham, *“Get thee out of thy country,”*—now watch this—*“and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee.”* (Genesis 12:1) But now go down to verses 4 and 5: *“So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him:”—*now, wait a minute. He said, “Get out of there, get away from your kinfolk,” but his nephew Lot went with him—*“and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran. And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother’s son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.”* (Genesis 12:4–5)

But he’s compromising now. He doesn’t go all the way to Canaan. He makes a short stop there at Haran. He’s like some of you. You’re going to give your heart to Jesus, but you kind of have some hangover sins, you have some unclaimed promises, and you compromise a little bit. You say, “Well, I’m going to keep this thing in my life, or that thing in my life.”

B. A Misplaced Confidence

Now what it was is a sinful compromise and that led to a misplaced confidence. He got the idea that perhaps in Egypt there would be plenty, and he went down to Egypt. He said, “There’s food in Egypt. God gave me a brain; God gave me a mind. God doesn’t expect me to starve.” And so he went down to Egypt. Here’s a good verse for you to put in your margin—Isaiah 31, verse 1: *“Woe unto them that go down to Egypt for help;”—**“Woe unto them that go down to Egypt for help”—**“and stay”—*that is, trust—*“on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many.”* (Isaiah 31:1) Sometimes you’ll get to figuring, and you’ll get to conniving. You begin by compromising. And after you have this compromise, then you begin to put your confidence in places where you ought not to put your confidence. Things get bad, and you begin to scheme. A wise person said, “Never doubt in the dark what God has showed you in the light.”

You say, “Well, God expects me to use my head.” It’s an amazing thing. Abraham trusted God to take him all the way from Ur of the Chaldees and could not trust in God after he got there. “Well,” you say, “how miserable!” Well, have you ever trusted God to save you, and then you don’t trust God to keep you? Have you ever trusted God for spiritual things and can’t trust Him for material things? Have you trusted God for all eternity, and yet you can’t trust Him for next week?

C. A Shameful Conduct

And now notice how his conduct begins to change. Chapter 12 and verse 11—this is

Abraham now, the father of the faithful: *“And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon: therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive. Say, I pray thee, that thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee.”* (Genesis 12:11–13) That rascal! He was willing to let his wife Sarah become a part of Pharaoh’s harem in order to save his own hide.

Now there was a technical sense in which he could say, “You’re my sister,” but it was a half-truth, which was a whole lie. And you see his life now beginning to unravel. He takes his father with him; he takes Lot with him. He doesn’t go all the way. He gets there and everything’s not like it ought to be, he thinks. And so he goes down to Egypt for help, and now he begins to do some terrible things.

I’m ashamed of Abraham. Did you know that a Christian, a true Christian, can do some terrible, horrible things? That’s true. Why is that? Because that which is flesh is flesh. (John 3:6) Come up real close, and I’m going to tell you something. I don’t care how long you’ve been saved; your flesh is not improved one scintilla of an iota. That which is flesh is flesh, and don’t you think that the flesh can be cultured and the flesh can be changed. You take your eyes off the Lord Jesus Christ, you stop living by faith, and you are going to find out that that old flesh nature is still there. And many Christians who start out on a life of faith, then begin to compromise, then begin to scheme, and then begin to do things that they would never have dreamed that they might have done.

D. The Cost of a Lapse in Faith

Now I want you to see how this lapse of faith cost him. It’s a costly thing. Unbelief is a thief. There were blessings that were stolen from Abram.

1. Wasted Time

First of all, there was wasted time. All the time that he spent in Egypt was wasted time. A young lady was baptized tonight. Beautiful! I watched it. Her testimony was, “I had given my heart to Christ, but I got away from God, and now I’m coming home. I want to go back and begin to serve the Lord again.” Fine! Wonderful! But think of all that wasted time. At the Judgment Seat of the Lord Jesus Christ, that time will be wasted. College students, many of you are still just getting ready to go away to college; this may be your last Sunday night at Bellevue. My heart breaks as I hear time after time after time—and I believe the same thing is true about you, Mark—they go off to college and get away from God. I think that’s something of your testimony. How sad that is—how sad that is—that you go down to Egypt, and you say, “Well, everybody’s got to do it. You know, college is supposed to be to live it up; you’re supposed to do this or that. No! Serve Jesus. Don’t compromise. That’s all just simply wasted time.

2. A Weakened Testimony

And not only wasted time, but a weakened testimony. Here was a man of God. What kind of a testimony did he have toward Pharaoh? Pharaoh found out that Sarah was married; he was scared to death. He said to Abram, “Why didn’t you tell me she was your wife? Did you want me to get killed? You want me to get in trouble?” When he stopped living a life of faith, not only was there wasted time; there was a weakened testimony.

What kind of a testimony was he to Lot? We talk about, “Oh, what a wonderful testimony he was to Lot!” Did you know where Lot got his love for sin and the things of this world? Down in Egypt! That’s the reason why he chose to go to Sodom. The Bible tells us that. He had seen and he had tasted of a life in Egypt. Some of you parents have compromised your faith, you’ve gone down to Egypt, you’ve not come all the way out, you’ve not let go of all of those idols, and you may come out and you may do all right, but that boy or that girl may not do all right. There may be things, tastes, and desires in their lives because you’ve been camping out in Egypt. Lot—listen to this—Genesis chapter 13, verse 10: *“And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt.”* (Genesis 13:10) Lot said, “Look! This is like Egypt! That’s the way I want to go.”

3. Inherited Trouble

He wasted his time, he wrecked his testimony, and he inherited all kinds of trouble. Do you know what Abram got when he went down to Egypt and took this side trip? I’ll tell you one thing he got; he gained wealth. Look in chapter 12, and look in verses 15 and 16: *“The princes also of Pharaoh saw her, and commended her before Pharaoh: and the woman was taken into Pharaoh’s house. And he entreated Abram well for her sake: and he had sheep, and oxen, and he asses, and menservants, and maidservants, and she asses, and camels.”* (Genesis 12:15–16) Abraham now is getting wealthy down in the land of Egypt.

Was that good? No, it wasn’t good. One of the things he got down in Egypt was cattle. What’s wrong with cattle? Well, God didn’t call him to be a rancher. God called him to be a shepherd. There’s a difference between cattle and sheep. Sheep browse and cattle graze. Sheep have two sets of teeth; they can clip low grass. Cows just have one set; they have to take their tongue, wrap their tongue around the grass, and break it off like that. You’ve seen cows do that out in the field with their one set of teeth. A cow can’t clip the grass like that. This range war started because he was down there and he got some things that were supposed to bring him a blessing but only brought him trouble and grief. Anything you get out of Egypt is going to cause you trouble and grief.

I’ll tell you something else he got: Not only did he get wealth; he got a woman. When

he was down there, he got an Egyptian maid. What was her name? Hagar. Where did he get her? He got her down there in Egypt. She became Sarah's maid. Later on, Abram, the father of the faithful, went into Hagar, his wife's maid, had a son Ishmael, the progenitor of the Arab race. And right now the world is a tinderbox because of Abram, the man of faith, who could not trust God, went down into Egypt, got himself into all kinds of trouble—the relapse of faith.

V. The Restoration of Faith

One last thing: Let's think about the restoration of his faith. Thank God he didn't stay there. Go back to Genesis chapter 13 now and look in verses 1 through 4: *“And Abram went up out of Egypt,”*—amen—*“he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south. And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold. And he went on his journeys from the south even to Bethel, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Hai; unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the LORD.”* (Genesis 13:1–4)

I'm so grateful that God was patient with Abram. Abram was an old man at this time, but he was young in the faith. And God was tender with him, and God was patient with him. God remembered his frailty. God knows our frame, that we're dust. And Abraham failed in the school of faith, but God just re-enrolled him, put him through again. You know, God doesn't grade on the curve, but He keeps on re-enrolling us, doesn't He? Keeps on giving us the lesson so we can pass.

How did he repair his broken faith? Three things:

A. Repentance

First of all, there was repentance. Look in verse 1—chapter 13, verse 1: *“And Abram went up out of Egypt.”* (Genesis 13:1) He forsook Egypt. Are you willing to forsake Egypt? Listen. He already had forsaken the Ur of the Chaldees, and now he forsakes Egypt. You cannot get right with God and remain in Egypt. Is there some sin in your life that's stultifying your faith? Are you willing to repent of it? Repent of it. Why don't you repent? You say, “Well, I love my sin.” The most miserable man on earth is not an unsaved man. The most miserable man on earth is a saved man out of fellowship with God. What a terrible cost to remain in Egypt! Oh, the misery of believing in God and living in Egypt!

Remembrance

First of all, repentance; and then, number two, remembrance. Notice verse 3: *“And he went on his journeys from the south even to Bethel, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning.”* (Genesis 13:3) Did you once walk with God, but now you wonder why you're even in church on Sunday night tonight, because you're so far away

from God? Do you remember how it was when God was real to you? When you had your Bethel? That's where Abram had met God at the first place. Let me ask you a question: Was there ever a time where God was nearer, dearer, sweeter to you than He is right now? If so, you're backslidden. Just remember. Remember what it was like, how sweet it was, when you walked with the Lord. Let God bring you back to His house. You say, "Pastor, how can I get right with God? Where can I find God?" You'll find him right where you left Him—right where you left Him.

I was teaching the Bible on a Caribbean cruise—you know, somebody's got to do it—and when I got to Orlando, we got on a bus and went over to Cape Canaveral to get on the cruise ship, and I didn't have my bag, my suit bag. I said, "Well, it's just a cruise. All I need, really, are a couple pair of trousers, couple of shirts; I can step offshore and buy those. I'll get my bag—evidently, it didn't get on the bus—in Orlando." But I got to Orlando after the cruise was over; my bag wasn't there. I went to Delta and said, "I want..." They said, "We don't have your bag." I said, "Well, it just didn't get on the plane coming to Orlando. I'll get it when I get to Memphis." I went to Memphis and went to the lost baggage place; they didn't have my bag. By then I was really steamed. But I went on home, opened the bedroom door, and looked on the bed—and there was my bag. You know where I found it? Right where I left it.

Listen, folks. You know where you're going to find God? Right where you left Him. You don't have to guess at it. You get on your knees, your face; God will show you—God will show you. Go back to your first love.

B. Restoration

Repentance, remembrance, and restoration. The Bible says, in verse 4, he went to *"the place of the altar, which he had [made] there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the LORD."* (Genesis 13:4) He went back to the altar; he gave it all back to Jesus. And you know what the Lord did? The Lord cleansed him.

I'm going to tell you something. It's going to be sweet; it's going to be a blessing to you, and I don't want you to miss it. You say, "The thing that's sweet to me is when you start walking down there, because I know you're about to quit." Here's the sweet thing. When you read the New Testament, you don't read anything about Abram's failure—nothing. The only way you can find that is to read it in the Old Testament. Isn't God good? God did not remember his sin. God remembered his faith. Our iniquities He remembers against us no more. So if you've gotten away from God and your faith needs a little first aid, do what old Abram did: Come on out of Egypt. It's not worth it to stay there. Remember how God used to be so real and so fresh to you, those sweet times, those wonderful times? Those are the best times. Go back to the altar, give it all back to the Lord, and walk by faith. 'Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus.

Conclusion

Father God, I thank you for the life of faith. And, Lord, I pray in my own heart and in my own life, Lord, you'll help me not to compromise but to come all the way out of the land of idolatry, and Lord, not to compromise by taking a sojourn down into Egypt, but to live day after day just trusting you, relying on your Word.

Dare to Be Great

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: February 4, 1990

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 12:1–4

*“And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee,
and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing.”*

GENESIS 12:2

Outline

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Introduction

Take your Bibles and turn with me, please, to the book of Genesis. That ought not to be hard to find. That’s the first book. And then go to chapter 12. Today, we’re beginning a brand-new series of messages entitled “The School of Faith.” And the title of this particular message is “Dare to Be Great.”

I wonder if you think that it is wrong to want to be great. I suppose most of us would just bow our heads and say, “Well, you know, I don’t want to be great. It would be wrong for me to want to great.” My dear friend, it would be wrong for you not to want to be great. But you must understand that it is true greatness that you must want. Did you know that the Lord Jesus Christ told us to be great? As a matter of fact, the Lord Jesus said, *“And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.”* (Matthew 20:27) Now our Lord didn’t say, “Don’t be great.” Our Lord said, “Make certain that it is true greatness that you get. And I want you to be great in faith. And because you’re great in faith, you’ll be a blessing. And you will become a servant when you’re filled with faith.”

So we’re going to be thinking today about Abraham, the father of the faithful. Abraham, the brightest star in the Hebrew heaven; Abraham, whose name is great

among Jews, among Muslims, among Christians—a name that is known the world around. What is Abraham’s claim to fame? What is it that made Abraham great? God said of Abraham, *“Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.”* (Genesis 17:5) What was it that made him so great? His faith—his faith. The Bible calls him, in Romans 4, verse 11, *“the father of all them that believe.”* (Romans 4:11)

All right now, let’s begin to read here, and I want to read Genesis 12, the first four verses: *“Now the LORD had said unto Abram...”*—by the way, his name was Abram before it became Abraham—*“Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:”*—and by the way, that is real greatness, when we become a blessing—*“and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.”* (Genesis 12:1–4)

Now we’re talking today about the school of faith, and this morning I want to enroll every one of you. I’ll enroll you in that school, and we’re going to matriculate you into Faith 101. Now, my dear friend, the textbook will be the Word of God, the faculty are those people who are found in Hebrews chapter 11, and the dean of that faculty is a man named Abraham. And so we’re going to be studying now about faith. And, by the way, the classroom is not here, but the classroom begins Monday morning when you get out there. Your life day by day is the classroom as you enroll in the school of faith.

How important it is, my dear friend, that we understand this matter of faith! For Jesus clearly said, in Matthew chapter 9, verse 29—are you listening?—*“According to your faith be it unto you.”* (Matthew 9:29) Now we meet one another on Sunday morning, and we say, “How are you feeling?” But God didn’t say, “According to your feeling be it unto you.” Maybe we ought to meet one another, and give each other a handshake, and say, “How are you *faithing*?” because according to your faith, not your feeling; according to your faith, not your fame; according to your faith, not your fortune; *“according to your faith be it unto you.”* (Matthew 9:29)

Did you know that faith is the measure of your failure or success in the Christian life? Did you know that everything worth having, everything worth knowing, and everything worth doing is wrapped up here in faith? You need to be saved. *“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”* (Romans 5:1) You need to overcome the world. *“This is the victory that overcometh the world, even [your] faith.”* (1 John 5:4) You need to have your prayers answered. *“Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them,*

and ye shall have them.” (Mark 11:24) “Pray, believe, and you’ll receive; pray in doubt, you’ll do without.”

You want to have victory over Satan? The Bible says, *“Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.”* (Ephesians 6:16) My dear friend, whatever it is in the kingdom of heaven, whatever you need, the medium of exchange is faith. To receive from God, first of all, you must offer to God your faith. *“According to your faith be it unto you.”* (Matthew 9:29) But we’re going to see that really your faith is really His faith in you and through you.

Now there are three things this morning as we enroll in the school of faith that I want you to learn about faith that God taught Abraham. And remember, Abraham is *“the father of all them that believe.”* (Romans 4:11)

I. The Root of Abraham’s Faith

Now, we’re going to go right back to bedrock. I want us to think, first of all, this morning about what I’m going to call the root of Abraham’s faith. And it will be the root of your faith and of all faith. What is the root of faith? It is a revelation from God. God must speak before you can have faith. Faith is a response of trust in what God has said. Unless God speaks, you can have no faith, for faith is taking God at His word. And there must, therefore, be a word from God, because the Bible says, in Romans 10:17, *“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God,”* or more literally, a word from God. (Romans 10:17)

Now begin reading here again—look in verse 1: *“Now the LORD had said unto Abram…”* (Genesis 12:1) That’s it. That’s the root of his faith. *“The LORD had said to Abram.”* God spoke to Abram; God gave Abram a word. The Lord hath said to him, and all he did was in response to what God said to him.

Now, let me tell you three things that faith is not rooted in, to make it very clear, since this is Faith 101.

A. Faith Is Not Rooted in Human Will

Faith is not rooted in human will. It wasn’t something that Abraham cooked up. Abraham didn’t say, “I think I ought to be the father of a great nation. I’ll name it and claim it.” He didn’t cook it up. It wasn’t his idea. But we have some people today who have the idea that anything you want, just name it and claim it. But, dear friend, you can’t claim it until God names it. Now it must be from God. It doesn’t root in human will.

I’m going to tell you something astounding now. Genesis 12 follows Genesis 11. Now you’ve already learned something. Now, listen. Go back to Genesis 11, and I want you to see the biggest fiasco that this world has ever known. It’s what we call the Tower of Babel. Now this tower was a high-rise to hell. It was a tower of blunders. It was a monumental failure. And these people are trying to build a tower that would reach into

heaven. And they're trying to do what? And they're trying to make a name for themselves.

Look, if you will, in verse 4, for example. I want you to see four times they use the little pronoun *us*. "*Let us*"—look at it: "*And they said, Go to, let us*"—do you see it? And then—"*build us*"—that's the second time—"a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us"—that's the third time—"make us a name." (Genesis 11:4) Four times: "*let us,*" "*let us,*" "*make us,*" "*us,*" "*us,*" "*us.*" Now, you see that? Four times they're saying, "We're going to make ourselves a name." It was a colossal failure.

Now I want you to go to Genesis 12 and look, if you will, please, in verses 1 through 3. Four times you hear God say, "*I will,*" "*I will,*" "*I will,*" "*I will.*" In Genesis 11, they're saying, "We're going to make us a name; "*let us,*" "*let us,*" "*let us,*" "*let us,*" and it was a colossal failure. And then God says here to Abram, in verse 1, "I will show thee." (Genesis 12:1) Verse 2: "I will make thee." (Genesis 12:2) Verse 2: "*I will bless thee.*" (Genesis 12:2) Verse 3: "I will bless thee." (Genesis 12:3) "*I will,*" "*I will,*" "*I will,*" "*I will.*" Now, my dear friend, the difference between "*let us,*" that man says, and "*I will,*" that God says, is the difference between failure and true greatness. Faith always begins with the "*I will*" of God and not the "*let us*" of man. It's ironic that these people in Genesis 11 said, "We're going to make us a name." (Genesis 11:4) They made a mess. God said, "I will make your name great, Abram." (Genesis 12:2)

B. Faith Is Not Rooted in Human Works

So the first thing I want you to learn about faith: It is not rooted in human will. The second thing: It is not rooted in human works—not in human works. Do you know what Abram was when God called him? Now we think of Abram as being a great man, but, my dear friend, when God called him, he was a pagan idolater. The Bible tells us, in chapter 11 and verse 31, that he was living in the center of idolatry, Ur of the Chaldees, and he was a pagan. God didn't choose Abram for what he was; God chose Abram for what God knew He could make out of him. And God's calling upon Abraham was a calling of grace. There was nothing in Abram that would have caused God to call him.

I want you to put this verse down in your margin, and it is a very important verse this morning—Romans 4, verses 3 through 5: "*For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.*" (Romans 4:3–4) That means, dear friend, if you had to work for your salvation, then God would owe it to you, and you wouldn't be saved by grace. But the Bible says here, in the following verse, "*But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.*" (Romans 4:5) Abram was a pagan. There was nothing good about him, and yet his faith was counted for righteousness.

I want to say something else while we're looking at this scripture. Look, if you will, in

verse 4: *“Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.”* (Genesis 12:4) Do you see that? He was seventy-five years old when God called him. Now, listen to me, my dear friend. Abram was a pagan idol worshipper, seventy-five years old, and God spoke to him, called him, and saved him. Now, listen. There’s no one so bad here today that they cannot be saved. And it’s not too late for anybody to be saved. Isn’t that wonderful? It’s not too late. You say, “I’m a seventy-five-year-old man.” Wonderful! Come to Jesus today! Abram did. You say, “Well, I’ve been a deep sinner.” Abram was.

C. Faith Is Not Rooted in Human Wisdom

Let me tell you about faith, my dear friend. It is not rooted in human will, but God’s *I will*. It is not rooted in human works, but God’s grace. And it is not rooted in human wisdom. Not human will, not human work, and not human wisdom. God said to Abram—just look at this passage of Scripture here in verse 1: *“Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee.”* (Genesis 12:1) That is, “Abram, you don’t need to understand it. It is not human wisdom.”

Now, what is faith? Faith is not getting it figured out. Faith is not positive thinking. Faith is not following a hunch. Faith is not hoping for the best. Faith is not a feeling of optimism. As the little boy said, “Faith: That’s believing what you know ain’t so.” No, faith is none of these things. Faith is just laying your intellectual pride in the dust and saying, “God, just show me. I don’t know, Lord. Just show me.” Put in your margin Hebrews 11 and verse 8. The Bible says, *“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.”* (Hebrews 11:8) He didn’t know where and he didn’t know why. But, bless God, he knew who. He knew the Lord.

D. Faith Is Rooted in the Word of God

What am I saying? Faith is not rooted in human will, faith is not rooted in human works, and faith is not rooted in human wisdom. Faith is rooted in the Word of God. God had said to Abram, and what Abram did was just simply step out on the Word of God; he stepped out on God’s omnipotence. Think about it. Here he was already a wealthy man, a successful man; here he was seventy-five years of age; here he was surrounded by his loved ones and his friends; here he was with a beautiful wife. And God said, “Abraham, let’s go.” And he says, “All right, Lord, let’s go.” He did not know where, and he did not know why, but, my dear friend, he had a word from God. Are you listening? You want to be a person of faith? This is Faith 101, my dear friend. *“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”* (Romans 10:17) Nobody has ever had faith that has not first of all had a word from God. Faith is believing God. And unless

God speaks, you cannot believe. All right, so that, first of all, is the root of Abraham's faith. You got it?

II. The Requirement of Abraham's Faith

Second point: the requirement of Abraham's faith. Now, when God speaks, what is the requirement? That we move and that we obey. Now look in verse 1: "*Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee.*" (Genesis 12:1) Now He didn't say, "I'll make thee," until he obeyed, until he got out in order that he might come in.

Now, my dear friend, let me tell you something. I said it takes the Word of God, but belief in the Word of God is not faith. It becomes faith not only when we believe it but when we act upon it. Are you listening? Do you know the difference between belief and faith? *Faith is belief with legs on it*—faith is belief with legs on it. Now the difference between belief and faith is the difference between knowing about God and knowing God. "*If ye know these things, happy are ye if you do them.*" (John 13:17) Jesus said, "*He that hath my commandments and keepeth them...I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.*" (John 14:21)

Now the requirement of faith is to obey God. Let me tell you something about what faith is. Faith is not believing in spite of evidence. That's not faith. That's superstition. God doesn't want any of us to believe without evidence. God gave Abraham evidence, and He'll give you evidence. The Bible says, Stephen, when he was preaching about this, said, "*The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham.*" (Acts 7:2) God gave him His Word. God spoke to him. God gave him some evidence. Blind faith is not faith at all. The Bible never anywhere just says, "Just believe." God always gives us reasons for believing. God gives us His Word. Faith is not believing in spite of evidence. You listen to me. Faith is obeying in spite of circumstances or consequences. My dear friend, faith is not believing in spite of evidence; it is obeying in spite of circumstances or consequences: "Whatever God says, I will do it." My dear friend, when you begin to live that way, then you have faith.

Now, listen. The root of faith was revelation. The requirement was separation. Notice what he says. Look: "*Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee.*" (Genesis 12:1) You say you have faith? My dear friend, your faith is going to be seen in what you get out of and what you come to. Get out and come in. Here was a man who was living in a land of idolatry. But God brought him out that he might bring him in. Deuteronomy 6 and verse 23, God said the same thing through Moses: "*And he brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land which he sware unto our fathers.*" (Deuteronomy 6:23) God always brings us out that he might bring us in.

Real faith is not simply being dead to the world but being alive unto God. Faith is—listen—not only abhorring that which is evil, but it is cleaving to that which is good. You see, the root of faith is the Word of God; the requirement of faith is obedience to that Word—revelation and separation.

Now, you know why many of us don't have faith? Do you know why many of us are limping rather than leaping? Do you know why there are so many people who are spiritually anemic and don't have faith? I'll tell you why, my dear friend. You listen to me. They have forsaken the old way. What is the soil in which the seed of faith grows? What is it like? It has to be clean soil. Hebrews 3, verse 12, says this: *“Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief.”* (Hebrews 3:12)

Where does your lack of faith come from? Your lack of faith doesn't come out of your head. You say, “Well now, Mr. Rogers, I have intellectual problems concerning faith.” No, you don't; you've got dirty, rotten sin. If that offends you, you come up to me after the service and apologize, and I'll forgive you. My dear friend, you don't have intellectual problems; you have moral problems! God built you and God made you to believe in Him! When your heart is right, you'll respond to God by faith like your eye responds to light when your eye is right and like your ear responds to sound when your ear is right. Unbelief doesn't come out of the head; it only shows in the head. It comes out of the heart. *“Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief.”* (Hebrews 3:12) *“Whatsoever is not of faith is sin,”* (Romans 14:23) the Bible says. It's sin that keeps us from believing our Creator and believing our God. You want to have faith? First John 3, verse 21: *“Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.”* (1 John 3:21)

Let me give you an illustration. Suppose you and your wife have just had a tremendous argument, and there's that hostility and that animosity between you and your wife. And then your little baby shows up with a tremendous fever, and you know that you need God to do something for that baby. And you get down on your knees, and you begin to pray and ask God to touch and heal your baby. Don't you feel silly? Don't you feel stupid? Don't you feel so out of place?—until you get up and you say, “Honey, I'm sorry; forgive me,” and until you all get it right, and then you can pray in faith, just like the Bible says that we are to dwell *“as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.”* (1 Peter 3:7)

There is nothing more damning, nothing more debilitating, nothing more stultifying, and nothing more inhibiting to faith than sin in the heart. Hebrews chapter 12, verses 1 and 2: *“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the*

cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Hebrews 12:1–2) Lay aside those encumbrances; lay aside that sin.

My dear friend, if you are having trouble—listen—if you’re having trouble with faith, try repentance—try repentance. Now God has put certain things in order in the Bible. For example, the Bible says, *“Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord.”* (2 Peter 1:2) It never says, “Peace and grace,” always *“Grace and peace.”* Why is that? Because you have to know grace before you have peace. Isn’t that right? The Bible always says, *“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.”* (Mark 16:16) It never says, “Be baptized and believe,” because if you’re baptized before you believe, that’s like having your funeral before you die. Believe and be baptized; that’s God’s order. And I’ll tell you another one of God’s orders, and it’s always this way in the Bible: repentance and faith. It’s never faith and repentance. If you’re having difficulty with faith, my dear friend, try repentance.

Now, what am I saying? Listen. The root of faith is the Word of God: revelation. The requirement of faith: separation. “Get out, Abraham.” “Come in, Abraham.” Not only “get out,” but “get in.” He brought Abraham out that He might bring him in. Do you want to live a life of faith? Would you dare to be great? There is no greatness without believing God. God said, *“I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing.”* (Genesis 12:2) He said, “Abram, your belief in me has got to have legs on it. You are going to have to start believing me.”

III. The Reward of Abraham’s Faith

All right now, let’s go to the third thing. Faith 101 now, I mean, this is basic, folks. We’re not going to get beyond this. The root of faith is revelation. The requirement of faith is separation. The reward of faith is appropriation. Look at it. Go back, if you will now, to Genesis 12, beginning in verse 2: *“And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing.”* (Genesis 12:2) Now by faith, you appropriate. God wants to bless you. How is God going to bless you? When you believe God. How do you appropriate what God has? By faith.

Put in your margin this verse—Hebrews 11:6: *“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”* (Hebrews 11:6) Now that verse tells us two things about faith. By faith man gives God pleasure. Without faith it is impossible to please Him. You want to please God? You want to give God pleasure this morning? Believe God. Did you know that faith honors God, and unbelief dishonors God? *“He that believeth not God hath made him a liar.”* (1 John 5:10) There’s no greater insult that you could give God than simply not believing God.

Suppose you were talking about me, and you said, “Well, Adrian Rogers, he’s this

and he's that," and you would say some nice things about me, and then you'd say, "But there's just one thing about him; you can't believe him." Now, my dear friend, no matter what else you may say about me, if you say that you can't believe me, you've just cut the jugular vein of my character. Isn't that right? I mean, you've just said the worst thing about me that you could say, that I am not trustworthy—"You can't believe him."

Now, my dear friend, no matter how much you say, "God is good," "God is great," "God is holy," "God is this," and "God is that," dear friend, if you don't believe God, "*he that believeth not God hath made him a liar.*" (1 John 5:10) "*Without faith it is impossible to please him.*" (Hebrews 11:6) What pleases God more than anything else is for you, my dear friend, to simply believe God, because faith honors God. "*Without faith it is impossible to please him.*" By faith man gives God pleasure. And through faith God gives man treasure. That's what Hebrews 11, verse 6, says, "*But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*" (Hebrews 11:6) The reward of faith is to appropriate what God has for you.

Now, did God bless him? Did God give him that land? Indeed He did. Did God make his name great? Indeed He did. But now, listen to me, folks. He wasn't great yet just by being a blessing. Look in verse 2: "*And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee*—that's only half of it, but now let's look at the rest of it—"*and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing.*" (Genesis 12:2) You want to be great? Would you dare to be great? My dear friend, God put you in your family, God put you in your business, God put you in your neighborhood, God put you wherever you are, God put you in that school, that you would be a blessing! Why does God bless you? Do you think that you're a reservoir into which God is going to pour blessings? Then you'll never have them. Do you see yourself as a pipeline through which God will pour blessings? You'll have plenty.

Now, my dear friend, your prayer must be, "Oh, God, bless me," because you can't be a blessing until you've been blessed. And, my dear friend, any sermon that I preach that doesn't bless me is not going to bless you. By the way, this one blesses me not because I'm the preacher but because of the subject. But, you see, when I get blessed, when I study and when I'm blessed, then I'll bless you. You see, dear friend, God makes us a blessing that we might be a blessing—not a reservoir of truth but a river of revival.

Think how God blessed Abraham. God made him a blessing to his nation. He's the father of the Jewish nation. And from the Jewish nation we got the prophets. And from the prophets we got the Bible. And we received the Lord Jesus, a direct descendant of Abraham. Yes, he was great. Yes, his name is great. But not only did God bless him; God made him a blessing. Oh, Lord, make me a blessing.

I tell you, our world today is in such a terrible, terrible condition. And the only people who are going to bless this world today, the only one who has any answers in the school where you are, or the neighborhood where you work, and the only one who has anything for your children is the one, dear friend, who has been blessed of God and becomes a blessing. And there's no blessing without believing God.

Conclusion

Listen. The root of faith is the Word of God. The requirement of faith is being obedient to God. The reward of faith is the blessing of God to us and through us. How we need to believe God! And this isn't just what God did for Abraham. The Bible says that Abraham is the father of all who believe. My dear friend, let me tell you this. It all begins with trusting Christ as your personal Savior and Lord. The Bible says, *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."* (Acts 16:31)

When I talk to boys and girls about faith, I have a story I tell them, and I'm going to tell it to you, because if they can understand it, you just might. A little girl was walking through her home one day, and she saw that the basement door, the cellar door, was opened. It wasn't the kind that had stairs. It was a trap door, and there was a ladder that had to be put in place. The door was open, and there was a black gaping hole in the floor. She said, "Who's down there?" Her daddy said, "I'm down here, sweetheart." She said, "Well, Daddy, I can't see you." He said, "Well, I can see you." She was up in the light, and he was down in the darkness. She said, "Daddy, I want to come down where you are." He said, "I've taken away the ladder." But he said, "I'll tell you what, sweetheart: You jump and I'll catch you." "But," she said, "I can't see you!" "That's all right; I can see you." "But," she said, "I'm afraid." He said, "Sweetheart, do you believe I'm here?" She said, "I know you're here. I'm talking to you. I know you're here." "Well, do you know that I love you?" "Well, yes, Dad, I know you love me." "Have I ever told you a lie?" "No, Daddy, you haven't lied to me." "Do you believe that I am strong enough to catch you?" "Sure, Daddy, I know you're strong enough to catch me." "If you know I'm here, you know I love you, you know I won't lie to you, you know I'm strong enough to catch you and I promise to do it, why don't you jump?" She said, "Okay, Dad, here I come," stepped off, and he caught her. My dear friend, that's what saving faith is like.

"God, I can't see you, but I've heard your voice. I know you're there. I know that you love me. I know that you do not lie, and you have promised to save me if I trust you. And, Lord, by faith I step off on your omnipotence and into your arms. *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."* (Acts 16:31)

When Your Faith Fails

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: March 16, 1997

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 12:1–4

*“And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee,
and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing.”*

GENESIS 12:2

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Conclusion

Introduction

Genesis chapter 12—find it, please, and when you’ve found it, look up here. I am very, very excited today about the Word of God that we’re going to be studying together. We’re going to be talking about faith: what it is, how to have it, and what happens when your faith fails, when you have a spiritual blowout on the road to heaven. Well, in just a moment, we’re going to be looking in this passage of Scripture.

But I want you now to imagine two letters that are sent to the post office. One letter is typed beautifully by a word processor. It is typed on exquisite, expensive stationery. There is not a word misspelled. It is beautifully framed. Everything is perfect, not a smudge, not a smear. It is perfectly addressed and it’s placed in the mail. Another letter

is written. This letter is written on common notepaper like a yellow legal pad. It's stuffed into an envelope. It is written by pencil. It is full of grammatical errors. It is smudged, dirty. It has erasures on it. But there's a difference in the two letters. The first letter, so beautifully written, has no stamp on it. The second letter, written in pencil, with smudges and smears, has a stamp on it. Question: Which letter will be delivered?

Now, let me tell you something, folks. Faith is the stamp that gets your letter on through—faith. Some people may pray beautiful prayers; I mean they are eloquent, and they may be right, and the content may be good, but there is no stamp on the letter.

Now, folks, I want to tell you something. It is faith that makes the difference, amen? So we'd better learn something about faith today.

Now we're going to be studying in the school of faith, and I want to say that life is the classroom in the school of faith. The Bible is the textbook in the school of faith. The apostles and the prophets are the teachers in the school of faith. And Abraham is the dean of that school. The Bible calls him, in Romans chapter 4, "*the father of all who believe.*" (Romans 4:11) And when we think of Abraham, we think of faith. He is the father of the faithful, so we're going to study his faith. We're going to find out how he got his faith; how he used his faith; what faith did in him, and through him, and with him, and for him. But we're going to see—now listen to me—we're going to see that even his faith failed at a time. Abraham had a spiritual blowout. We're going to find out why, and then we're going to find out what he did about it. And then you're going to learn.

Some of you right now are having difficulty believing God, so this is going to be a wonderful Bible study for us today. And I want you now to read with me Genesis 12, verses 1 through 4: "*Now the LORD had said unto Abram...*"—now Abram was his name before he had this wonderful experience with God called faith—"*Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.*" (Genesis 12:1–4)

Now again, I cannot say enough about the importance of faith. Now, listen very carefully to me as to why this is so important. Faith is the identifying mark of a Christian. Did you know that Christians were called believers before they were called Christians? Jesus said to have faith is our chief duty—John 6, verse 29: "*Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.*" (John 6:29) Unbelief is the greatest sin. There's no greater sin than not to believe God. The Bible says, in John chapter 3, "*He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that*

believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” (John 3:18)

You know, you can say all kinds of nice things about me and then say, “But there’s just one thing about Adrian; you can’t believe him.” No matter what else you may have said, you just cut the taproot of my character. You can say many nice things about God, but friend, if you don’t believe God, that’s the biggest insult you can give to Almighty God. Unbelief is the mother sin, the father sin, the parent sin, the sin out of which all other sins grow.

Your Christian life is to be lived by faith. I want to give you four verses. Don’t look them up, but listen to them: Habakkuk 2, verse 4 (Habakkuk 2:4); Romans 1, verse 17 (Romans 1:17); Galatians 3, verse 11 (Galatians 3:11); Hebrews 10, verse 38 (Hebrews 10:38). They all say exactly the same thing. Do you know what it is? *“The just shall live by faith.”* Do you think God’s trying to tell us something? Four times God uses that exact statement, *“The just shall live by faith.”* (Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38) The way you live your Christian life is not by trying; it is by trusting. *“The just shall live by faith.”* (Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38) Your success in the Christian life is going to be measured by your faith.

Matthew 9, verse 29—Jesus said, *“According to your faith be it unto you.”* (Matthew 9:29) And again, even as we told you, it is faith that pleases God. Hebrews 11:6 says, *“He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”* (Hebrews 11:6) But that verse begins with this phrase, *“But without faith it is impossible to please him.”* (Hebrews 11:6) It is faith that enables you to overcome the world. This world is getting so vile and so wicked. How are you going to stand? How are you going to live? First John chapter 5 and verse 4: *“This is the victory that overcometh the world, even [your] faith.”* (1 John 5:4)

Folks, I’m telling you this, that you are not going to live the Christian life if you don’t have a strong faith. Do you believe that? You know, rather than meeting one another on Sunday morning and saying, “How are you feeling?” we ought to say, “How are you *faithing*?”—“How are you *faithing*?” because that’s it; that’s the bottom line.

I. The Root of Abraham’s Faith

Now, let’s look at Abraham, and let’s see, first of all, the root of his faith. How did Abraham come to be a man of God, a man of faith? Well, look in verse 1: *“Now the LORD had said unto Abram...”*—now, folks, that’s it right there. Faith is rooted in the Word of God. Are you listening? Faith is rooted in the Word of God—*“the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee.”* (Genesis 12:1) Now faith is not rooted in human will and human desire. Folks, Abraham did not name it and claim it; God named

it, and Abraham claimed it. Are you paying attention? God named it and Abraham claimed it.

Let me show you the difference between Bible faith and human will and ingenuity. Now I'm going to tell you something astounding. Chapter 12 follows chapter 11, okay? Now, look, if you will, in chapter 11. You're going to find man's high-rise to hell, man's tower of blunders, where man tries to build the Tower of Babel, and notice, if you will, in Genesis chapter 11, verse 4: *"And they said..."*—now these are the builders of man's civic masterpiece which was a tower of blunders—*"And they said...Let us"*—underscore that—*"build us"*—underscore that—*"a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us"*—underscore that—*"make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth."* (Genesis 11:4) Where did all of this begin? Not in the will of God, but in the wit, the wisdom, and the ingenuity of men. They say, *"Let us," "let us," "let us," "let us," "let us."*

Now, let me show you the difference between that and what God said to Abraham. Just turn back over here in Genesis chapter 12. Now, notice how the first two verses read: *"Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that"*—now watch this—*"I will shew thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:"*—verse 3—*"and I will bless them."* (Genesis 12:1–3) God says, *"I will," "I will," "I will," "I will."* Four times God says it. Four times in Genesis 11, they said, *"Let us," "let us," "let us," "us."* (Genesis 11:4) Do you see the difference?

Now, folks, faith is rooted in revelation from Almighty God. Faith has to have a word from God. Now you read there in Genesis chapter 11 and verse 4, they said what? *"Let us make us a name."* (Genesis 11:4) Well, do you know any of the names of those guys? Somebody stand up and tell me the name of one of them. Hey, you don't know who they are. But I'll tell you, we all know the name of Abraham, do we not? Because it is faith that counts. You see, here was a man. He was a pagan idolater. He lived, chapter 11, verse 31 tells us, over in Ur of the Chaldees, the counterpart of Babylon. (Genesis 11:31) He did not know God. But God took this man, a pagan idolater—a pagan idolater—and made of him a man of faith, because God gave him a revelation. God spoke to him.

I'll tell you something else. Not only was he a pagan; he was seventy-five years old when this happened. You can look at it in verse 4—chapter 12, verse 4. (Genesis 12:4) He was seventy-five years old. Now I want to say this to anybody listening to me. I don't care how bad you've been, and I don't care how old you are. You can become a person of faith—you can become a person of faith. Here is Abram. He is the father of the faithful. He gets a word from God.

Now, let me tell you what faith is not. It is not positive thinking. Now I like positive

thinking, but it's not positive thinking. Faith is not following a hunch. Faith is not hoping for the best. It's good to hope for the best, but faith is not optimism. Faith is not believing what you know ain't so.

Faith is getting a word from God. Romans 10:17 says, "*Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*" (Romans 10:17) Now, look at it again—Genesis chapter 12, verse 1: "*Now the LORD had said unto Abram...*" (Genesis 12:1) That's the reason that Bible study is so important. That's the reason that prayer is so important. That's the reason when you pray, not only should you talk; you ought to listen, and you ought to say, "God, speak to me." And God speaks in many, many ways. But you need to hear God in order to have faith. It is rooted in relationship with Almighty God.

Now, folks, faith doesn't mean that you're going to understand everything. Abraham did not know why, and he did not know where. Put in your margin Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 8: "*By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance,*"—now, listen to this—"obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went." (Hebrews 11:8) He did not understand, but he obeyed by faith, because he had a word from God. Warren Wiersbe, a great Bible teacher, has said this: "Faith is not believing in spite of evidence; that is superstition. Faith is obeying God's Word in spite of circumstances or consequences."

I want to ask a question. Be honest with me. How many of you remember what I just said that Warren Wiersbe said? Lift up your hand. Ha ha, that's not even ten percent. How many of you say, "Pastor,"—be honest—"I don't think I really heard it"? Lift up your hand. How many of you sit here and say, "I'm not going to let you trick me into anything"? Now, listen. Listen to that statement again. Now I want you to hear it. I didn't read that just to exercise my lips. Listen to it: "Faith is not believing in spite of evidence; that's superstition. Faith is obeying God's Word in spite of circumstances or consequences." Did you hear it that time? "Faith is obeying God's Word in spite of circumstances or consequences." He did not know where, he did not know why, but he knew whom. He had a word from God.

Now, folks, you'd better listen to what I'm telling you now. You've got to hear from God in order to have faith. You're not going to get everything all figured out every time.

II. The Requirement of Abraham's Faith

Now here's the second thing I want you to see: not only the root of Abraham's faith, but the requirement of his faith. Look again in verse 1: "*Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee.*" (Genesis 12:1) Now the root of faith is a word from God. The requirement of faith is to be separated from sin. "Get out that I might bring you in." You see, faith brings us out that it might bring us in. So many people want to live in the land

of faith and the land of idolatry at the same time. Listen to me, folks. You are not going to have faith until you're willing to be separated from sin. The most antithetical thing to faith is sin in the heart and in the life. And so many people are trying to live double lives and want to believe God, but the Bible says, "*A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.*" (James 1:8) "*Let not that man think he shall receive any thing of the Lord.*" (James 1:7) We are told to "*abhor that which is evil*"; (Romans 12:9) we are told to "*cleave to that which is good.*" (Romans 12:9)

Do you want to have faith? Get your heart clean. Let me give you some scriptures. Hebrews 3, verse 12—the Bible says, "*[Beware], lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief.*" (Hebrews 3:12) Now, notice this: Unbelief is not intellectual; it is moral. It doesn't come out of the head; it comes out of the heart. "*[Beware—beware], lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief.*" (Hebrews 3:12) There is nothing more debilitating, stultifying, to faith than sin in the life. Listen to Hebrews chapter 12, verses 1 and 2; it's a great faith chapter. It says this: "*Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a crowd of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight...*"—now, listen to this—"*let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.*" (Hebrews 12:1–2)

What's this passage saying? It's saying, if you want faith, put your eyes on Jesus. But when you put your eyes on Jesus, "*lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us.*" (Hebrews 12:1) If you're having difficulty—please listen—if you're having difficulty with faith, try repentance. If you're having difficulty with faith, try repentance. There are certain things that always come in a particular order in the Bible: grace and peace—never peace and grace—grace and peace, because you'll never know peace until you know grace. Believe and be baptized. The Bible doesn't say, "Be baptized and believe." Some of you need to get your baptism on the right side of your faith. And another order that God has given is repentance and faith—repentance and faith, repentance and faith! God says, "Abram, get away from these pagans. Get out of this pagan land of idolatry into a place that I will show you." You've got to be separated from sin.

Now, why can't some people have faith in God as they ought? Well, the Bible tells us clearly—1 John 3, verse 21: "*Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.*" (1 John 3:21)

Let's give an example. You and your wife are having a horrendous argument, and you're both filled with bitterness and hostility, and you're saying all kinds of horrid things. And then you discover your baby is sick and has a high fever. You say, "Well, we need to pray," and you and your husband get down on your knees to pray. Don't you feel silly? I mean, don't you feel silly? You know exactly what you've got to do first. What?

“Honey, I’m sorry. Forgive me. God, have mercy on us.” Why? You can’t pray with that hostility in your heart. Why? Because your heart condemns you, and you have no confidence toward God.

III. The Reward of Abraham’s Faith

Now the root of faith: You’ve got to hear from God. Now, friend, the requirement of faith: You cannot practice faith, live in the land of faith, and live in the land of idolatry at the same time. Now here’s the third thing I want you to see: I want you to see the reward of his faith. Notice verses 2 and 3—God said, *“I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.”* (Genesis 12:2–3)

Now, let me tell you what faith is. By faith you receive the blessings of God. Do you remember we said—Hebrews 11, verse 6: *“Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him”?* (Hebrews 11:6) You see, by faith man gives God pleasure; our faith pleases God. And through faith God gives man treasure. *“According to your faith be it unto you.”* (Matthew 9:29) Faith is the medium of exchange in the kingdom of heaven, just like money is the medium of exchange. If you want to go to the grocery store, you buy something; it takes money. You come to heaven to receive from God: *“Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”* (Hebrews 11:6) *“According to your faith be it unto you.”* (Matthew 9:29)

Now, what is the reward of faith? We are blessed by faith—by faith. Now, what did God do to Abram because he believed God? God said, “I give you a land.” God did give him a land. God said, “I’ll make your name great.” And his name is great; his name is known the world around. Every blessing of God is appropriated by faith. Some of you here today need to be saved. How are you going to be saved? The Bible says it clearly, sweetly, simply, sublimely. Acts chapter 16 and verse 31: *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”* (Acts 16:31) God will save you today; I promise you on the authority of the Word of God. And He’ll keep you saved if you will trust Him.

Now, wait. Listen to me now. What is the reward of faith? Not only that you will be blessed, but the reward of faith is that you will be a blessing. Now don’t miss this. Look in verse 2: *“And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing.”* (Genesis 12:2) It’s a twisted gospel that is self-centered. Do you know what you need to pray today? “Lord, help me to believe you, to get the sin out of my life so that you can bless me. And, Lord, make me a blessing.”

Abram became a blessing. He is a blessing to the world today. He became a

blessing to his own family. He became a blessing to the Jewish nation because they came out of the loins of Abraham through his son Isaac. Abram is a blessing to the world because the seed of Abraham wrote the book that we're preaching from. He is a blessing to this church because through his descendancy according to the flesh came the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He's a blessing to me personally because I'm learning about faith from this episode today. God made him a blessing, didn't He? God made him a blessing. God said, "I'll bless you, and through you, Abram, all the nations of the world will be blessed." (Genesis 12:3) And we're sitting here in Memphis, Tennessee, 1997, being blessed by a man who lived millenniums ago because he believed God.

You know, I'm going to step off this planet one of these days, but I'm going to leave behind a blessing. I'd like for people to say, "Adrian believed God." I'd like for my children to remember me not primarily for my preaching but for my faith. And I would pray that my children would be children of faith, that they would believe God. Friend, that's the reward of faith. We need to pray, "Lord, bless me and make me a blessing. Lord, help me to be a blessing to other people."

But let me tell you what the greatest blessing is. The greatest blessing is not to receive a blessing, but to be a blessing. And the greatest greatness is not to be great but to make others great. That is the greatest greatness. And that's what God used this man Abram to do. No wonder he's the dean of the school of faith.

IV. The Relapse of Abraham's Faith

Now that brings me to the fourth point. We've talked about the root of his faith. We've talked about the requirement of his faith. We've talked about the reward of his faith. Now, alas, let's talk about the relapse of his faith. Did you know that even Father Abraham, I say, had a faith failure, that he had a spiritual blowout in his life?

Now you're in chapter 12—go down to verse 10: "*And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land.*" (Genesis 12:10) Now here's Abram: God put him exactly, precisely, where God wanted him to be. He's in the land of Canaan, the land that flows with milk and honey, the land of promise, the land of plenty. And there's a famine in the land of plenty. There's a crisis in the land of promise. He doesn't know what to do. And now, rather than believing God and looking to God and trusting God, he goes down to Egypt, because down in Egypt, there is plenty of food at this particular time.

Why was there famine in the land of plenty? It was a test—it was a test. Now, folks, the faith that can't be tested can't be trusted. Would you want to fly on an airplane that had not been tested? Would you want to drive in an automobile that had not been tested by the manufacturer?

Do you know the Bible says that faith is like gold? (1 Peter 1:7) How do you know

you don't have fool's gold? How do you know that you have real gold? Well, a prospector takes his gold into the assayer's office, and he does a chemical test and says, "It's real gold." First Peter chapter 1, verse 7: "*That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold...*"—"the trial of your faith, being much more precious than...gold." (1 Peter 1:7) If you would try gold to find if it was pure gold, wouldn't you want to try your faith to find out if it is real faith?

Now, what should Abram have done here when there arose a famine? He should have prayed and gotten another word from God. Don't you think God knew where he was? Hadn't God led him there? Was he not obeying Almighty God when he got there? Yes! God fed Elijah with ravens. God fed the children of Israel with manna. And, friend, you believe God, and *don't you doubt in the dark what God has shown you in the light.*

Now here's this man; he has a relapse of his faith. And so many times we just think, "Well, if I just give my heart to God, everything is going to be fine. My wife and I got saved; now our marriage is not going to have any more problems." We discover we still have incredible testings and trials. We join the church, and we say, "Well now, I'm in a little colony of heaven. All the sinners are out there, and all the saints are in here." "Oh, look!" And we come to these difficulties, and we think, "Well, now what?" I thought serving God was going to be all honey and no bees. No. Abram has his faith tested, and he fails the test.

A. **The Cause of It**

Now, why did he fail the test?

1. Misguided Compromise

Well, you can see already the inkling of it if you go back to chapter 12, verse 1. God said, in chapter 12, verse 1, "Get out of thy country and from your kinfolks." (Genesis 12:1) But he didn't get out of his country and from his kinfolk. He took his father with him, Terah. He took his nephew with him, Lot. God said, "You leave those kinfolks." That's just a little compromise. He took them. And God said, "You go all the way to Canaan." But he stopped off halfway. Verses 4 and 5 tell us that he got to Haran, and he stopped there for a while. (Genesis 12:4–5)

He reminds me of a lot of folks here, members of this church. They live in faith, but they've got some kinfolks kind of hanging on. I'm not talking about physical kinfolks; I'm talking about spiritual kinfolks: old habits, old ways, hangover sins. And you've not gone all the way; you've not gone out-and-out one hundred percent for God. You're just kind of at a halfway house. You say, "Yeah, I really want to go to heaven, but I don't want to live like that radical Rogers is telling me to live. I mean, after all, I am saved." And so his first step—listen—was a misguided compromise.

2. Misplaced Confidence

And then his second step was a misplaced confidence—a misplaced confidence. Now he goes down to Egypt, and look, if you will, in verse 10: *“Abram went down into Egypt.”* (Genesis 12:10) Famine or no famine, he should not have gone down to Egypt. The Bible says, in Isaiah 31, verse 1, *“Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help.”* (Isaiah 31:1) Egypt was a pagan place in that day; it represented sin and compromise. And rather than depending upon God, he’s looking for worldly help. It’s an amazing thing. He trusted God to get him all the way from Ur of the Chaldees to Canaan, and then he couldn’t trust God to keep him once he got there. That’s like so many of us. We trust God to save us, and then we can’t trust God to keep us. You know anybody like that? Lots of folks like that, we trust God for spiritual things—that’s what Abram did—and then we can’t trust Him for material things when a famine comes along. We can trust God for all eternity, and we can’t trust Him for tomorrow.

3. Misappropriate Conduct

Listen. Misguided compromise, misplaced confidence, and then misappropriate conduct. Now, notice he’s beginning to go down; he’s getting away from God.

*Who is it knocks so loud?
“A lonely little sin.”
“Slip through,” I answered,
And soon all hell was in.*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

You won’t believe what you’re about to read in verse 11 except it’s in the Word of God. Now, look, if you will, in verse 11: *“And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon: therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive. Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister:”—can you imagine a guy saying this about his wife?—“that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee.”* (Genesis 12:11–13)

This rascal! This rascal! I mean, this is Abram! How can he get so low? He says, “Sweetheart, you’re so beautiful the king of Egypt may want to put you in his harem. Now if he finds out that we’re married, he may liquidate me, so just tell the king that you’re my sister.” Now that was half true. They were related in some way, but a half-truth is a whole lie. You know that, don’t you? But the worst thing behind that is the idea, the dastardly thing that he did.

First of all, compromise, then the wrong confidence, and now this unspeakable conduct of this man. I’m saying that Abram had a blowout on the road to heaven.

B. The Cost of It

Now, what happened to him? That was the cause of it. What was the cost of it?

1. Time

Well, number one: He wasted an awful lot of time. All the time that he was down in Egypt was wasted time because, you see, the Bible says that *“whatsoever is not of faith is sin.”* (Romans 14:23) At the Judgment Seat, Abram gets no reward for the time.

2. Testimony

But not only was it wasted time, a weakened testimony. Can you imagine the testimony? When that Egyptian king found out what Abram had done, he scolded Abraham for his duplicity. Can you imagine a pagan scolding a man of God, saying, “Hey, why did you deceive me like that?” What kind of testimony did Abram have to the king of Egypt?

And he took with him Lot down to Egypt. What kind of a testimony did he have to his nephew Lot? I tell you, his nephew Lot got down in Egypt; his nephew Lot had a taste of Egypt. And do you know what happened to his nephew Lot? He never forgot it, brother. As a matter of fact, when Lot was given a choice as to which way he could go after there was a conflict between his herdsmen and Abram’s herdsmen, the Bible says, “Lot lifted up his eyes and looked to the well-watered plains; the grass was lush.” (Genesis 13:10) “Why,” he said, the Bible tells us he said, “that’s just like Egypt—that’s just like Egypt.” (Genesis 13:10) And Lot pitched his tent toward Sodom. You know where it began? With Uncle Abraham. I mean, the man of faith.

Now I want every parent in this building to listen to me. And those of you watching on television, you listen to me. You may be saved, and you may be going to heaven, but camp out in Egypt and your kids are going to get in all kinds of trouble. I mean, the testimony that you have, the junk that you watch on television, the places that you go—you are going down to Egypt; you’re living like an Egyptian. And God may get you out of Egypt, and God got Lot out of Egypt, but He never got the Egypt out of Lot.

3. Trouble

Wasted time, weakened testimony when he’s down in there; but not only in the error of time and testimony, but trouble. Do you know what he got when he was down there in Egypt? He got two things, folks. Number one, he got wealth; and number two, he got a woman. The wealth he got: He picked up cattle, and later on there came a range war. Before this, he was not a herdsman; he was a shepherd. He had sheep. He didn’t have cattle. The cattle came from Egypt.

What’s the difference between sheep and cattle? Sheep browse. Cattle graze. Sheep can eat the things that cows can’t eat. Sheep just clip the grass. They’ve got two sets of teeth. Cows just have one. Did you know that? I read this. I’m not a farm boy.

You watch a cow. A cow will take long grass, put his tongue around it, and lift up his head. And with one set of teeth, he'll break off that grass. You watch a cow. I've watched cows do this. They take that grass, and they break it off. A sheep doesn't do that. A sheep just goes along, just like your barber shears, just clipping that grass. Now it takes a whole lot more for cattle than it takes for sheep. And so Abram comes out, and the Bible says he's got all these cows. Now he's a rancher, not a shepherd. And what he thought was going to be such a blessing to him became a curse to him.

And he got a woman down there. What was her name? Hagar, an Egyptian maid. She was an Egyptian. He later slept with her, produced a son Ishmael, who is giving to the sons of Abraham trouble to this very day. And the trouble spot in the world is the Middle East, because a man went down to Egypt and would not believe God and would not trust God. He had a blowout, a lapse of faith.

V. The Restoration of Abraham's Faith

Well, very quickly, notice the restoration of his faith. Go to chapter 13. It wasn't over with him. God was patient with him. I don't even have time to preach it. Let me just tell you what happened.

A. He Repented of His Sin

He repented of his sin—he repented of his sin—chapter 13, verse 1. (Genesis 13:1)

B. He Remembered His Former Faith

Number two: He remembered his former faith.

C. He Was Restored to His Former Condition

Verses 2 and 3 say he went back to Bethel. (Genesis 13:3) *Bethel* means “the house of God.” He came back to his original condition. Friend, I want to tell you, God was patient with Abram. He was an old man, but he was a babe; he was a child in the faith, a spiritual child. And God now has to help him, and God does help him. He has repentance, he has remembrance, he goes back to where he was, and he has restoration. He laid everything back on the altar.

Conclusion

Oh, listen to me! If you've had a relapse of your faith, listen to this verse—1 John 1:7: “*The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*” (1 John 1:7) Amen?

Bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. I'm going to tell you a real blessing—a real blessing. While your heads are bowed, listen to this real blessing. Did you know that the only place you can read about Abraham's failure is in the Old Testament? You can't read about it in the New Testament. Did you know that? In the New Testament, when God speaks of Abram, God does not remember his failure;

God remembers his faith. Isn't that wonderful? Is that not wonderful? And, friend, I tell you, if you have failed God today, you can put that failure in the grave of God's forgetfulness. And the God that gave Abram a new start and changed his name to Abraham is the God who'll give you a new start. God will give you a new name, a name written down in glory, if you'll trust Jesus.

Where should you put your faith today? You put your faith where God has put your sins: on Jesus. The Bible says, "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.*" (Acts 16:31)

What to Do When Faith Falters

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: April 12, 1981

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 12:1–20

“And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.”

GENESIS 12:2–3

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Introduction

Today, we’re going to introduce you to that brightest star in the Hebrew heaven: Abraham. Abraham, the man who was called the friend of God; Abraham, the man who is honored by Jews and Christians and Muslims alike. One of the greatest men that ever lived was Abraham, and Abraham’s claim to fame was his faith. He’s called, in Romans chapter 4, verse 11, *“the father of all them that believe.”* (Romans 4:11) And the Bible tells us, in Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 8, that he is one of the heroes of the faith for

all times. (Hebrews 11:8) And it was faith that caused Abraham to do all of the wonderful, mighty things that he did. So as we study this life of Abraham, we're going to be studying the life of faith. And we're going to be studying Abraham for quite a while now, so we want to learn a lot of things about him. And may I say that, as I'm talking and reading the Scripture, you're going to see that I'm going to be reading the word *Abram* rather than *Abraham*, because his name was later changed to Abraham. And so if I say, "Abraham" part of the time and "Abram" the other part of the time, you know I'm speaking of the same person.

All right, let's begin to read now in Genesis chapter 12, verse 1: "*Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great...and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed. So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him.*" (Genesis 12:1-4)

Now, let me just pause right here and tell you, dear friend, that we're going to be thinking about three things today. First of all, we're going to be talking about Abraham's response of faith; and then we're going to be talking about Abraham's relapse of faith, when his faith falters; and then we're going to be talking about Abraham's return of faith, when he got his faith back and got back on the track for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now you need to pay attention, because you're going to find out as a Christian that sometimes your faith will falter. And I hope you'll learn a great lesson today. I want to tell you, I've really preached to my own heart as I've already preached this message one time today. There's a real blessing here for us today if we'll listen, if we'll learn. Remember what we've said before: God will not only hold you accountable for what you hear; He will hold you accountable for what you would have heard if you had listened. So pay attention. And find out what God has to say to you today about faith, because faith is so vitally important.

The Bible says, "*According to your faith be it unto you.*" (Matthew 9:29) Not according to your fame, not according to your fortune, not according to your friends, not according to your fate, but "*according to your faith be it unto you.*" So many times we meet our friends around the church, and we say, "How are you feeling?" We ought to say, "How are you *faithing*?" Amen? Because it's not according to your feeling, but "*according to your faith be it unto you.*" (Matthew 9:29)

Friend, I want to tell you *the difference between the infinite and the finite is the difference between faith and unbelief. I tell you, when we believe God, we link our nothingness with His almightiness.* And faith can do anything that God can do, and God can do anything. How we need to learn to trust God by faith!

I think it was Archimedes who said, "You give me a lever and a fulcrum—that is,

something to rest it upon and a place far enough out in space to stand—and with that fulcrum and with that lever I can move the world.” He was a physicist. But I want to tell you, dear friend, that the lever is faith, and the fulcrum is the Word of God, and with it, not only can you move this world, you can move heaven above by believing God—by believing God, by trusting God.

“According to your faith be it unto you.” (Matthew 9:29) “Without faith it is impossible to please [God].” (Hebrews 11:6) And Abraham is called the father of the faithful. (Romans 4:11) So we’re going to learn some wonderful lessons today about faith, and we’re going to learn something about “What to Do When Your Faith Falters.”

I. The Response of Abraham’s Faith

Now the first thing I want you to notice is the response of Abraham’s faith. God spoke. Abraham responded. And that was faith. I don’t know a better way to explain to you what faith is than that: Faith is the proper response to the revelation of God. Faith is—pay attention now; it may not sound interesting, but it’s important—faith is response to revelation. That’s what faith is. God speaks, and you respond to what God says. And that’s faith. There cannot be faith unless God speaks, and there is no faith until you respond. It is when you respond to what God has said that there’s faith. That’s the reason the Bible says, “*Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*” (Romans 10:17) Unless you hear God speak, there could be no faith. You know, there are a lot of things that people respond to other than the Word of God.

A. Faith Is Not Rooted in Human Motivation

Faith is not a response to human motivation. Sometimes we get the idea, you know, “If I just get motivated about something...” We read a lot of these people who get us in these motivational meetings: “How to Think Positively” and “Get Yourself Properly Motivated.” And these people, and they’re good people—some of them in this audience—they say, “Boy, you know, if you can just think positively...” “Boy, if you just have faith, you can do it.” Well, friend, positive thinking never needs to be mixed in with faith, because they’re absolutely two different things—absolutely two different things. Faith is not rooted in human motivation.

Now I think positive thinking is fine. Man, I just don’t like to be around folks that don’t think positively. You ever drive and get behind a person expecting every light to turn red? And, sure enough, when they get there, it has. I hate to get behind a person like that. I’m not against positive thinking, but don’t confuse positive thinking with faith. Faith is not a response to human motivation. Sometimes a person says, “Boy, I’m going to do this thing. I’m going to do that thing. And now I’m going to believe that I can do it. And that will be faith.” That’s not faith. It may be presumption.

Look, if you will—let me show you something. Go back to Genesis chapter 11, verse

4. Remember last week we were talking about the building of the Tower of Babel. Do you remember that? Nod your head if you do. Look intelligent. All right now, look—do you remember that?—now, look—I want you to see what motivated these people who wanted to build that Tower of Babel there. Genesis chapter 11 and verse 4: *“And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad.”* (Genesis 11:4) Four times they say, *“Let us”*: *“let us,” “let us,” “let us,” “let us.”* Oh, they were motivated, all right. But, you see, that wasn’t faith; that was human motivation.

Now I want you to see the difference in what happened in Abraham. Look, if you will, in the last part of chapter 12, verse 1—and God says, *“I will shew thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee.”* (Genesis 12:1–2) And verse 3: *“I will bless them that bless thee.”* (Genesis 12:3) Notice four times those people said, in Genesis chapter 11, *“Let us,” “let us,” “let us,” “let us.”* Four times in Genesis 12, God says, *“I will,” “I will,” “I will,” “I will.”* And the difference between man’s *“let us”* and God’s *“I will”* is the difference between failure and faith. Do you see it?

You see, faith is not in human motivation. Faith is not something you cook up, something you scheme up, something you say, *“Now, let us do this,”* and ask God to bless it. Friend, there can be no faith until God speaks. When God says, *“I will,” “I will,” “I will,” “I will,”* and you respond to what God says, that’s faith—that’s faith. *“Faith cometh [from] hearing...the word of God.”* (Romans 10:17) Faith is not positive thinking. Faith is not your scheming up something and asking God to rubber stamp it.

And I tell you, there’s a real danger going on around now, and a lot of it is on television. A lot of these boys in the happiness cult are coming on television, you know, and getting a big following by people who are sometimes gullible. And this is what they are saying to those people. Now I’m not saying these people are insincere, but I’m saying they are certainly mistaken. And they may be insincere—I don’t know; I’ll leave that to God—but I know they are mistaken, almost to the point of heresy. And here’s the mistake they are making: They are saying to people who have needs in their lives—or at least, what they think are needs—they are saying to these people, *“What do you want? What is it you desire? Name it and claim it.”* Do you ever hear that? *“Name it and claim it.”* Friend, *you cannot name it and claim it. God names it, and then you claim it.* That’s the difference—that’s the difference.

Over here in Genesis 11, they tried to name it and claim it, and they sat and wept among the ruins of their crumpled tower of blunders, because they said, *“Let us,” “let us,” “let us,” “let us.”* But God says, *“I will,” “I will,” “I will,” “I will.”* And when God said, *“I will,”* and Abraham believed it, that’s faith. Faith is not rooted in human motivation.

B. Faith Is Not Rooted in Human Merit

Also, faith is not rooted in human merit. Do you know what Abraham was when God

called him? He was an idolater; he was a pagan. He was living in Ur of the Chaldees where they worshipped the moon god. He had no inherent worthiness to offer to God, but yet God broke through that darkness of his mind. And God spoke to this man, and he believed God. He had no merit to offer.

I want you to see something that is very interesting, if you will. Turn to Romans chapter 4. Just turn to it. Just keep one finger there and look in Romans chapter 4 for a moment. Do you want to see something about Abraham's faith? Romans chapter 4, verse 3: *"For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness."* (Romans 4:3)

Now, how did Abraham get righteous? By doing good works? By joining a church? Getting baptized? Keeping the Ten Commandments? No. *"Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness."* But, *"Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt."* (Romans 4:3–4) You see, if you could be saved by working for it, it would mean that God owed you salvation; you worked your way to heaven. God's not going to be indebted to any man. That's what verse 4 is saying: *"...that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."* (Romans 4:5)

Now, why do I say that? I want you to see that, not only is faith not rooted in human motivation; faith is not rooted in human merit. Do you get the idea that somehow, if you can be good enough, you'll earn the favor of God? Do you get the idea that you can please God with good works, the works of your hands? Friend, I want to tell you that that is another heresy.

Faith is not a response to how good I am; it's a response to how great God is. And there are a lot of self-righteous people who are going to miss the blessings. And there are a lot of people who are not nearly so outwardly righteous who are going to receive the blessing, because those dear people have learned how to believe God.

Did you know there are a lot of people who work their fingers to the bone trying to do church work, who think somehow they're going to commend themselves to God, and they still fail to believe God? Friend, it's time for you to stop trying and start trusting. Did you know that? It's time to stop trying and start trusting. *"But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."* (Romans 4:5)

C. Faith Is Not Rooted in Human Mentality

Faith is not rooted in human motivation. Faith is not rooted in human merit. And faith is not rooted in human mentality. That is, it didn't make sense. God said to Abraham, "You go to a place that I will show you." Not "I have shown you"; "I will show you." And the Bible says, "Abraham went, not knowing where." (Hebrews 11:8) He just went. It didn't have to make sense to him. God said it. He believed it. That settled it. Someone said, "God said it. That settles it, whether you believe it or not."

God said it. He said, “I’ll just show you.” I can see Abraham. He’s packing his things. “Abraham, where you going?” neighbors said. “Don’t know.” “How long you going to be gone?” “Don’t know.” “What are you going to do when you get there?” “Have no idea.” “I’ll tell you where you’re going; you’re going crazy. Where you going?” “No, God is calling. I felt God speak to my heart. God has said that I’m to go. I don’t have to understand it; I just have to stand on it.”

Now, friend, don’t get the idea that if you can just see your way clearer, you can do something. You keep your eyes on the Lord, who clears the way. *The world says that seeing is believing; the Bible teaches that believing is seeing.* If you believe, you’ll see the glory of God. That’s what the Bible says: You cannot see until you believe. “Abraham went out, not knowing where he went.” (Hebrews 11:8) He didn’t know how long he was going to stay there. He just simply stepped out on omnipotence. And I mean, here he was, at least seventy years old, established in the land with a family and with a business—whatever his business was, I don’t know. He didn’t know where, but he knew whom. And he stepped out. You say, “That must have been exciting.” It was. Aren’t you tired of living a monotonous life: dull, insipid, average, drawing your breath, drawing your salary? Why don’t you cut loose and live by faith that way? That’s why this is put in the Bible: to encourage you. He’s to be the father of all who believe. (Romans 4:11)

What I’m saying is that faith is not rooted in human motivation. It is not rooted in human merit. It is not rooted in human mentality. It is a response to revelation. God speaks; God says something. You find a promise from God—either a promise in God’s Word or a promise that God takes the Word of God and makes a specific promise to your heart through His Spirit—and you believe God. And that is faith.

Now, was Abram a fool to do this? Well, God says, “You go, and I’m going to give you this land.” God says, “You go. I’m going to make you a blessing to all nations.” And God says, “You go, and I’m going to make your name great.” Well, did God give him the land? Indeed He did. Do you know why those people are over in that land today? Because God gave it to them. And not only do they have what they have now; they are going to have it all, dear friend. Mark it down. God put them in that land. That’s the Promised Land. God gave it to Abraham.

But listen. Not only did God give him a land—what did He say? He said, “I’m going to make you a blessing to all nations.” I want to tell you, Abraham is a blessing to me today. Do you know why? He sired the people who gave us this book. I thank God for the Jewish people. I love them with all my heart. And one reason I love them is that they gave me this book that I’m preaching from. But not only that, through them came the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. What a blessing Abram has been to all nations!

And his name is great. Here we are talking about it now, millenniums after he lived.

Little boys named Abraham—how many people do you know named Abe? Listen. Those people at the Tower of Babel said, “We’ll build up the tower and make us a name.” How many of their names do you know? You see, they did it their way, but God said to Abraham, “I’m going to make your name great.” He did it God’s way. And so, what is faith? Faith is a response to revelation. And that’s the reason you’ve got to know this book.

Many of you are floundering about like a ship without a mast, sail, or rudder on a dark and stormy night, with no compass on board. You’re wondering why you don’t know what’s happening. What’s up? You’re wondering why you don’t have any more faith. *“Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”* (Romans 10:17) Faith is a response to revelation. You can’t have faith until you saturate yourself with this book and put yourself in the presence of God and have a quiet time and let God begin to speak to you.

II. The Relapse of Abraham’s Faith

Now that’s the first thing I want you to see: the response of Abraham’s faith. I wish I could end it there—and you say, “I do too.” No, I’ve got more time to preach. All right now, listen. There’s something else: Not only the response of Abraham’s faith, I want you to see the relapse of Abraham’s faith. There was a time when this man’s faith faltered.

And begin reading in verse 10—Genesis chapter 12, verse 10: *“And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land. And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon: therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive. Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee. And it came to pass, that, when Abram was come into Egypt, the Egyptians beheld the woman that she was very fair. The princes also of Pharaoh saw her, and commended her before Pharaoh: and the woman was taken into Pharaoh’s house. And he entreated Abram well for her sake: and he had sheep, and oxen, and he asses, and menservants, and maidservants, and she asses, and camels. And the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai [Abraham’s] wife”—or “Abram’s wife.” “And Pharaoh called Abram and said, What is this that thou hast done unto me? why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife? why saidst thou, She is my sister? so I might have taken her to me to wife: now therefore behold thy wife, take her, and go thy way”—that is, “Get out of here.” “And Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him: and they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had.”*

(Genesis 12:10–20)

Oh, here was a terrible relapse of faith! Here was time when Abram’s faith faltered. And now I’m not happy this happened to Abram, but I’m kind of glad it’s in the Bible. I’ll tell you why: because it encourages me, because my faith has faltered sometimes. Has yours ever faltered? Sure! Well, you see, that’s the wonderful thing about the Bible: When the Bible paints a portrait of a man, it paints warts and all. You know, here’s Abram. You know, the Bible doesn’t gloss over this. I’m glad because, in a strange way, that’s an encouragement to us, because we can learn a lesson. And I pray God that you’ll learn it.

Here’s what happened to Abram. Abram now, he’s following God. He hears God. God says, “You go.” He says, “I’ll go.” “Where you’re going doesn’t make any difference. Just follow me.” He follows. He’s walking by faith. And we find out here in the verses before verse 10 that he’s built a tent and an altar. He’s worshipping the Lord. But then there’s a famine in the land. A famine where? In the land of Canaan. What was the land of Canaan? The land of plenty and the land of promise. And there was a famine in the land of promise. That is, he was exactly where God told him to be, doing exactly what God told him to do, and a famine came in the land. Man, he couldn’t understand it. He says, “Now this fine kettle of fish. Here I am, following the Lord, stepped out on omnipotence, doing exactly what God told me to do, and now here I am in the middle of a famine. I know what I’m going to do: I’m going to hotfoot it down to Egypt.”

Now, what was wrong with going to Egypt? Egypt, in the Bible, is a type of sin in the world. And he had no business going down to Egypt. The Bible says, in the book of Isaiah, “*Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help.*” (Isaiah 31:1) Woe unto the Christian who, once he sets his sails to follow the Lord, turns back. Woe unto that man, that woman, that boy, that girl, who says, “I’m going for Jesus,” and when he gets in a little hot water, when famine comes in the land of plenty, he goes back to the world for help. That’s exactly what this man did. He took his eyes off the Lord; he put his eyes on circumstances. And had we remonstrated with him, he would have said, “Well, after all, God expects me to use my head.” And he went down there into Egypt and disobeyed his Lord, and he dishonored his Lord.

A. The Reason for Abraham’s Faltering Faith

Now, let me tell you how he got into this business.

1. Incomplete Obedience

First of all, there was incomplete obedience. Let me show you something here. Look, if you will, in the last part of chapter 11, and look in verse 31: “*And Terah...*”—you haven’t met him yet, have you? All right, he was Abram’s father—“*And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son’s son, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son*

Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there." (Genesis 11:31) You say, "Well, what's wrong with that?" Well, look in verse 1: "Now the *LORD* had said..."—He's already said it; this was before all this took place in the last three verses—"*the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee.*" (Genesis 12:1)

Now God hadn't told him to go to Haran, but that's where he went. And God had told him to leave his kinfolds, and he didn't. He went with his father, and he went with his nephew. Well now, did he step out by faith? Yes, he did. When he left Ur of the Chaldees, he was believing God, for the Bible says he did it by faith. But wait a minute. He didn't go all the way at first; he just went halfway. Have you ever been to Halfway Haran? Have you? And he took with him some things that he ought not to have taken. Have you got some hangover sins?

Now I'm talking to some folks—listen to me now—I'm talking to some of you who are true believers, some of you who have really trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior—I mean, you said, "I'm going for God"—but you haven't gone all the way. And furthermore, you've got some hangover sins with you. Some of you haven't gone all the way. You say, "What do you mean, 'haven't gone all the way'?" Some of you gave your heart to Jesus Christ and said, "I want to be saved," and you meant business, and you got saved, but you haven't been baptized yet. Some of you have never had believer's baptism. You wonder why you're having difficulty with faith. Halfway Christians with hangover sins: Some of you got saved, and God the Holy Spirit is saying, "Leave that behind, and leave that behind." You say, "Well, I'm going, but I'm going to take that with me." You do, and you'll have trouble all your Christian life, and you'll have difficulty with a faltering faith. Abram did, and you will.

2. Incomplete Dependence

First of all, there was incomplete obedience. And then there was an incomplete dependence. When he got down there to the land of Canaan and there was a famine in the land, what should he have done? Whether he could understand it or not, whether it made sense to him or not, whether it seemed reasonable to him or not, he should have said, "This is where God put me, and this is where I'm going to stay, regardless of what happens; if I starve to death." Amen? I mean, when you say, "I'm going to start tithing," and then you lose your job, what do you do? Keep tithing. Boy, when there's a famine in the land of plenty, just trust God. Let me tell you something, friend. All that was, was a test of Abram's faith. And *don't you ever doubt in the dark what God has shown you in the light*. I mean, when you're in the will of God, if it doesn't make sense to you or not, you just depend upon God. You say, "Now God put me here, and I'm going to stay here. And I'm going to stay here even if it doesn't make sense to me."

It was a test of Abram's faith. He got down there. There was a famine in the land. He said, "I'm going to Egypt," and that's where he got in trouble.

3. Incomplete Honesty

Listen. There was an incomplete obedience: He went halfway, took some people with him he ought not to have taken. There was incomplete dependence: He did not depend upon the Lord. There was an incomplete honesty: He's still trying to do a little bit himself.

Now when he goes down to Egypt, you know, he had a good-looker for a wife, Sarah. I mean, she was beautiful. Listen, ladies. She was at least sixty-five years old, and there wasn't a drugstore in sight. And this woman—listen—she must have been something. I kid you not. He says, "When we get down there to Egypt, ol' Pharaoh's going to see you. He's going to want you. I mean, he's going to want to put you in the harem. And when he finds out you have a husband, that's going to be the end of that husband. He's going to do something to me. And so, look, don't tell him. Don't tell him we're married. Just tell him you're my sister."

Now, you see, there was a sense in which that was true, because she was his half sister. What this was, was a half-truth, which equated to a whole lie. It was the half-truth, but it was meant to deceive. And you can lie with the arching of the eyebrow. Anytime you deceive anybody, you're telling a lie, whether or not you try to weave it out and make it sound like the truth, you see? And so here was an incomplete honesty. Here he's trying the carnal ways of the world.

You see, when a man gets away from God, then he has to start scheming; he has to start figuring things out himself. This old rascal! I mean, can you imagine? To tell his wife he'd rather have her in a pagan harem, just to save his own hide! Listen. When Pharaoh found out what he had done, even Pharaoh was disgusted. Pharaoh said, "Would you get out of here! We're having a lot of trouble because of you." I tell you what. Ol' Jonah even made that whale sick to his stomach. And here is Pharaoh—here's Pharaoh—who's disgusted at a child of God. Did you know that a Christian out of fellowship with God can do some mighty terrible things, can't he? I mean, so much that it's even a disgrace to the world. And here Pharaoh has to say, "Look, you're a troublemaker. I wish you'd get away. You take your wife. You take everything and just get on away from here"—because of an incomplete honesty.

B. The Results of Abraham's Faltering Faith

Now here's the part of the message that really gripped my heart, so you pay attention. When I studied this, this really, really spoke to me. I want you to see what happened, the cost to Abram, when his faith faltered. I want you to see two things that he gained and two things that he lost when his faith faltered.

Let's start with the things that he lost first.

1. He Lost Time

First of all, he lost time. The whole time that he was down in Egypt he was out of the will of God. And anytime that you're out of the will of God, that time amounts to nothing in eternity's clock. At the Judgment Seat of Christ, anything you do out of the will of God is wood, hay, and stubble. (1 Corinthians 3:12) It's gone forever. That's the reason the Bible says, "*So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.*" (Psalms 90:12) I tell you, dear friend, today, if your faith is faltering, you're not living by faith. Now the Bible says, "*Whatsoever is not of faith is...*"—what?—"sin." (Romans 14:23) And what's sin going to amount to at the Judgment Seat of Christ? You see, here his faith faltered, and he lost time when he could be getting rewards in heaven, when he could be getting gold and silver and precious stones. Here it is. There is a loss of time.

2. He Lost Testimony

But not only was there a loss of time; there was a loss of testimony. Do you know that this man should have been able to witness to old Pharaoh under the right conditions—not when he's down in Egypt trying to get help from Egypt, but in the right conditions? But rather than being a witness, he was disgusting to Pharaoh. I tell you, dear friend, if you're a backslidden Christian, please don't try and witness. Do me a favor and keep your mouth shut, will you? If you're a member of Bellevue, and you're not going to live for God, don't brag that you're a member of Bellevue, would you, please? Kind of hide it, would you?

Oh, listen. Did you know—did you know—that Christians out of fellowship with God are an abomination to God? That's what keeps us from bringing the world to Jesus Christ. We can't even reach the goal, because we stumble over our own soldiers. *The greatest argument for Jesus and against Jesus is the life of a Christian.* And when we testify, not only should we be witnesses; we ought to be evidence. Here is a man who disgraced God before the unsaved. And if Pharaoh died and went to hell, a part of it was Abram's fault, because he wasn't walking with faith.

And then not only before the unbelievers; think about the testimony before the believer. What kind of a testimony was he to Lot? Did you know that Lot was a saved man? Did you know that one day you'll see Lot in heaven? That is, if you get there. Did you know that Lot is a saved man? The Bible tells us that he was justified. He believed God also. But here was Abram, took Lot down to Egypt with him, and Abram got Lot out of Egypt, but he never got Egypt out of Lot. And Abram was a more mature man, a more mature believer, and what Abram was able to live with, Lot was not able to live with; and what Abram was able to overcome, Lot never did really overcome. And it

became the ruination of Lot.

I want to show you something here very interesting. Look, if you will, in Genesis chapter 13, verse 10. Do you remember Lot was the one who pitched his tent towards Sodom? Lot was the one who went down into Sodom and lost his family and lived in disgrace. A terrible thing happened to Lot when he went to Sodom. Well, we're always blaming Lot for pitching his tent towards Sodom, but, friend, I want to tell you something: It wasn't altogether Lot's fault. A part of it was Abraham's fault.

Look, if you will, please, in Genesis chapter 13 now and verse 10: *"And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt."* (Genesis 13:10) When Lot looked up, he said, "Wow! That's like Egypt. Hot dog! Look! There's something like Egypt."

What I'm trying to tell you is that Abram got Lot out of Egypt, but he never got Egypt out of Lot. And when you as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ allow sin to get in your heart, and when your faith falters, maybe you'll come back. But there may be some weak believer who is going to be forever by your side during your sojourn down into Egypt. Boy, the Bible says, don't destroy that weaker brother for whom Jesus died. Lot was a weaker brother. But Abram lost his testimony. He lost time. He lost testimony.

But now let's see what he gained when he was down in Egypt. He lost two things: time and testimony. He gained two things. Here's what he gained: He gained wealth, and he gained a woman. Now let's see what good they did him.

3. He Gained Wealth

Now, first of all, he gained wealth. Look in chapter 13, verses 1 and 2: *"And Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south. And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold."* (Genesis 13:1-2) Now, just underscore the word *cattle* because that's what I want to bear down on right now. He gained wealth, and a part of the wealth that he gained was cattle. You say, "What's wrong with that?" God didn't want him to have cattle. Had God wanted him to have cattle, God would never have depended upon Pharaoh to give him cattle. This is the first mention of cattle in Abram's life. You see, Abram went down into Egypt a shepherd; he came out a cattleman. He went down a nomad; he came out a rancher.

You say, "Well, big deal!" Pay attention now. The thing that got Abram in trouble after he got out of Egypt were these cows that he had. You see, there was a range war, and the cowboys of Lot and the cowboys of Abram got in a big hot argument over grazing rights. And there wasn't enough grass to feed these herds that they got down in Egypt. They went into Egypt with flocks of sheep; they came out of Egypt with herds of cattle. "Well," you say, "sheep, cattle, what makes the difference?" There's a difference in the way they feed. Do you know how a sheep feeds? A sheep will browse; a cow will

graze. You say, “Just a play on words.” No, it’s not a play on words. A sheep has two sets of teeth. He has upper teeth and lower teeth. And so a sheep, when it’s feeding, browses; that is, he clips the grass like that. He bites it off. That’s called browsing. And therefore, he can eat grass that’s very low.

I’ve been over to the Middle East, I guess, ten or eleven times on various journeys over there. And it’s always been interesting to see these sheep on the mountainside. It looks like they’re eating the ground. It looks like they’re eating sand; it looks like they’re eating dirt. And you get up there real close; it’s that low-growing brown grass that’s so close to the earth. It looks like it’s a barren field, but they’re out there browsing, nibbling, and eating. Cows can’t do that. You see, a cow only has teeth up here, doesn’t have any down here. And so how does a cow feed? A cow takes his long, slithering tongue, wraps it around that grass, and holds it, and then puts his head, and breaks it off with his teeth. You ever seen a cow do that: put his head down, just break it off? That’s the way he does it. He can’t bite it off.

Now I’m not a farm boy. I read this. But after I read it, I thought about it, and I know it’s true—it’s true. See, a cow—a cow—can’t do that. A cow needs pasture that no sheep can live in, and what will take care of many sheep will only take care of a few cows. And, you see, God didn’t want him to have these cows. If God had wanted him to have these cows, God would have given him these cows. And, you see, everything the devil gives you, the devil’s going to collect for.

We used to have a great pastor here at this church named Dr. Robert G. Lee. He said, “You can eat the devil’s corn if you want to, but he’ll choke you on the cob.” Amen? You see, you’re not going to outsmart God. You say, “Well, I’m going to go down to Egypt. There’s a famine in the land. I’m going to do it my way; I’m going to get something I want.” Everything the devil gives you, you’re going to pay for. You’re not going to outsmart God.

4. He Gained a Woman

But not only did he get wealth; he got a woman. You know who else he got when he was down there? He got an Egyptian handmaiden. You know what her name was? Hagar. “Well,” you say, “who was Hagar?” Hagar was the woman that Abraham took for a concubine, went in and had a child by her, whose name was Ishmael, and from Ishmael came the Arab race. And the problem in the Middle East right now that has set the world on a tinderbox is because this man, so long ago, faltered in his faith. And the pain in the side of these people for so long has been: Here was a man who went down to Egypt; here was a man who could not trust God in the dark; here was a man who took matters into his own hands.

He went down there, and he lost time, and he lost testimony. He gained wealth, and he gained the woman. Oh, the sadness, the tragedy, when faith falters, when we get out

eyes off the Lord, put our eyes in circumstances, and when we try to do things our own way! Would to God that we could learn!

III. The Return of Abraham's Faith

Now, let me just go to one other thing, and I'll be finished this morning. Not only do I want you to see the response of Abraham's faith—that is, God spoke and Abraham responded. That was faith. Not only do I want you to see the relapse of Abraham's faith, but I want you to see the return of Abraham's faith. And I'm so grateful that the Bible doesn't end here in Genesis chapter 12, but it goes on to Genesis chapter 13. That's brilliant, isn't it?

All right now, listen in Genesis chapter 13, the first four verses: *“And Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south. And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold. And he went on his journeys from the south even to Bethel, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Hai;”*—now he just goes back to Bethel. You know what *Bethel* means? *Bethel*: “house of God.” Out of Egypt, out of the land of sin, back to the house of God—*“unto the place of the altar, which he had make there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the LORD.”* (Genesis 13:1–4)

Oh, I like that: just like it was at the beginning. Isn't God great? Isn't God wonderful? That God says, “You can come back.” “Come out of Egypt, my people,” He says. “Come on back.” And how did he come back?

A. Separation

First of all, there was separation: He came out of Egypt. Do you want to get right with God? You'll never do it down in Egypt. He never could have gotten right down there in the land of disobedience. *“Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD [his God].”* (Isaiah 55:7) Are you willing to come out of Egypt? Are you willing to cease your dependence upon Pharaoh and upon those things down there in the world? Their world could never enrich you. You need to come out. You need to forsake Egypt. Oh, he was glad he did. Now he might have been down there in Egypt thinking he was having a good time, but in his heart he knew he wasn't.

Do you know who the most miserable man on earth is? Not an unsaved man. You know, sometimes we make a mistake. We tell people, you know, “You're miserable. If you'd get saved, you'd be happy.” He may be happy without being saved. Did you know that? He may think you're a nut. You say, “Boy, if you just go down there and listen to Brother Rogers, you'd be happy.” He says, “Man, I'm having a good time in this bar”—and he is. Don't tell him he's not, because, friend, he knows he is. And if you have any sense, you'd know he's having a good time. The Bible speaks of *“the pleasures of sin.”*

You say, “Brother Rogers, don’t tell people that.” Well, the Bible tells us. The Bible speaks, in Hebrews 11, of *“the pleasures of sin.”* *Don’t tell people there are no pleasures in sin. Of course, there are pleasures in sin. The devil’s too smart to go fishing without any bait on his hook.* There’s pleasure in sin. But the Bible says that *“the pleasures of sin [are only] for a season.”* (Hebrews 11:25)

Now there’s no joy in sin. There’s no peace in sin. There’s no salvation in sin. But there’s a certain sensual pleasure in sin. If there weren’t, people wouldn’t do it. You see, there’s a certain pleasure in sin. *And the most miserable person, therefore, is not an unsaved person; the most miserable person is a saved man out of fellowship with God.* The most miserable person is a man like Abraham, who started out for God and then goes down to Egypt. Now that is a miserable man because, you see, he’s got God in his heart, and Egypt’s under his feet. And he’s unhappy in both worlds.

Say, don’t you think it’s about time you came out of Egypt? Don’t you think it’s about time you let go of this world with both hands and took hold of God with both hands? You want joy now? Let’s not talk about pleasure and happiness anymore. Let’s talk about joy. You’ll never know joy—I’m talking about pure, wonderful joy—until you go all the way with the Lord. Abram went back.

B. Sanctification

See, first of all, there was separation. And then not only was there separation; there was sanctification. You see, he not only left Egypt; he went back to Bethel. You see, it’s not enough for you to be dead to the world; you’ve got to be alive unto God. It’s not enough just for you to say, “I’m not going to do this anymore.” You see, Christianity is not a negative thing; it’s a positive thing. You say, “Well, I don’t smoke, and I don’t chew, and I don’t drink, and I don’t do this.” Well, I’ve got a dog at home that doesn’t do any of those things—she does a lot of things though, I tell you. But anyway, we’re training her, a little puppy—but it’s not what you don’t do, you see. You’ve got to come out of Egypt. That’s one thing. But you’ve got to go to Bethel, back to where God tells you to go. I don’t know where your Bethel is. I don’t know what the will of God is for you, but dear friend, there is no joy, no happiness, no fulfillment, no restoration of faith until you go back to where God put you.

C. Sacrifice

There was, first of all, separation, then sanctification, and then sacrifice. Look at it, in verse 4: *“Unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first.”* (Genesis 13:4) I’m so grateful for the altar in Abraham’s life. There are two things in Abraham’s life that stand out. Perhaps in this series we’ll have a chance to talk about them. One was the tent; the other was the altar. The tent showed that he was just a pilgrim, a sojourner; the altar showed that he was trusting God with all of his heart and all of his

soul. Oh, listen, friend. There is today that sacrifice of Jesus for you. You know, the Bible says that Abraham saw the gospel. (Galatians 3:8) God revealed to Abraham so long ago that Jesus would come and die. That's right. The Bible says, in the book of Galatians, the gospel was preached unto Abraham. (Galatians 3:8) Jesus said, "Abraham saw my day and was glad." (John 8:56) And every altar in the Old Testament, do you know what it was a picture of? Do you know what it was a prophecy of? Do you know what it was a promise of? That one day Jesus would come and die upon the cross. All of it spoke of Jesus, the Lamb of God, that "*taketh away the sin of the world.*" (John 1:29)

Conclusion

And I want to tell you here today, dear friend, dear backslidden Christian who's had a faltering faith, why don't you come out of Egypt and make that separation? Why don't you come back to God and make that sanctification? Why don't you claim the altar and that sacrifice, the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, that "*cleanseth...from all sin*"? (1 John 1:7) God took Abram back. God will take you back. He will—He will. And there are some of you who have never the first time stepped out of the land of idolatry to say, "I'm going to follow the Lord." You know, the Bible says, "Abram believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness." (Genesis 15:6) The thing that made him fit for heaven, the reason that he's in heaven right now, is because when God spoke, he believed.

Now, friend, let me tell you how you can be saved today. You can believe God, just like Abraham did so long ago. "*That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*" (Romans 10:9–10) "*Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*" (Romans 5:1)

Would you like to be saved? You can be saved right now. You can pray a prayer like this: "God, I'm a sinner, and I'm lost, and I need to be saved, and I want to be saved. And, Jesus you died to save me, and you promised to save me if I would only trust you. I do trust you, Jesus, right now, this moment, with all of my heart, once and for all, now and forever. I trust you, Jesus. Forgive my sins and save me." You don't have to pray a long prayer like that. God's not all that interested in your words. You may put it in one sentence. You just may say, "Lord, save me." "*For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*" (Romans 10:13) Just trust Him.

What to Do When Your Faith Falters

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: February 11, 1990

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 12:10–20

“Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee.”

GENESIS 12:13

Outline

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- I. The Cause of Faltering Faith
 - A. Worldly Compromise
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 - C. Wicked Conduct
- II. The Cost of Faltering Faith
 - A. Time
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Conclusion

Introduction

We’re continuing our series on “The School of Faith.” Now when you’ve found Genesis 12, look up here and let me tell you something. The measure of your accomplishment and your victory is your faith. The Bible clearly, concisely, convincingly, and compellingly tells us that *“according to your faith be it unto you”*—*“according to your faith be it unto you.”* (Matthew 9:29) Now, let me tell you something, friend: The identifying mark of a Christian is his faith. As a matter of fact, Christians were called believers before they were called Christians. Faith is the identifying mark of a Christian. But not only is it his identifying mark; it is his chief duty. You have no greater duty than to just simply believe God. John 6, verse 29: *“Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe.”* (John 6:29) Isn’t that something? *“This is the work*

of God, that ye believe.”

Now if faith is the chief duty, then unbelief is the greatest evil. There is no greater sin than the sin of unbelief. As a matter of fact, that’s the sin that will consign you to hell for eternity. The Bible says, in John 3, verse 18, *“He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”* (John 3:18)—not because he steals, not because he murders or lies, not because of his lust or pride, but because he believes not. Unbelief is the mother sin, the father sin, the parent sin, the sin out of which all other sins grow.

My dear friend, there is nothing that ties the hands of God in your life like unbelief. Did you know that you could bind God? Did you know that you could fetter Jesus? Just as Jesus allowed them to bind His hands and feet in the Garden of Gethsemane, your unbelief hinders God from doing for you what He wants to do for you. And the Bible says that in His hometown of Nazareth, Jesus *“did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief”* (Matthew 13:58)—not because of His inability, but because of their unbelief. Have you ever thought about how you have bound the hands that want to bless by unbelief? You see, dear friend, the way a Christian lives is this: He is to live by faith.

Now the Bible makes one statement four times. In Habakkuk 2:4, in Hebrews 10:38, in Galatians 3:11, and in Romans 1:17, there is one verse that is repeated four times. Do you want me to tell you what it is? *“The just shall live by faith.”* (Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38) Do you have it? *“The just shall live by faith.”* Four times God says: *“The just shall live by faith,” “The just shall live by faith,” “The just shall live by faith,” “The just shall live by faith.”* Do you get the idea God is trying to tell us something? Yes, He is and I’ll tell you what it is: *“The just shall live by faith.”* My dear friend, the way that you live the Christian life is by faith.

Your accomplishment is measured by your faith. Matthew 9, verse 29: *“According to your faith be it unto you.”* (Matthew 9:29) Do you want to please God? People do all kinds of things to please God. They go on pilgrimages, they give money, they make sacrifices, and some of them dress in strange ways and do outlandish things. Do you want me to tell you how to please God? Believe Him. *“Without faith it is impossible to please [God].”* (Hebrews 11:6) Faith pleases God because faith honors God. And by the way, if you please God, it doesn’t matter whom you displease. And if you displease God, it doesn’t matter whom you please. And the way to please God is to believe God.

Faith overcomes the world. Are you having troubles and struggling? Is this world oppressing you and weighting you down? The Bible says, in 1 John 5, verse 4, *“And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”* (1 John 5:4) You say, “Pastor, I’ve got a mountain of problems.” Our Lord says, in Matthew 17, verse 20, *“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.” (Matthew 17:20)

I do not have the vocabulary, words, or emotion enough today to emphasize to you the importance of faith. So, therefore, I am bringing this series of messages on “The School of Faith.” The title of our message this morning is this: “What to Do When Your Faith Falters.” Sometimes we have a sagging faith, a failing faith, or a faltering faith. And what happens when our faith gets weak? What causes our faith to get weak? And what can we do to have a vital, vibrant, and victorious faith? That’s what we’re studying.

Now Abraham has been called of God out of the land of paganism called Ur of the Chaldees. He’s been called by the grace of God to forsake his family, his friends, his fortune, and his fixed position, and to go into a land that God would show him. Now he’s come into that land. And I begin our reading here in Genesis 12, verses 10 to 20: *“And there was a famine in the land:”—in what land? In the land of Canaan. There was a famine in the land that flowed with milk and honey. That sounds contradictory, doesn’t it? God said, “Abraham, I’m going to bless you. You follow me, you obey me, you do what I tell you to do, and I’ll bless you.” So he says, “All right, Lord, I’ll do what you tell me to do.” And when he gets there, what does he meet first thing? A famine in the land: a famine in the land of plenty, a famine in the land of promise—“and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land. And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon...”—incidentally, she was sixty-five years old here, and not a drugstore in sight. She must have been a knockout. Now, listen—“I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon: therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive. Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee. And it came to pass, that, when Abram was come into Egypt, the Egyptians beheld the woman that she was very fair. The princes also of Pharaoh saw her, and commended her before Pharaoh: and the woman was taken into Pharaoh’s house.” That is, they said, “Pharaoh, there’s a great addition for your harem; take her.” “And he entreated Abram well for her sake: and he had sheep, and oxen, and he asses, and menservants, and maidservants, and she asses, and camels. And the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai Abram’s wife. And Pharaoh called Abram and said, What is this that thou hast done unto me? why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife? why saidst thou, She is my sister? so I might have taken her to me to wife: now therefore behold thy wife, take her, and go thy way. And Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him: and they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had.” (Genesis 12:10–20)* What a low point in the life of a man of God, a man of faith!

Now I told you that Abraham was the dean in the school of faith, but he had to learn some lessons himself. At this time he was very young in the faith. And God now brings him into the land of famine, as we're going to see, for one purpose, and one purpose only, and that is to test him. But he failed the test. Now, my dear friend, God's going to test your faith—not because He doesn't love you, but because He does love you. If you don't remember anything else that I'm going to tell you today, I'm going to tell you this: A faith that cannot be tested cannot be trusted. How do you know that you have the real thing? How can you trust what you have if it's not been tested?

Now God will test you. Peter taught the same thing. First Peter 1, verse 7: *“That the trial of your faith,”*—that is, “the testing of your faith”—*“being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire”*—or “through fire.” (1 Peter 1:7)

Now what Peter says is that your faith is worth more than gold. But you test gold to make certain that it's real gold and not fool's gold. Now if a man goes out here and he thinks he has a gold mine and he finds some gold, he brings it into the assayer's office, and they test that gold. If it's not real gold, then he quits digging for it. He doesn't want to make a fool of himself. But if it is real gold, he says, “I'm wealthy. I can invest it and I can use it. I can spend it.”

Now, my dear friend, God wants you to know if your faith is real or whether it is bogus. Your faith is more precious than gold—1 Peter 1:7. And again, I want to tell you that a faith that cannot be tested cannot be trusted.

And so God brings Abraham, the father of them that believe, and He brings him into a place of testing, and there is famine in the land of plenty, the land that flowed with milk and honey.

Now so many times we get the idea that if we're trusting God, that if we are obeying God, if we're doing what God has told to be, it will be all milk and honey—as a matter of fact, it will be all honey and no bees. But, my dear friend, that is not necessarily so. So many times when we get saved, we say, “Now, wonderful! I've trusted God. He's brought me into the land of plenty.” We think it's all milk and honey, but it's not necessarily so. Dear friend, getting saved will be the end of your troubles, but it will be the front end. I mean, listen. Then you're going to meet the devil. You're going to be tested in many, many ways.

And many of us have been tested after we got saved in ways that we never were before we got saved. Sometimes we get married and we think, “Oh, this is the land of milk and honey!” And God brings heartaches and tears and trials right into the land of promise. And you know it is so. Sometimes in our prayer life, we pray, and we've been told prayer is the land of promise and trust God. And we pray. And people have simplified this matter of prayer. And they say, “Well, you know, God always answers prayer. Sometimes He says *yes*, and sometimes He says *no*, but He always answers

prayer.”

It would be wonderful if it were just that simple. Friend, sometimes He doesn't say anything. Have you noticed that? I mean, sometimes you just pray, and you don't seem to get an answer. And, I mean, it just seems to be darkness out there, famine in the land of plenty. Sometimes we go to church, and we get the idea that, you know, over in church everything is going to be wonderful. Oh boy! You know, all the sinners are out there, and all the saints are in here. Ain't necessarily so, folks.

A theologian wisely observed, “The church is kind of like Noah's ark.” He said, “We wouldn't be able to stand the stench inside if it weren't for the storm outside.”

Now, dear friend, I'm not saying that the church is a failure. I'm not saying that at all. But, friend, I'm going to tell you, whether it be in your prayer life, whether it be in your marriage, whether it be in your salvation, whether it be in your church life, or wherever it is when God brings you into the land of plenty, He's going to test you there—He's going to test you there. He's going to see what your reactions are going to be. God is not going to bring you into a place of perfection; God is going to bring you into a place of testing. And Abram, God's man, was in the place that God had put him. He was there because he was following God and obeying God. And yet there was a testing.

Now, friend, when testing comes, don't try to understand it. Learn something else. *As Christians, we do not live by explanation; we live by promises.* We do not live by explanations. God has not promised to explain it to you. As a matter of fact, He says, “*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways.*” (Isaiah 55:8) I told you last week what faith is. Faith is not believing in spite of evidence. That's not faith. Believing in spite of evidence is just superstition. When God asks us to believe, He gives us a reason to believe; He reveals Himself mighty and glorious, and He gives us His Word, and faith is a response to the Word of God. It is not believing without evidence. But, my dear friend, real faith is obeying in spite of circumstances or consequences. Did you hear it? Real faith is obeying in spite of circumstances, a famine, or consequences. “*If I perish, I perish.*” (Esther 4:16) I am going to go where God sends me, and I'm going to stay where God puts me until God moves me. I'm going to live by faith.

Now God will test your faith to find out whether you have the real thing. Now God knows, but he wants you to know. God's not trying to find out something about you; He wants you to find out something about you. So God put Abram here in a place of testing. Now surely God could have controlled whether or not there was a famine in the land of Canaan. Now, God paints a picture here of Abram when he failed. God's photograph album has warts and all. I mean, I'm glad, because, really, if Abram is the father of all them that believe, that can be an encouragement to me, because when I see how God helped Abram in his faltering faith, I can learn how God can help me in

faltering faith.

Now there are three things I want you to see this morning. I've talked to you about the importance of faith, but sometimes faith fails.

I. The Cause of Faltering Faith

All right now, the first thing I want you to see is the cause of faltering faith. What is the cause? Why did Abram's faith falter?

A. Worldly Compromise

Number one: worldly compromise—worldly compromise. Look in Genesis 12, verse 1: *“Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country,”—underscore that—“and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will shew thee.”* (Genesis 12:1) Nothing could be clearer than that. “Get out. Leave your kindred, and go to the place that I will show thee.” Did he do that? Well, go down to Genesis 12, verses 4 and 5: *“So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him”—hey, wait a minute. Didn't He say, “Leave your kinfolks”? Yes. Who is Lot? His nephew—“and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.”* (Genesis 12:4) Where was Haran? That was between his hometown and where God had sent him to be. He went down to Haran and sojourned there for a while. *“And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.”* (Genesis 12:5) But they didn't go straight to Canaan, and they didn't leave everything that they had behind. Rather than going all of the way, he settled in Haran.

Now, does that remind you of anybody that you know? I call them halfway Christians. I mean, they're saved, but it seems like they only go halfway. Rather than forsaking this world, as our Lord has taught us to do, we have those hangover sins. I mean, we bring the old things with us just like Abram did. And out there are the promises of God, but they are unclaimed promises. And so we're sort of out of paganism, but we're not into Canaan. We're sort of separated from sin, but we're bringing some sins with us. In other words, it's just a time of compromise. Now I'm speaking to many today: You're saved, and if you died right now, you'd go to heaven, but your faith is so weak. Now I'll tell you one of the reasons that your faith is weak because you're like Abram was—worldly compromise.

B. Weakened Confidence

Now, what's the result of worldly compromise? I'll tell you what is; it's weakened confidence—weakened confidence. You see, when we begin to compromise with the world, our faith begins to sag. You see, the Bible says, *“Beloved, if our heart condemn*

us not, then have we confidence toward God." (1 John 3:21) Now, do you think Abram's heart condemned him when he did not go, as God commanded him to go? Of course it did! Do you think Abram knew that he was doing wrong when he took Terah, his father, and Lot, his nephew, with him? Of course he did! But he was hoping somehow, some way, that God would just overlook it all. But in his heart he knew that God would not.

There are those sitting in this congregation this morning who desperately need faith and desperately need the power of God, but because of worldly compromise, you have weakened confidence. Your heart condemns you, and you know that you cannot pray with faith about this thing or that thing. And so there is a weakened confidence. Now, what should he have done? What kind of confidence should he have had? He should have said, "Well, God, you put me here. You called me here, and you said you would bless me. Lord, there's a famine in the land. Boy, it's going to be exciting to see what you're going to do. I don't know what you're going to do, God, but I can tell you this. It is going to be exciting." You see, God brought food to Elijah and fed Elijah with ravens, didn't He? God gave manna to the Israelites in the wilderness, didn't He? And God somehow would have taken care of this man Abram. But he didn't have the confidence. And so he listened to his flesh rather than his faith.

Now I want to give you something else, and I want you to listen to this. Friend, you should never doubt in the dark what God has shown you in the light. Now when you're walking with God, and God is speaking with you, remember what God is saying to you and nail it down. And get it, and get it good, because dark times will come to test your faith. *Never doubt in the dark what God has shown you in the light.* Now, *"the glory of God appeared unto our father Abraham,"* Stephen said. But then he got in the dark, he got into Canaan, he got into a famine, and he began to doubt. And rather than listening to his faith, he listened to his flesh.

Now the Bible says that, therefore, he went down to Egypt, because there was no food in Canaan. There was plenty of food in Egypt. But God had not told him to go into Egypt. Later on, Isaiah the prophet would say, in Isaiah 31, verse 1, *"Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help."* (Isaiah 31:1) Now so many times, rather than walking by faith, we just go down to Egypt for help. You know, does Abram now remind you of anybody you know? First of all, worldly compromise, and then weakened confidence. I mean people who really love God in their heart, but they say, "Well, God expects me to use my head." Now, isn't that amazing? He could trust God to get him out of Ur of the Chaldees, but he couldn't trust God to keep him in Canaan once he got there. Does that remind you of anybody? You trusted God to save you, but now you're not trusting God to keep you. We trust God for spiritual things, but we can't trust Him for material things. We're trusting God for all eternity, but we can't trust Him for next week. My dear friend, if you have trusted Him to save you, if He's brought you out of the land of paganism,

then you are just going to have to trust Him when a famine comes.

C. **Wicked Conduct**

Now, notice, first of all, I'm talking to you about the cause of a faltering faith. Worldly compromise, weakened confidence, and oh, if it could only end there. But notice finally, wicked conduct—wicked conduct. When he gets down into Egypt, when he gets out of his element, and when he has failed to trust God, then what does he do? He goes down there and lives like any other pagan, it seems. Notice in verse 11 that he gets down there, and he's afraid now that the Egyptians are going to mistreat him: *“And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon: therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive. Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me.”* (Genesis 12:11–13) Well, was she his sister? Well, she was, but she was also his wife. She was his half sister; she was his whole wife. It was a half-truth. And a half-truth is a whole lie.

Now he told a lie to save his hide. You see, when a man of God or a woman of God stops trusting God, then they act just like the people of this world. What a disgrace! He got down there, and Pharaoh saw Sarah and took her into his harem. He was about to make her one of his wives when, all of a sudden, he started having all kinds of trouble and mischief and plagues, more than he'd ever had. He finally figured it out. He said, “I didn't have all this trouble before that woman got here.” Somebody investigate that woman. He sent out his FBI, and they said, “What you don't know, Pharaoh, is she's married to that man Abram that you've been so good to.” Pharaoh said, “Well, how about that! They're about to make a fool out of me.” It's a wonder he didn't kill Abram then. He said, “Abram, you and that woman and everything else you have, get out of here!”

I wonder if Abram told Pharaoh that he was a follower of Jehovah God when he was down there in Egypt? What a disgrace! What a testimony! Here's a man of God down there in Egypt living in sin, disobeying God, and ruining his testimony. Terrible! But, friend, listen. You begin to compromise, and your worldly compromise is going to lead to a weakened confidence, and it's going to lead to wicked conduct. I'm telling you that the only way that you can live is to live by faith.

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

—JOHN H. SAMMIS

II. **The Cost of Faltering Faith**

Now that's the cause of it. Now I want you to see the cost of it. What did this faltering

faith cost Abram? Well, I want to mention three things it cost him:

A. Time

First of all, it cost him time. Now, friend, when he was down in Egypt, he wasn't up in Canaan. When he was down in Egypt, he was out of the will of God, and he was not doing the will of God. *"Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."* (James 4:17) When he was down in Egypt, he was not living in faith. *"For whatsoever is not of faith is sin."* (Romans 14:23) And so all that he was doing down there was sin, because he was out of the will of God. Now, when you're out of the will of God, it doesn't matter how many good things you think you're doing, because if you're out of the will of God, the total result is sin, and you are wasting your time.

Jesus said, *"Without me ye can do nothing."* (John 15:5) One of these days, soon and very soon, every one of us who name the name of Jesus is going to stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ and give an account. Everything that you've not done in your land of Canaan is going to be wood, hay, and stubble at the Judgment Seat of Christ. (1 Corinthians 3:12) You see, you're losing time. If nothing else, when you're not living by faith, you are wasting time that, one day, you'll never be rewarded for at the Judgment Seat of Christ. That cost him time.

B. Testimony

But not only did it cost him time; it cost him testimony—testimony. While he was down there, he had lost his testimony. Now, what kind of a testimony do you think Abram was before the pagan King Pharaoh? Maybe Pharaoh would have been saved if Abram had obeyed God and done what God had told him to do.

But I'll tell you something else he did when he went down to Egypt. Do you know whom he took with him? He took his nephew Lot with him. And Lot, down there in Egypt, saw things that got into his heart and never got out of the heart of Lot. You see, Abram got Lot out of Egypt, but he could never get Egypt out of Lot. Go, if you will, to Genesis chapter 13 and verse 10. You're going to find out that later on Lot made the mistake of moving down to Sodom. And the reason that Lot moved down to Sodom we're going to see in Genesis chapter 13, verse 10: *"And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt."* (Genesis 13:10) Lot said, "Hey, that's like Egypt! I remember Egypt. Ol' Uncle Abe took me down to Egypt. That's for me! That's for me!" What a testimony Abram lost with the pagans and those of his own household!

Now I want to say something very seriously to some of you parents: You're living lives of worldly compromise, weakened confidence, and wicked conduct. And there are members of your family, while you're living that way, who are going to get a taste of

Egypt, and you're going to pay a fearful price because of your faltering faith. Some of you parents—listen to me—you've got teenagers right now, and they are so impressionable. If you were ever going to live by faith, you ought to live by faith now. If you were ever going to trust God, you ought to be trusting God now!

C. Trouble

Abram lost his time. Abram lost his testimony. And not only was there a cost of time and testimony; there was a cost of trouble. Brother, he got some things down in Egypt that gave him trouble from there on.

Do you know what he got in Egypt? Do you know what he picked up in Egypt? He got two things down in Egypt. First of all, he got wealth; and secondly, he got a woman. He got wealth and he got a woman when he was down there in Egypt. Now, look, if you will, in Genesis chapter 12, verse 15 and following. The Bible says that while he was down there in Egypt, *“the princes also of Pharaoh saw her, and commended her before Pharaoh: and the woman was taken into Pharaoh’s house. And he entreated Abram well for her sake: and he entreated Abram well for her sake: and he had sheep, and oxen, and he asses, and menservants, and maidservants, and she asses, and camels.”* (Genesis 12:15–16) “Oh boy!” he says. “Look, Abram. Here are some servants, here are some flocks, here are some herds, here are some camels, and here are some cattle. It’s all yours, Abram.”

“Well,” you say, “it doesn’t look to me like he’s failing; it looks like he’s succeeding.” Listen to me, friend. A wise man once said this: “Whatever a man does without God, in that thing he will fail miserably, or he will succeed even more miserably.” Listen to it again: “Whatever a man does without God, in that thing he will fail miserably, or he will succeed even more miserably.” Now, is Abram failing or is he succeeding? “Well,” you say, “he’s down in Egypt, but he’s getting wealthy.” Ha! The Bible says, *“In the revenues of the wicked is trouble.”* (Proverbs 15:6)

Now, what did he get? What kind of wealth did he get down there? Well, look, if you will, in Genesis chapter 13, verse 2. The Bible says here, in this particular verse, that *“Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold.”* (Genesis 13:2) Now look at the word *cattle*. You see it? Underscore it. *“Very rich in cattle.”* This is the first mention of cattle in Abram’s life. Abram did not come out of Ur of the Chaldees with cows; he came out with sheep. Abram was not a rancher; he was a shepherd. He was not a herdsman; he was a keeper of sheep. But when he got down there in Egypt and got out of the will of God, he got cattle.

Now when he came back, his cattle caused him difficulty. There was a range war. And what was the range war over? Look in Genesis chapter 13 and verse 7: *“And there was strife between the herdmen of Abram’s cattle and the herdmen of Lot’s cattle”* (Genesis 13:7) —not the shepherds of Abram’s sheep and the shepherds of Lot’s

sheep. No! The cowboys! They were having a range war. Why? God didn't give Abram those cattle. Pharaoh gave them to him. "And in the revenue of the wicked is much trouble." (Proverbs 15:6) Now God knew what he wanted Abram to have. You see, sheep would have been all right. There wouldn't have been any range war. Why? Because, my dear friend, it doesn't take near the land and near the grass to take care of sheep that it does for cows. You see, cows graze. Sheep browse.

You say, "What's the difference?" Cows only have one set of teeth in front. They have teeth up front, but they don't have any teeth below. Did you know that? Go home this afternoon and look in your cow's mouth, and you'll see that's true. There are no teeth down here. It's smooth, just the gums, just the teeth up here. But sheep have teeth up here and teeth down there. So sheep can bite the grass; they can browse. But a cow can't do that. What does a cow do? He's got to have tall enough grass for him to go down and put his rough tongue on that grass, hang it on his tongue, and then break it off with his teeth. Have you ever seen a cow do that? Sure! You remember. That's the way the cow will get that grass, wrap his tongue around it, and break it off. But the sheep can go down to grass only *that* high. It can just clip that grass, and just like a razor, just clipping that grass. And a sheep will eat twigs, leaves, and things that a cow can't eat.

Now God never intended for Abram to have that cattle. He got that cattle down there, and here's a range war! What I'm trying to say is, dear friend, that what he got when he thought he was getting wealth, he was getting trouble. He was buying trouble with wealth. Some of you say, "Well, I haven't been serving God, but I'm really prospering." Are you? Whatever a man does without God, in that thing he will fail miserably, or he will succeed even more miserably. "In the revenue of the wicked is much trouble." (Proverbs 15:6)

But not only did Pharaoh give him cattle; Pharaoh gave him servants: men-servants and women-servants. One of those women-servants was a woman named Hagar. Isn't that right? Hagar. Who was Hagar? Look in Genesis chapter 16, verse 1: "*Now Sarai Abram's wife bare him no children: and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar.*" (Genesis 16:1) He got an Egyptian down there, and she became what? The woman that Abram later took as a surrogate wife. He used her to try to help God fulfill His promise. And rather than producing an Isaac, he produced an Ishmael and brought to himself heartache and trouble like he'd never known. And today the world is sitting on the brink of war because of it. He was smart, wasn't he? He couldn't trust God down in the land of promise, because there was a famine in the land. And so his faith faltered. And he went down there. And what was the cost of a faltering faith?

It cost time, it cost testimony, and it cost trouble. And it will cost you the same thing. I'm telling you, my dear friend, the way to live the Christian life is by faith. And you stay

where God put you, and you do what God tells you. And you, by faith, obey God in spite of consequences or circumstances.

III. The Cure for Faltering Faith

Now, let me go, finally, to the third and final point of this message very quickly. What was the cure for his faltering faith? What did God do? Now, remember that God was patient with Abram. Abram was an old man physically, but was a young man in the faith. And so God didn't flunk him out of the school of faith; God just re-enrolled him. God seems to keep giving the lessons so we can pass. So look in Genesis chapter 13, if you will. Three very quick things:

A. Repentance

First of all, there was repentance. Look in Genesis chapter 13, verse 1: "*And Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south.*" (Genesis 13:1) First of all, repentance. He got out of where he was and should not have been; he forsook Egypt. He could not have remained in Egypt and gotten right with God at the same time. And I'm glad he did forsake Egypt. I've told you perhaps a hundred times: *The most miserable man in the world is not an unsaved man. The most miserable man in the world is a saved man out of fellowship with God.* He forsook Egypt. That's repentance.

B. Remembrance

But not only repentance; there was remembrance. Look, if you will, in Genesis 13, verses 2 and 3 of this chapter: "*And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold. And he went on his journeys from the south even to Bethel, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Hai.*" (Genesis 13:2–3) *Hai* means "a heap of ruins." *Bethel* means "the house of God." He pitched his tent there before the house of God, with a heap of ruins reminding him that this old world is a heap of ruins, but this is the house of God. And Abram had an altar and a tent reminding him one more time of his pilgrim character. And he goes back to Bethel, back to the house of God, back to where he was in the beginning.

Now, my dear friend, if you've gotten away from God, I want to tell you where you are going to find Him. Are you listening? You're going to find Him right where you left Him.

About two or three weeks ago, Joyce and I—maybe a little longer than that now—had the joy of teaching the Bible on a Bible study cruise. We do that in January. You ought to come and go with us. We'd love to have you. We went on that Bible study cruise. We flew into Orlando, and took a bus over to Cape Canaveral to get on that ship. And we got on the ship, started to unpack, and I said, "Joyce, I left my suit bag. I must

have left it there in the airport.” She said, “Well, honey, what are we going to do?” I said, “Well, there is nothing we can do now. We’re already on board, and the ship’s going out. I’ll just have to get along, and you’ll just have to get used to seeing me and smelling me like I am, and that’s just the way I’ll be.”

So on that whole cruise, when we got off on the shore, I bought a few things. But I said, “Well, I’ll get my suit bag when I go back to Orlando.” So I went to Orlando, and I went there to the Delta office. I said, “I left my suit bag here. Can I have it?” They looked, and they said, “Mister, we have no record of it.” I said, “Well, I left it here.” They said, “I’m sorry. We have no record whatsoever.”

I said, “Oh boy, well, maybe I didn’t put it on the plane when I left Memphis.” So I went back to Memphis. I walked right in and told the man, I said, “Look, I lost a suit bag. You fellows, you know, you all mishandled it some way. You didn’t get it on here,” told him all about that. He said, “Well, Mr. Rogers, we’ll sure look for it. Give us all that information.” I thought, Oh boy, I just lost it all. Well, we went home, walked in the bedroom—there it was on the bed, right where I left it, hadn’t moved an inch, exactly right where I left it. I’m blaming everybody else about how they mishandled my bags.

Now, my friend, I want to tell you something: You’re going to find God right where you left Him, and nobody else you’re going to blame. You can blame everybody else; you can blame circumstances and everything else. But you are going to find Him right where you left Him.

Abram went right back there where he was in the beginning. Look at it. It’s so beautiful. And the Bible says, in verse 3, that he went “*unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning*”—“*at the beginning.*” (Genesis 13:3) That’s where God’s going to bring you, friend.

C. Restoration

Now, listen. If there was ever a time that you loved God more than you love Him right now, to that degree, you’re a backslider—you’re a backslider. Not only repentance and remembrance but also restoration. Look in Genesis 13, verse 4, and look at it here: “*unto the place of the altar.*” (Genesis 13:4) You know what the altar stands for? The Lord Jesus Christ. “*The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*” (1 John 1:7) Restoration: He’ll restore you when your faith falters.

Conclusion

Heads are bowed; eyes are closed. Father God, thank you so much for your Word today. Lord God, I just thank you that there is a cure for faltering faith. Lord God, help us that we’ll forsake Egypt, and Lord, that we’ll come clean out of Ur. Lord God, that we will obey you in spite of circumstances and in spite of consequences. Lord God, teach us. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

The Sin of Sodom and the Spirit of the World

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: August 3, 2003

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 13:1–11

“And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar.”

GENESIS 13:10

Outline

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- B. The Philosophy of This World
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Conclusion

Introduction

Be finding Genesis chapter 13 in the Word of God. I want to talk to you tonight about worldliness—worldliness. We don't hear many sermons today about worldliness, and as a preacher I don't suppose I've preached enough about worldliness. We live in a generation where the world has become churchy, and the church has become worldly, and there doesn't seem to be much difference. But the Bible teaches that, when Jesus Christ saved us, He saved us out of this world. A typical verse might be Titus chapter 2, verses 11 and 12: *“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly,*

righteously, and godly, in this present world.” (Titus 2:11–12) We are to deny worldly lusts.

Now, what is the world? Well, certainly, it’s not the planet Earth. There’s nothing wrong with the planet Earth. God made that, and God said it’s good. It’s not the people of the world that we’re not to love, for the Bible says, *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.”* (John 3:16) What do we mean when we say the world? The Greek word *world* is the word *kosmos*, and it means “a system” or “an order.” Let me describe the world to you that you and I need to be separated from.

A. The Prince of This World

This world has a prince. And, by the way, take a piece of paper and jot these scriptures down. This world has a prince. In John chapter 12 and verse 31, Jesus called Satan *“the prince of this world”*: *“Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.”* (John 12:31) Satan is the prince of this world. In John chapter 16, verse 11, again he’s called *“the prince of this world.”* Jesus said the Holy Spirit is going to convince us and convict us *“of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.”* (John 16:11) The apostle John said, in 1 John chapter 5, verse 19, *“The whole world lieth in wickedness”* (1 John 5:19)—*“The whole world lieth in wickedness.”* And the figure there is of a baby in the arms, in the bosom, of its mother. Satan is rocking the world, as it were, in his bosom. This world has a prince.

Satan is the mastermind of this world’s conspiracy. People ask me, “Do you believe in a conspiratorial theory of history?” Yes, I do, but it’s bigger than what a lot of these people may think it is. There is a vast conspiracy, a worldwide network of evil. And so that’s the reason the Bible says, in Ephesians 6, verse 12, *“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world.”* (Ephesians 6:12) There is a world prince. His name is Satan.

B. The Philosophy of This World

Not only does the world have a prince, but the world also has a philosophy. There is a philosophical idea about this world. Let me give you some verses that speak of the philosophy of this world. For example, 1 Corinthians 2, verse 12, speaks of *“the spirit of the world.”* (1 Corinthians 2:12) The Bible, in 1 Corinthians 3:19, speaks of *“the wisdom of the world.”* (Corinthians 3:19) The Bible, in 1 Corinthians 7, verse 31, speaks of *“the fashion of the world.”* (1 Corinthians 7:31) The Bible, in 2 Peter 1, verse 4, speaks of *“the corruption that is in the world.”* (2 Peter 1:4) The Bible speaks, in 2 Peter 2, verse 20, of *“the pollutions of the world.”* (2 Peter 2:20) Now, think about that: *“the spirit of the world,” “the wisdom of this world,” “the fashion of this world,” “the corruption of this world,” “the pollution of this world.”* There is a system, and this system has a philosophy.

C. The Purpose of This World

Not only does the world have a prince, and a philosophy; it has a purpose. What is the purpose of this world's prince? And what has he crafted his philosophy to do? It is to draw away your love from the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, let me give you some Scripture that proves that. John 7, verse 7—Jesus said, *“The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it.”* (John 7:7) This world hates Jesus Christ. John 14, verse 17—Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit, and He said, *“Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him.”* (John 14:17) This world knows nothing of the Holy Spirit. Then Jesus spoke to those of us who are His followers, and He said, in John 15:18, *“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.”* (John 14:18) And James warned us, in James 4, verse 4, that friendship with the world is warfare with God. (James 4:4)

D. The People of This World

So here's a world—a world that has a prince, a world that has a philosophy, a world that has a purpose—and that purpose, brother or sister, is to draw away your pure love from the Lord Jesus Christ. And the world has a people. Luke 16, verse 8— Jesus said, *“For the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light”* (Luke 16:8)—*“the children of this world.”*

Now you, if you're saved, are twice-born, but you live in a world of once- born people. So what you are and what you believe is antithetical. It starts at a different source. It follows a different course. It arrives at a different conclusion. And you're going to find out that you're going to be going against the tide all the time if you are a separated person. This world wants to bring you, squeeze you, into its mold. Listen to Romans 12, verse 2: *“Be not conformed to this world.”* (Romans 12:2) Phillips translates that, I believe, “Don't let this world squeeze you into its mold.”

Now most of us don't want to be separated from the world, because if we're separated from the world, the world is going to hate us. Jesus said, in John 15, verse 19, *“If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.”* (John 15:19)

Now, if you're living a godly life, the world is going to hate you. “To speak of a worldly Christian is really contradictory. It's like speaking of a heavenly devil,” Billy Sunday said. *We hear a lot today about the separation of church and state. I believe we need to hear a whole lot more about the separation of church and world.* I'm amazed at how worldly some of the people of this church are, and some of them who purport to be leaders are living lives of worldliness. Yet the Bible has challenged us—yea, commanded us—not to love this world. First John 2, verse 15: *“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father*

is not in him." (1 John 2:15) Do not say that you love the Lord Jesus Christ, do not say that God's love is in you, if you love this world.

This world has a prince. This world has a philosophy. This world has a purpose. This world has a people. And if you come out from this world, if you begin to live a godly, separated life, you're going to find out that the world is going to hate you.

Now there's a great illustration of a man who loved God in his heart of hearts, but he became worldly. And so he had a saved soul but a lost life. He lost his testimony. He lost most all that we ought to hold dear. His name was Lot. Now, with that in mind, go to the scripture where you have your Bibles open there, if you will, in Genesis 13, and let's begin reading: *"And Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot went with him, into the south."* (Genesis 13:1) Abram is another name for Abraham. God later changed his name to Abraham. Here he's called Abram. He has a nephew named Lot. God had called Abram out of Ur of the Chaldees to the Promised Land, and God told him to leave houses and land, mother and father, and possessions; but Lot, his nephew, tagged along with him. And the Bible says, in verse 2, *"And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold. And he went on his journeys from the south even to Bethel, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Hai; unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the LORD. And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents. And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together. And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land. And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou wilt depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left. And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other."* (Genesis 13:2–11)

Now, here's the situation. Sodom was unspeakably immoral, ungodly, wicked, and lascivious. Abram says to Lot, his nephew, "Look, the land is not big enough for all of us. We're going to have to divide." There were range wars. "Your herdsmen and my herdsmen are fighting together. That ought not to be, for we're brethren." And so Abram, to whom God had given the whole land, magnanimously and generously said, "Look, Lot, just choose whichever way you want to go. If you want to go right, I'll go left.

You want to go left, I'll go right." And the Bible says that Lot made a decision, but he made his decision on economic or social reasons. He looked toward Sodom, Sodom with its lush grass, and Lot decided, "That's the way I want to go."

Now I want you to see several things about worldliness. I want you to see what Lot's worldliness did, because what Lot made was a worldly decision. Several things I want you to see.

I. How the World Courted Lot

The first of these: I want you to see how the world courted Lot—how the world courted him.

Now Abram made a generous offer to Lot. And read again, if you will, in verse 10: *"And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD."* (Genesis 13:10) Now Sodom at this time stood for all that God hates. It was unspeakably wicked, but it was attractive. And here at this moment Lot feels the pull of the world. He feels now that he needs to go to this direction. Sodom with its pleasures, Sodom with its business, Sodom with its social life begins to pull on this man. There's no record here that Lot prayed. There's no indication that he sought the will of God or the face of God. He makes a decision, and he makes it, not on the basis of the welfare of his children, not on the glory of God. As you read the subject, he made a decision, basically, on an economic basis. He made it for money, for material things, and he *"pitched his tent toward Sodom."* (Genesis 13:12)

Now, let me say something to you. Every now and then at a graduation, a speaker will say to young people, "You need to be successful. You need to make all the money you can, just as long as you make it honestly." No man has the right to make all the money he can, even if he makes it honestly. There's nothing wrong with making money. If you're wealthy, I'm happy for you. The Bible says, *"The LORD thy God...giveth thee power to get wealth."* (Deuteronomy 8:18) The Bible says that God takes *"pleasure in the prosperity of his servant."* (Psalms 35:27) But any man who is making all the money that he can has put money first; and the Bible says we're to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33), and the Bible says, in 1 Timothy chapter 6, verse 10, *"For the love of money is the root of all evil."* (1 Timothy 6:10) It doesn't say, "money is the root of all evil," but, *"the love of money is the root of all evil."*

What would you say to a pastor who left one church and went to another church for more money? What would you think of a pastor like that? You'd say, "Good riddance," wouldn't you? I mean, here, if he's pastoring a church, God is blessing, and some church comes along and says, "Well, look. If you'll come over here, we'll pay you more." And he says to these people, "Well, I'm sorry. They're offering me more money. I've got

to go. After all, business is business.” You say, “No pastor ought to operate like that.” And I would agree one hundred percent.

Well, let me ask you another question. What would you think of a businessman who would leave one city and go to another city for more money? “Well, that’s perfectly all right.” Why? Why? Should the pastor love God more than the businessman? What right does a businessman have to put money first? Now he may go to another city and get more money, and if he does, I’m happy for him, if it’s God’s will. But doesn’t he need to pray? Doesn’t he need to find the will of God? What right does he have just to say, “They’re offering me more money, and therefore I’ll go”? No. He has to say, “Lord, what is your will? What is your plan for me? Is it your will that I uproot my family? Is it your will that I take my children out of school? Is it your will that I do this or that? Lord, I belong to you, and I submit to you.” It takes as much blood to save the businessman—the blood of Jesus—as it did the pastor, right? We all belong to Jesus.

And here was a man now. He wasn’t a pastor, but he made a decision on economic reasons and that alone. The world now begins to court him, and the world begins to pull at him. What is the world? Again, 1 John 2, verse 16: “*For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.*” (1 John 2:16) “*The lust of the flesh*”: that’s Sodom with its pleasures. “*The lust of the eyes*”: that’s Sodom with its possessions. “*The pride of life*”: that’s Sodom with its philosophies. And here is Lot, who is being courted by the world. And, by the way, you don’t have to be a rich person to be covetous. Abram was very rich, but he wasn’t covetous. He was magnanimous. He said, “Lot, you go this way, and I’ll go that way.” Lot was a covetous man. This world flirted with him, and he took the bait. And, again, I remind you that the Bible says, in James 4:4, that friendship with the world is warfare with God. Now the same forces that worked on Lot are working on you every day.

II. How the World Conformed Lot

Now I want you to see, secondly, not only how the world courted him, but I want you to see how the world conformed him. I want you to see how the world squeezed him into its mold. Look, if you will, in Genesis 13, now verse 12: “*Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain,*”—now, watch this—“*and pitched his tent toward Sodom.*” (Genesis 13:12) Now Lot did not move immediately into Sodom. All he did was just move toward Sodom. He “*pitched his tent toward Sodom.*”

A. Direction

Put down the word direction—direction. First of all, he just simply moves in that direction. I’m speaking to some people today: you’re not into Sodom yet, but if you’ll check up on your life, you are moving in that direction. May I ask you this question: Are

you compromising today on things you did not compromise on yesterday? Are you living a life today that you would have been surprised several years ago that you would be living? Is there literature in your home? Are there things that you're watching? Are there things that you participate in that you would not have participated in before? Is there sort of an unlawful toleration in your life?

B. Decision

First of all, there's just direction. Here was a man who *"pitched his tent toward Sodom."* But after direction, the next word I want you to see is decision. He made a decision to move into Sodom. He's now at home there. Genesis 14, verse 12, tells us now that he *"dwelt in Sodom."* (Genesis 14:12) First of all, he just moved toward Sodom. Now he is at home in Sodom. He's living there. Perhaps he just pitched his tent closer and closer, and compromised here and compromised there. And then, perhaps, he moved into the suburbs of Sodom. And now, finally, he is in Sodom. He moves in. He says to himself, "Well, I can live in Sodom. I don't have to partake of Sodom's sin. I can live here. After all, it's a good place to live. It's a nice place to work."

C. Deception

First of all, direction: he pitched his tent there. Secondly, decision: he moves in. Thirdly, deception: he has now been deceived by Sodom. Genesis 19, verse 1: *"And there came two angels to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom."* (Genesis 19:1) Now, what does that mean: "to sit in the gate"? Well, if you've been with me to Israel, you know that the gates in the Holy Land, even to this day, are places of commerce and places of government. "To sit in the gate" means that you have become a VIP. Now Lot, evidently, is a city councilman. Evidently, he's on the commission, or he's the governor. Whatever it is, he has power and influence. Now he has become a part of Sodom. He is one of Sodom's solid citizens. He is now a VIP in Sodom. His wife is interested in Sodom society. His girls are cheerleaders at Sodom High. His girls are dating the boys of Sodom. This world has courted him, and now this world has conformed him and moved him an inch at a time.

But it's not over yet. Go to Genesis chapter 19 and verse 7, and you hear Lot saying to the Sodomites, *"I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly."* (Genesis 19:7) Now he is calling the filthy Sodomites his brothers: "my brothers." Now you would never have convinced Lot that he would have done this when he started out, when he just pitched his tent toward Sodom. But this world now has squeezed him into its mold. No wonder the Apostle Paul said, *"Be not conformed to this world."* (Romans 12:2)

*"Who is it knocks so loud?" "A lonely little sin."
"Slip through," I answered.
Soon all hell was in.*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

*Vice is a monster of so frightful mien
As to be hated needs but to be seen;
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.*

—ALEXANDER POPE

Here's a man now who has embraced Sodom. He is a solid citizen of Sodom. He's calling the Sodomites his brothers.

III. How the World Corrupted Lot

Now, here's the third thing I want you to see. We talked about how the world courted him, and then how the world conformed him. Now I want you to see how the world corrupted him. Look in Genesis 19 now, and begin to read with me in verse 1: *“And there came two angels to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom: and Lot seeing them rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground; and he said, Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your ways. And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all night.”* Now Lot sees these angels, and he says, “Come into my house. I want to show you hospitality.” But they said, “No. It's all right. We'll just stay out here on the street.” But Lot knew how wicked and how vile Sodom was. In verse 3: *“And he pressed upon them greatly; and they turned in unto him, and entered into his house; and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat.”*

Now, remember, as I'm going to show you later on, Lot really is a saved man. We're going to give you some Scripture to prove that in a moment. *“But before they lay down, the men of the city, even the men of Sodom, compassed the house round, both old and young, all the people from every quarter: and they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men which came in to thee this night? bring them out unto us, that we may know them”—*that is, “that we may sexually assault them, that we may sodomize them.” *“And Lot went out at the door unto them, and shut the door after him, and said, I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly.”* Now he's calling the Sodomites his brothers. “Behold now...”—listen to this. You won't believe this unless you've read it in the Scripture, and then you will believe it—*“Behold now, I have two daughters which have not known man;”—*two virgin daughters—*“let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as is good in your eyes: only unto these men do nothing; for therefore came they under the shadow of my roof.”*

Now Lot now is willing to sacrifice his daughters to pacify their anger and to satisfy their lust. *“And they said, Stand back. And they said again, This one fellow came in to*

sojourn, and he will need to be a judge: now we will deal worse with thee, than with them.” Now they’re turning on him now in anger. *“And they pressed sore upon the man, even Lot, and came near to break the door. But the men put forth their hand,”*—that is, the angels—*“and pulled Lot into the house to them, and shut to the door. And they”*—the angels—*“smote the men that were at the door of the house with blindness, both small and great: so that they wearied themselves to find the door.”* (Genesis 19:1–11)

Tragic! I even hate to speak of something as vile, as filthy; but if there’s ever a generation that needs to hear this scripture, it’s this generation. Here is a land given over to sexual perversion, to sodomy, to vileness, to wickedness, and here is Lot right there with them. Now I cannot for the life of me believe, apart from the inspiration of the Scripture, that Lot ever even knew the Lord. And notice what happens here. The angels say to Lot, “Lot, you need to get out of the city. We’re going to destroy this place.”

Look, if you will, in Genesis 19, and begin in verse 12 of this same chapter: *“And the men said unto Lot, Hast thou here any besides? son in law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place: for we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the LORD; and the LORD hath sent us to destroy it. And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons in law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law. And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city.”* Now, notice verse 16: *“And while he lingered...”*—just underscore that— *“while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the LORD being merciful unto him; and they brought him forth, and set him without the city. And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed. And Lot said unto them, Oh, not so, my LORD.”* (Genesis 19:12–18) “Lord, just don’t let Sodom be destroyed. Please have mercy upon Sodom.”

I can hardly believe this. Lot, who is willing to give his daughters to satisfy the lust of these Sodomites, now lingers. He doesn’t want to leave Sodom. The angels have to take him by the hand. As we read later, his wife, who had Sodom’s initials carved on her heart, figuratively, could not bear to leave her beloved Sodom, turned around and looked back, and is turned into a pillar of salt. And then, later, the story gets worse. Lot becomes drunk. Perhaps he picked up that habit in Sodom. A little drink here won’t hurt. After all, all the Sodomites drink, and after all, he’s a part of Sodom society. And then, in an incestuous relationship with his own daughters, he gets his daughters pregnant. How could a man fall so low?

IV. What the World Cost Lot

How the world courted him! How the world conformed him! How the world corrupted him! Now, last of all, I want you to see what the world cost him. And I want you to listen. I want you kids to listen. I want you college kids to listen. I want you singles to listen to this. I want you deacons to listen to it. If you think you can flirt with this world and live an ungodly, worldly life as a child of God, and you're counting on eternal security to get you to heaven, don't forget there is a price that you're going to pay. If you're bound to sin, you are bound to suffer.

First of all, God's judgment fell on Sodom. I want you to hear what happened to Sodom—Genesis 19, verses 24 and 25: *“Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven; and he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground.”* (Genesis 19:24–25) It was a scorched earth. God destroyed Sodom with fire and brimstone out of heaven. The archeologists have gone there. I have visited there. There's nothing there but brimstone and salt. I've walked on cakes of salt as high as a snow bank. The archeologists have gone there to the Dead Sea and put down their grappling hooks where ancient Sodom used to be, and they have retrieved molten sulfur, which is brimstone that has been burned.

You say, “Pastor Rogers, do you believe that really happened?” Yes. I'll tell you who else believed it: Jesus. Put in your margin Luke 17, verse 29. Jesus said, *“But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all.”* (Luke 17:29) Who said that? Some fanatic? Jesus said it. Peter and Jude both tell us of the same thing. Second Peter 2, verse 6: *“And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow,”*—now, listen to this—*“making them an [example] unto those that after should live ungodly.”* (2 Peter 2:6)

Sodom and its smoking ruins is an example. Can you learn from an example? You say, “Well, God hasn't destroyed America. God hasn't destroyed other cities.” God will. Judgment is coming. This is an example. Jude 1, verse 7: *“Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.”* (Jude 1:7) Can you learn? Can you listen? Do you see that there's a price to pay? Now all that Lot loved and held dear, other than the Lord, was in Sodom, and it all went up in smoke. Lot is an example of a Christian who is a worldly Christian. God forbid! Someone with a saved soul and a lost life.

What did worldliness cost this man? And I'll be finished.

A. A Cost to His Faith

Number one: There was a cost to his faith. When you are worldly, there's no way that

you're going to know God intimately, because friendship with the world is warfare with God. (James 4:4) Genesis chapter 13, verse 14: *"And the LORD said unto Abram, after Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward."* (Genesis 13:14) Now I chose that passage, because it says, "The Lord said unto Abram, after Lot departed from him." God didn't say anything to Lot. God is speaking to Abram, not to Lot. When Lot left and pitched his tent toward Sodom, communication with Lot is cut off.

Have you ever wondered why God speaks to some people and God doesn't speak to you? Some people seem to hear the Lord and know the Lord, and they have spiritual insight—and you don't have any. Why did God commune with Abram and not with Lot? Because God has no fellowship with worldliness. *"Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord...and I will receive you."* (2 Corinthians 6:17) If you are a worldly Christian, no wonder you don't hear from God; no wonder you don't have fellowship with God. There was a cost to his faith.

B. A Cost to His Family

Secondly, there was a cost to his family. The angels said to Lot, "Get out of Sodom. It's going to be destroyed. Warn your children, your daughters, their husbands." But notice what happened. Look, if you will, in Genesis 19, verse 14: *"And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons in law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law."* (Genesis 19:14) He had absolutely, totally, no influence. I can imagine there: "You telling us what to do? Hey, old man, you got religion? We've been watching you. We know how you live. We know what you've done. We've seen you there in the gate wheeling and dealing. We've seen you slap the Sodomites on the back and call them brethren." And they laughed at him. They died and they went to hell.

There are some in this building. You are saved and going to heaven, but your children are going to go to hell. And your sons-in-law and your grandchildren are going to go to hell, because in order to be saved they'd have to climb over your rotten testimony. And you speak to them about Jesus, and they'll laugh in your face. Is it worth that to you to flirt with this world, to play with this world, to love this world?

C. A Loss of His Fortune

The cost to his faith: God stopped speaking to him. The cost to his family: he lost his daughters; he lost his wife; he lost his sons-in-law. How tragic that is! And then, not only was there the cost to his faith, and his family, but also there was a loss of his fortune—a loss of his fortune. You know, the Bible says that he was a very rich man before he went down to Sodom. But he saw everything that he had go up in smoke. But that's not the greatest loss that he had to his fortune. He lost his spiritual fortune. One day Lot will

come to the Judgment Seat of Christ, and the Bible says that there's going to be another fire, and the fire is going to test *"every man's work of what sort it is,"* whether it's wood, hay, and stubble, or gold, silver, and precious stones. (1 Corinthians 3:12–13)

Now the worldly man's life is made up of wood, hay, and stubble: things that are cheap, things that are combustible. A godly man's life is gold and silver and precious stones. There's coming a torch test. God is going to put the torch to your life, and the Bible says every man's work is going to be tried by fire. Then the Bible says, *"If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon,"*—that is, on Jesus, the foundation—*"[that man] shall receive a reward. [But] if any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss..."*—1 Corinthians 3, verse 15—*"If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire."* (1 Corinthians 3:14–15)

I want you to think of Lot coming out of Sodom. There's Sodom with all of its smoke and fire and brimstone—the angel taking him out. Lot is saved, but behind him is a wife, a pillar of salt, sons-in-law consumed in the flame. Lot couldn't even find ten righteous people after he lived there all that time that he could lead to the Lord.

How sad that must be at the judgment! I don't know whether you realize it or not, but you're coming to judgment as a Christian. You know, sometimes we get the idea that it's the unsaved that are going to be judged, but we're not going to be judged. But to the contrary, the Bible says, *"We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ."* (2 Corinthians 5:10) There are three judgments. We were judged as sinners at the cross. And because Jesus took our judgment for us, and we're in Christ, *"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."* (Romans 8:1) Now we're judged as sons in this life. *"Whom the Lord loves, He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives."* (Hebrews 12:6) And then, one day, at the Judgment Seat of Christ, we're going to be judged as servants. Do you have the idea that everybody is going to be just the same in heaven? No. Jesus said, *"Lay up for yourself treasures in heaven."* (Matthew 6:20)

That makes absolutely no sense if we all have the same reward. What sort of treasure are you going to have? What sort of treasure did Lot have? What was the cost, not only to his faith, and his family, but to his fortune? What did he have? Friend, it all went up in smoke. *"If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss."* (1 Corinthians 3:15) He lost it. But you say, *"But Lot's in heaven. Isn't that good enough?"* I know what the average Baptist thinks. The average Baptist says, *"Well, pastor, I may not have one of those big rewards in heaven, but it will be okay. Anywhere in heaven is fine. Just build me a cabin in the corner of glory land."* Do you ever feel that way? *"It's okay. The worst place in heaven is better than anything I've ever known. It will be just fine, Lord—just fine."*

Well, let's imagine there's a man who lives in a fine house. He has a loving family.

But the man has no insurance, and he doesn't believe in banks. Everything he has is in that house. The house represents his life work; his stocks, his bonds, his money, his jewels, everything's in that house. One morning he begins to cough. He wakes up and acrid smoke is filling the room. There are lurid flames on the wall; the curtains are blazing. He looks above, and the timbers of the roof are creaking and falling in. The entire house is being consumed in flames. He doesn't have time to go to the dresser to get his billfold. He doesn't have time to get his stocks and bonds. He doesn't have time to waken his wife. He can't go to the bedroom and get the children out. There's just a hole in the wall. And he jumps through that hole in the wall. The embers are there on his pajamas, but he jumps through to safety. And at that time the house just caves in. And he turns around to hear the agonizing cries and screams of his children. And he stands there and watches as everything that he owns, everything that he's worked for all of his life, and his loved ones, everything goes up in flame. But he got out. A neighbor is standing there by him. What do you think he would say? You think he'd say, "Well, ha ha! Hallelujah! I'm saved! Lookie there! I got out! Yeah, I'm singed a little bit. I lost it all. My loved ones died in the flame. But look at me! I'm saved! Let's go buy a steak and celebrate"? Do you think he'd do that? I don't think so.

I'll tell you something, friend. Lot had nothing to celebrate. And I don't know exactly how it's going to work out, but one of these days we're going to stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ. And the Bible says it, and the Bible doesn't explain how it's going to work, but the Bible says, *"If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire."*

Conclusion

Pitiful Lot! Pitiful Lot! The world courted him. The world conformed him. The world corrupted him. The world cost him. You say, "Pastor Rogers, you're asking me to give up the world?" Yes sir. "Well," you say, "isn't that too much to give up?" Who wouldn't give up dirt for diamonds? Who wouldn't give up hog swill for nectar? Listen, friend. The greatest thing you can do is to love Jesus Christ passionately and come out from this world and be separate.

I want our church to be a holy church, don't you? I want my children to be holy. I don't want my kids to think I'm a phony. I don't want them to mock at my faith. A Christian needs to be different. A church needs to be different. And it needs to be starting with you, sir—yes sir—you and me and us.

Your Friendly Enemy

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: June 23, 1991

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 13: 5–12

“Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other.”

GENESIS 13:11

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Conclusion

Introduction

I wonder, today, do you know that you know—do you absolutely know—if you died right now, you’d go to heaven? You can know that. And I pray, God, before this message has come to a close, that you will have said an everlasting yes to the Lord Jesus Christ, that you will have the assurance of Christ indwelling in your heart, and that heaven is your home.

Would you take God’s Word this morning, please, and turn with me to Genesis chapter 13, and in a moment we’re going to begin reading in verse 5—Genesis chapter 13. It’s always good to know who your enemies are. And may I tell you, beyond the shadow of any doubt or peradventure, that you have three enemies at least, and they are three big ones: the world, the flesh, and the devil. And no Christian can afford to be ignorant of these enemies, for to be ignorant is to be unprepared, and to be unprepared

is to fall and to go down in shame and disgrace and ignominious defeat. Now of these three enemies, I want to just take one and talk to you about that one enemy this morning. And that one enemy is the world. And I've entitled our message this morning "Your Friendly Enemy," because the world seems so friendly, so charming, so innocuous, sometimes beautiful, sometimes helpful, sometimes harmless. But I want to warn you that what the Bible calls "*the world*" is an enemy, and a deadly enemy. So we're thinking today about "Your Friendly Enemy."

I'm reading here from Genesis chapter 13. I begin in verse 5. It is an episode in the lives of Abram and his nephew Lot. In verse 5, the Bible says, "*And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents. And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together. And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land. And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left. And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other. Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom.*" (Genesis 13:5–12)

Now, what do we mean when we say "the world"? We have to be very careful because we're certainly not talking about the earth, Planet Earth. Sometimes the word *cosmos*, that's translated "world," speaks of Planet Earth. For example, it does in Acts chapter 17, where the Bible says the Lord made the world and everything that is in it. (Acts 17:24) There's nothing evil about the rocks and the trees, the birds, the oceans, the fields, the mountains. Thank God for these things. Jesus said, "*Consider the lilies how they grow.*" (Luke 12:27) Oh, there's nothing wrong with the material physical universe—and never think that there is. And when the Bible warns about the world, it's not warning about Planet Earth. Do you have that?

All right, secondly, when the Bible warns about the world, it's not warning about the people of the world. The Bible says, in John chapter 3, verse 16, "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.*" (John 3:16) There He's talking about the people of the world. Now if God loves those people, we ought to love them. "Red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in His sight." He's not talking, therefore, about the physical universe or the physical earth; he's not talking about the people, some five

billion of them now, that live on Planet Earth.

When the Bible uses the word *world*, what does the Bible mean—when the Bible says, “*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world*”—1 John 2, verse 15? (1 John 2:15) Well, it’s the word *cosmos*. And what does that mean? It means a system, an order. For example, when a woman is putting on her cosmetics, she’s putting her face in order. We speak today of the world of sports, or the world of finance, the world of industry, the world of business; and what we mean by that is a system, an organized system.

Now there is a system that the Bible calls “*the world*,” which is the world of wickedness—and we’re told not to love it. First John 2, verse 15: “*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love [this system], the love of the Father is not in him.*” (1 John 2:15)

A. The World’s Prince

But let me just describe the world to you for just a moment, okay? What we are talking about, this ungodly system, first of all, it has a prince. The prince of the world is the devil. Now the Bible makes that plain. For example, in John chapter 12 and verse 31, Jesus called the devil “*the prince of this world.*” (John 12:31) What Jesus meant by that is that Satan rules this ungodly system. He is the prince of this world. In John chapter 14 and verse 30, again, He says, “*The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.*” (John 14:30) That is, Jesus had no itch the devil could scratch. But there again, Jesus called the devil “*the prince of this world.*” And in John chapter 16, verse 11, He spoke “*of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.*” (John 16:11)

This world has a prince, and the prince of this world is Satan himself. That’s the reason the apostle John said, in 1 John chapter 5, verse 19, “*And we know that...the whole world lieth in wickedness.*” (1 John 5:19) The whole world, the whole system, lies in wickedness. And the word *wickedness* there may be personified. It literally means the whole world lies in “the wicked one.” And the word *lieth* there actually means “to sleep in the bosom, or the lap, of one.” That is, Satan’s got this whole world in his hand. We sing, “God’s got the whole world in His hands,” but actually, the Bible says that Satan has this world in his hands. This whole world lieth, sleepeth, in the bosom, in the lap, of the wicked one. So the world—put it down, number one—has a prince.

B. The World’s Philosophy

Number two: It has a philosophy. There is an enticing network of ideas and values that the devil has skillfully woven together in order to attract you, as a child of God. For example, 1 Corinthians chapter 2, verse 12, speaks of the spirit of this world. (1 Corinthians 2:12) First Corinthians chapter 3, verse 19, speaks of the wisdom of this world. (1 Corinthians 3:19) First Corinthians chapter 7, verse 31, speaks of the passion of this world. (1 Corinthians 7:31) And so it doesn’t matter whether it’s from the

schoolhouse to the courthouse, from Madison Avenue to Wall Street, whether it's Hollywood or your neighborhood—it makes no difference—there is a philosophy that is permeating all that we see out there, and, my dear friend, it is your enemy.

C. **The World's Purpose**

Now the world has a prince, it has a philosophy, and it has a purpose. Why did Satan organize this system as he did? To draw away your love from the Lord Jesus Christ. The world is unalterably opposed to the things of God. It is continually hostile to the things of God. Let me give you some verses. John chapter 7, verse 7—Jesus said, *“The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth.”* (John 7:7) The world hates the Lord Jesus Christ. John 14, verse 17—Jesus spoke of *“the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive.”* (John 14:17) This world does not, cannot, never will understand or perceive what you and I know today, the Bible calls *“the Spirit of truth.”* John 15, verse 18—Jesus said, *“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.”* (John 15:18)

Any friend of Jesus is going to be an enemy of the world. Any friend of the world is the enemy of the Lord Jesus Christ. And that's the reason the Bible says, in James chapter 4 and verse 4—James warns; he says, *“Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?”* That means “warfare with God.” *“Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.”* (James 4:4) Any man, any woman, any boy, any girl, who is a friend to this ungodly system has become God's implacable foe. You are an enemy of Almighty God. So what is the purpose of the world? It is Satan's system to draw away your hearts and minds from a devotional love for the Lord Jesus Christ.

D. **The World's People**

The world has a prince, the world has a philosophy, the world has a purpose, and the world has a people. We're to love these people, but we must understand that these people will not love us. It has a people. Luke chapter 16 and verse 8—the Lord Jesus said: *“The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.”* (Luke 16:8) What the Lord is saying is we, as Christians, need to smell the coffee; we need to wake up. The world out there is doing all of these things, and the devil is doing a better job at destroying the world than the children of God are doing at redeeming the world, because *“the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.”* (Luke 16:8)

But these are the people of the world that Jesus called *“the children of this world.”* And you're going to find out, dear friend, therefore, that these people who are worldly people, when you become a spiritual Christian, are not going to love you. Now if you're like the world, you're not going to have any trouble. But when you come out from the world, then you're going to have trouble. Listen. Friend, what we believe starts at a

different source; it follows a different course; it ends at a different conclusion. *We're twice-born people in a world of once-born people. And when you live for Jesus, you're going to be going against the tide all the time*—all the time. All the time! And you're going to understand them, but they are not going to understand you. And they're going to think of you not only as weird, but they're going to think of you as their enemy, and they're going to hate you. And Jesus said, "If the world hates you, that's all right. I want you to know that the world hated me before it hated you." (John 15:18) And a friend of this world is an enemy of God.

Now I've said all of that just simply to set a platform for what I'm about to say. Now I'm talking about your friendly enemy. And I've chosen from the Word of God a man for an illustration. That man has a small name, only three letters in his name: Lot. And he is a classic example of a man who had a saved soul but a lost life. He was a man who loved the wrong world. Now as we get into this study of this man named Lot, you're liable to think he wasn't saved at all. If I didn't have what the New Testament says about him, I would just simply say Lot never knew the Lord. But the Bible teaches that he did know the Lord.

For example, put in your margin, in Genesis chapter 13, this scripture: 2 Peter chapter 2, verses 6 and following. And it tells how God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. And it says, *"Turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly."* (2 Peter 2:6) And now, listen to verse 7: *"And [he] delivered just Lot,"*—it doesn't mean *"only Lot,"* but it means *"Lot, who was a just man."* God delivered Lot from Sodom. Lot, who was—*"vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (for that righteous man)"*—God called him here a *"righteous man"*—*"dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;"* (2 Peter 2:7–8)

Now I don't want to expound that scripture any more, except to say this—that Peter tells us, and we have from the Word of God proof positive—that Lot was a just man, that Lot had a righteous soul, and one day you and I will meet this man named Lot in heaven. Now, keep that in mind and let it be a warning to you, because, you say, "Well, since I'm saved, I don't have anything to worry about." May I tell you, my dear friend, that you have an enemy, a friendly enemy, and the enemy who destroyed Lot, who was a just man and a righteous man, can take you and rob your life of all that you hold near and dear and precious. And this enemy seems so innocuous. Your enemy is the world.

Now there are four things I want you to see as to what the world did to Lot. And these are four things your enemy can do to you:

I. How the World Courted Lot

First of all, I want you to see how the world courted him. You know, the Bible speaks of the world like a harlot: *“Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.”* (James 4:4) This world will flirt with you. This world will court you.

Now what happened is this, that God had called Abram from Ur of the Chaldees into the land of Canaan, the land of promise. And Abram took with him his nephew Lot. Abram was a big herdsman, and so was Lot. And both of them had flocks and herds. And the herds were too great, and there was a range war between Lot’s cowboys and herdsmen and Abram’s cowboys and herdsmen. And Abram was a magnanimous man with a great spirit, and he said, “Now, Lot, why, you and I are brothers. Let’s not war about this thing. We’re being a poor example to the heathen, the Canaanites, in the land. We’re representatives of Almighty God. Let’s just agree to disagree. Let’s just divide. Lot, just choose. Lot, if you want to go this way, I’ll go that way. You take what you want, Lot, and I’ll take what’s left.”

What a wonderful spirit Abram had! And then the Bible says that Lot lifted up his eyes, and he looked over there, and he saw the well-watered plain of Jordan. This was in the direction of two of the most wicked cities on the face of this earth: Sodom and Gomorrah. But Lot was not so interested in the sin of Sodom as he was the wealth he thought he could have. And so the Bible says that when Lot saw all of this tall grass, when Lot saw all of this lush fertile valley, Lot said, “Well, Uncle Abe, I’ll just take that.” He didn’t pray about it. He didn’t seek the mind of God about it. He didn’t think about the welfare of his children or his wife. He did not consider the ungodly, unspeakable, immoral lifestyle of the Sodomites. Oh no. All he thought about was his cattle, his flocks, his herds, his money.

And the Bible tells us here a significant thing. The Bible says, in verse 11, *“Then Lot chose him”*—that is, he’s choosing for himself—*“all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other. Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and”*—watch it now—*“[he] pitched his tent toward Sodom.”* (Genesis 13:11–12)

May I tell you again, my dear friend, that Sodom stands for all that God hates. It was unspeakably wicked. And yet it spoke of the world: the world with its money, the world with its business, the world with its pleasure, the world with its social life. And Lot said, “That’s what I want.” He didn’t ask God about it. He didn’t pray about it. He made his decision on one basis and one basis alone: his own selfish desire. And primarily, he was motivated by covetousness.

May I tell you right now that there are some men in this building thinking about making a job change, but you’re not praying about it. You’re not seeking the welfare of

your children. You're not seeking God in this thing. All you're saying is, "Where can I make the most money?" "Well," you say, "a man's got to live, Preacher." No, he doesn't. He's got to die. And after that, he's got to face God in the judgment. No man—listen to me—no man has the right to make all the money he can—no man.

Sometimes graduation speakers will stand up and say, "Make all the money you can, just so you make it honestly." That's the poorest advice ever heard. If a man is making all the money he can, he'll be making money when he ought to be praying; he'll be making money when he ought to be studying the Bible; he'll be making money when he ought to be witnessing; he'll be making money, sometimes, at the expense of his wife, his family, and his children. And the Bible says, in 1 Timothy chapter 6 and verse 10, *"For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."* (1 Timothy 6:10)

My dear friend, that scripture is going to be fulfilled before your very eyes in the life of this man called Lot. "Well," you say, "Pastor, then what should I do if I'm not to make all the money I can?" I'll tell you exactly what you're to do. Matthew chapter 6, verse 33—Jesus Christ said, *"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."* (Matthew 6:33)

Now there was the world before Lot, and it was Satan's masterpiece—Sodom, I'm talking about. You see, the Bible says, in 1 John chapter 2 and verse 16, *"For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."* (1 John 2:16) There was Sodom with the lust of the flesh: Sodom with its pleasures. There was Sodom with the lust of the eyes: Sodom with its possessions. There was Sodom with the pride of life: Sodom with its philosophies.

Now you don't have to be a rich man to be covetous. You may be on a meager salary and be covetous. Or you may be rich and not be covetous. Abram was a rich man, and God never condemned Abram for being a rich man. But Abram "looked for a city that had foundations, whose builder and maker is God." (Hebrews 11:10) There was a difference between Abram and Lot.

Now, my dear friend, this world flirted with Lot. And Lot took the bait. He was enticed, and a courtship was born that would ruin his life. And this world became a harlot to steal away his love for his Lord. And I want to warn you, dear friend, the Bible says, *"Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."* (1 Corinthians 10:12) And the same world that flirted with Lot is flirting with you every day of your life. It is your friendly enemy.

II. How the World Conformed Lot

Now there's a second thing I want you to see. Not only do I want you to see how the world

courted him, but I want you to see how the world conformed him—how the world conformed him; how the world took Lot and molded him and squeezed him into its mold. Romans chapter 12, verses 1 and 2, give us a great warning. The Bible says there, in Romans chapter 12 and 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.”* (Romans 12:1) Now listen to verse 2—Romans 12, verse 2: *“And be not conformed to this world”*—*“be not conformed to this world.”* (Romans 12:2) After the world courts you, the world will conform you. After the world entices you, then the world will try to squeeze you into its mold. And it will do so very slowly, but very carefully.

A. **A Wrong Direction**

You see, first of all, Lot just simply had the wrong direction. Look, if you will, in Genesis 13, verse 12. The Bible says, *“And [Lot] pitched his tent toward Sodom.”* (Genesis 13:12) He didn’t move into Sodom. I don’t think he ever intended to move into Sodom. All he did was just simply go in that direction: a small thing. May I ask you today—you’re not living in Sodom, you’re a respectable person—but have you in your mind pitched your tent toward Sodom? Is there in your heart some worldly compromise, some ungodly direction, some uncontrolled desire and love, some choice that you don’t think is so bad, but you know that it’s contrary to the will of God?

B. **A Willful Decision**

First of all, there was just simply a wrong direction. But then there came a willful decision. Look in Genesis chapter 14 and verse 12. The Bible says that Lot dwelt in Sodom. (Genesis 14:12) First of all, he pitched his tent in Sodom. And now he’s living in Sodom. I don’t know how it happened. One day, he pitched his tent here, then he pitched his tent a little closer, and then a little closer, and then he said to his wife, *“Honey, why don’t you come with me, and let’s get our camels and go for a Sunday afternoon drive through Sodom. I just want to see the sights.”* Then maybe they went to do some shopping in Sodom. Maybe then they just pitched the tent in the suburbs of Sodom. But then, after a while, the Bible says that here is Lot; he is dwelling in Sodom. Now he’s living there; now he has settled down. I’m sure he said to himself, *“I can live here. I don’t have to partake of their sins. After all, when I’m in Sodom, I don’t have to do as the Sodomites do.”*

C. **A Wicked Deception**

First of all, there was a direction, then a decision, and then a deception. Now I want you to see what happens. Lot becomes a solid citizen of Sodom. Look, if you will, in Genesis chapter 19 and verse 1—the Bible says, *“There came two angels to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom.”* (Genesis 19:1)

Now that may not mean much to you today, but to sit in the gate of Sodom is the

Bible's way of saying that Lot was a city councilman. That's what it means. The gates were the place of business; they were the place, the city gates, that was the town hall. To sit in the gate of a city means he had come to the place where he was one of the elders of Sodom. Lot was a Sodomite VIP. He was on the city council of Sodom. First, he pitched his tent toward Sodom, then he dwelt in Sodom, and then he became one of the leading citizens of Sodom. His conscience has become dull. Sin no longer shocked him. What used to amaze him now simply amuses him. He's a solid citizen. His wife was a leader in Sodom society. His girls went to Sodom High. They dated the boys of Sodom. This was a man who loved God, a righteous man. But the world courted him, and then the world conformed him.

Why, we can't believe what's happening. But, my dear friend, here's a man who actually begins to call the people of Sodom "his brothers." Look, if you will, in Genesis chapter 19, verse 7. And he says, *"I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly."* (Genesis 19:7) Here's a man calling these people "brothers," who were so wicked that God is going to destroy them with brimstone and fire from heaven. His conscience has become so dull. He never would have thought this would have happened to him.

Who is it that knocks so loud?"

"A lonely little sin."

"Slip through," I answered.

And soon all hell was in.

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

III. How the World Corrupted Lot

The world courted him, the world conformed him, and the world corrupted him. That's the third thing I want you to see. I want you to see now how the world has corrupted this man of God. Genesis chapter 19—let me read to you a terrifying episode in the life of Lot, beginning in verse 1: *"And there came two angels to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom: and Lot seeing them rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground;"*—he recognized these angels as messengers from God—*"and he said, Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your ways. And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all night."* They said, "We're going to sleep out here in the street." *"And he pressed upon them greatly; and they turned in unto him, and entered into his house; and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat. But before they lay down, the men of the city, even the men of Sodom, compassed the house round, both old and young, all the people from every quarter: and they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men which came in to thee this night? bring them out unto us, that we may know them."* (Genesis 19:1–5)

These were the sexual perverts of Sodom who were so vile in their sins that they

wanted to commit the act of sodomy with God’s angels. I can’t believe this—and yet I do believe it. And then the Bible says, in verse 6: *“And Lot went out at the door unto them, and shut the door after him, and said, I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly. Behold now, I have two daughters which have not known man; let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as is good in your eyes: only unto these men do nothing; for therefore came they under the shadow of my roof. And they said, Stand back. And they said again, This one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge:”—boy, you see the contempt they had for this backslidden Christian—“now will we deal worse with thee, than with them. And they pressed sore upon the man, even Lot, and came near to break the door. But the men put forth their hand, and pulled Lot into the house to them, and shut to the door. And they smote the men that were at the door of the house with blindness, both small and great: so that they wearied themselves to find the door.”* (Genesis 19:6–11)

Oh, my dear friend, I blush to stand in this pulpit and try to describe to you—and I will not try to describe to you—the rottenness, the wickedness, the perversity that took place in this episode. But you can understand why God had sent these two angels to warn Lot that He was going to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. The sex perverts of Sodom sought to attack these two angels. In order to pacify their anger and to satiate their lust, Lot offered to these wicked men of Sodom his two virgin daughters and said “Take them out, and do to them as you will.” Then they’re still angry with Lot. They turn on Lot, and the angels reach out and snatch Lot inside the house and bolt the door. The men are beating upon the door, and the angels smite these men of Sodom with blindness. What a sad episode!

The angels say to Lot, “Lot, we’re going to destroy this place. If you have any loved ones, you’d better warn them.” And Lot goes to warn his loved ones. Look, if you will, in verse 12: *“And the men said unto Lot, Hast thou here any besides? son in law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place: for we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the LORD; and the LORD hath sent us to destroy it. And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons in law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city.”* And here’s one of the saddest sentences in the Bible: *“But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law.”* (Genesis 19:12–14) Here goes Lot to warn his sons-in-law that God’s judgment is going to fall on Sodom, and they laughed in his face. They had no respect whatsoever for this corrupted Christian, this worldly man, who had lost his testimony.

And then, my dear friend, finally, God says to Lot, “Lot, you’d better get out of this city. I’m going to destroy it.” Look, if you will, in chapter 19, verse 15: *“And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two*

daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city.” And look in verse 16, and underscore that: *“And while he lingered...”*—there’s Lot. You see, Lot got into Sodom, and Sodom got into Lot. And there’s Lot with imminent judgment, and he’s lingering in the face of the warning of these angels—*“And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the LORD being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city. And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed. And Lot said unto them, Oh, not so, my LORD:”—*that is, “Oh, Lord, don’t let this happen to my beautiful city”—*“Behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight,”* (Genesis 19:15–19) and so forth.

And then, while Lot lingers and Lot argues, the angel takes them out. You know the rest of the story, and I don’t have time to describe it. Lot’s wife turns back. She looks back at her beloved Sodom and Sodomite society, and the Bible says that she’s turned to a pillar of salt. Later, Lot, dwelling in a cave, gets drunk. His two daughters commit incest with him. It is the most unspeakably immoral and vile and debauched story in all of the Bible! You’re going to understand why I say it would be hard for me to believe, if I’d not read it in 2 Peter, that Lot was a righteous man, a man who’d been saved. (2 Peter 2:7) But I want you to see, my dear friend, how his friendly enemy courted him, and then it conformed him. And after it courted him and conformed him, it corrupted him. And how corrupt this man was! And yet he was a man who knew God. *“Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.”* (1 Corinthians 10:12)

IV. What the World Cost Lot

Now here’s the last thing I want you to see, and I’ll be finished. I want you to see what the world cost him—not only how it corrupted him, but what it cost him. Now many of you think, “Oh, if I just simply play with this world, that will be fine. I will gain from this world.” But may I tell you, my dear friend, that this world is going to cost you.

A. He Lost His Worship

First of all, the world cost Lot his worship. No longer is Lot fellowshiping with God. Go back to Genesis 13 and look at something significant. The Bible says, in Genesis 13, verse 14: *“And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward.”* (Genesis 13:14)

Now you say, “Pastor, what’s exciting about that verse?” The Bible says that God spoke to Abram after Lot had departed from him. That is, Lot wasn’t there when God was doing the speaking—*after* Lot departed. Every step that Lot took toward Sodom, he took a step away from God. Here is God speaking with Abram and Lot. And then Lot

begins to move away, and God now is speaking with Abram.

Have you ever wondered why God doesn't speak to you? Have you ever wondered why God is not real to you? Have you ever wondered why you don't have any revelation from God, why your prayers fall to the ground, why your worship is juiceless? "Whosoever is a friend of the world is an enemy of God" (James 4:4) —that's why.

B. He Lost His Witness

And what this man lost, first of all, was his worship. I'll tell you what else he lost, my dear friend. He lost his witness. *You say, "If I'm a worldly Christian, will I go to hell?" My dear friend, you'll send a lot of people to hell.* Here was a man who had no influence. His daughters married the wicked men of Sodom. When he went to speak to them, they laughed at him. They mocked him. His wife, his own dear wife, was so full of Sodom that she turned around, looked back, and was turned to a pillar of salt. And I believe that she's in hell. And Jesus said, "*Remember Lot's wife*"—"Remember Lot's wife." (Luke 17:32) Why, Lot did not even have the power to win ten men to Jesus Christ. Abram was interceding for Sodom and said, "God, spare Sodom. If I can find ten righteous souls, will you spare it?" and God said, "I'll spare it." (Genesis 18:32) But here was a man who was a city councilman sitting in the gates of Sodom. He'd not won one blessed soul to Jesus Christ. He lost his witness. His family, his loved ones, died and went to hell because of his friendly enemy, the world.

C. He Lost His Wealth

He lost his wealth. Why, it all went up in smoke: everything that he'd dreamed for and schemed for and sold his life for. The Bible says that God destroyed it with fire and brimstone. You say, "Pastor, do you believe that?" Of course I do! Let me tell you what Jesus said about it—Luke chapter 17, verse 29: "*But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all.*" (Luke 17:29)

Peter and Jude both warn us about this. Second Peter chapter 2 and verse 6—Peter tells us that God "turned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemning them with an overthrow, and making them an example to those that after should live ungodly." (2 Peter 2:6) Where is Sodom today? It's beneath the waters of the Dead Sea. The archaeologists have gone down there and put down their grappling hooks and brought up molten pieces of sulfur where God rained red fire—fire and brimstone. And that whole area is full of slime pits, and that asphalt caught on fire. And God left Sodom with its smoking ruins as "an example to those that after should live ungodly," to show you what God thought about the whole business.

What did Lot lose? My dear friend, he lost his worship. He lost his witness. What did Lot lose? He lost, my dear friend, his wealth. It all went up in smoke. He had no treasure on earth, and he has no treasure in heaven. He lost it all. The Bible says, "*If any man's*

work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.” (1 Corinthians 3:15)

I know what some of you are thinking. You’re saying, “Well, Pastor, any place in heaven will be all right with me. It doesn’t make any difference, Pastor, just so long as I get to heaven. Just build me a cabin in the corner of Glory Land. That will satisfy me. I don’t have to have a big reward in heaven.” I want to warn you, my dear friend, the Bible says, *“If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.”* (1 Corinthians 3:15) He shall suffer loss.

Conclusion

Let me give you this example and I’ll be finished. Suppose that you had no bank to put your money in. Everything that you own and everything that you’ve worked for, you have in your house. Your loved ones, your children, are in that house. In the middle of the night you wake up. There’s acrid smoke in your room. You’re choking. You look over on the walls, and the flames are dancing up the curtains. You look up, and your entire ceiling is on fire, and the timbers there are groaning in the trusses. You realize that your house is on fire and that everything that is in it is about to go up in smoke. There’s no time to get your wife; there’s no time to get your children. There’s no time to go to the dresser to get your billfold; there’s no time to get your stocks, your bonds, your gems—nothing. All you have time to do is just jump out through the burning wall to safety. And after you jump out through the burning wall, the house collapses. Inside you hear the shrieks and the groans and the moans of your children, your wife. You see all that you had—no insurance, nothing to cover it, nothing in the bank—you see everything going up in smoke. Now, what would you do? A neighbor is standing there who has come. There’s nothing that you can do to help get the people out of the house. What would you do? Would you turn to that neighbor and say, “Well, there goes my life’s work. Everything went up in smoke. My children have perished in agony and flame. My wife, my beloved companion, is gone forever! Ha, but I got out! I saved my skin! Hey, neighbor, let’s go celebrate and get a steak!” Is that what you think you’d do? No. And when you get to heaven, you say, “Oh well, just so long as I make it into heaven.”

My dear friend, one of these days, if you live for this world, you’re going to see everything go up. You’re going to see your loved ones lost, die, and go to hell, and all that you’ve worked for will go up in smoke. *“If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss”*—*“suffer loss.”*(1 Corinthians 3:15) You have an enemy. And that enemy is a friendly enemy, but a deadly enemy: the world. *We talk about a worldly Christian. You might as well talk about a heavenly devil.* My dear friend, the Bible says we’re to be separate, and we’re to be different.

Dangerous Decisions

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: April 26, 1981

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 13:5–13

“Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom.”

GENESIS 13:12

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Introduction

Now, take your Bibles and turn to Genesis chapter 13—Genesis chapter 13—and we want to begin reading in verse 13 in just a moment. Let me say that next Sunday we begin our pastor-led revival crusade. Bellevue’s music program is going to be working full scale, and Dr. Lane and Jim Whitmire have planned a marvelous, marvelous program of music for us in the pastor-led crusade. Next Sunday we’re asking God to give us a record attendance in Sunday School. So I want to say to all of our friends and visitors everywhere that are listening to this program, if you do not plan to be in Sunday School anywhere else next Sunday, please plan to be here with us. We would be so delighted to have you be a part of our Sunday School next Sunday.

I’m going to be teaching a very special message in my Pastor’s Discovery Class at 9:30. And I teach a class right here at 9:30 I call the Discovery Class. It’s very different from this program, because we slow down a little bit. We have an open Bible together. We don’t have a lot of music. We have almost a full hour of Bible teaching. I enjoy it so much. This morning we had several hundred, but we’re asking next week—and I pray—that we’ll have more than a thousand in the Pastor’s Discovery Class. And we’re asking God to give us 5,555 in Sunday School next week. We believe we can have them. And if we have this great high attendance, we just believe that our pastor-led revival crusade

will be off to a running start. And we're going to soak it in prayer.

Tomorrow is a day of fasting and prayer. Now it may not be the best time for you to fast and pray tomorrow. Maybe you'd like to take Thursday or Friday or Saturday—sometime. But we're going to ask you to set aside a day to fast and pray. And then tomorrow evening at seven o'clock we're going to have a prayer rally right here in the sanctuary, and we want you to come. It's not going to be preaching, not going to be singing—just going to be a time when we meet together with our brothers and sisters in Jesus and pray. That prayer rally will be right here in our sanctuary at seven o'clock. You'll want to be here for the prayer rally.

Oh, and next Sunday also, we're honoring Bellevue's seniors. Today we honored Bellevue's babies. But next Sunday, Bellevue's seniors and ladies, all of the ladies who are in Sunday School who are above the age of sixty, are going to receive a lovely orchid to wear—all of you. So we especially want to have our lovely ladies here to show them how much we love them and appreciate them. Ladies, just those of you who are in Sunday School now, don't come to the eleven o'clock service. We can't do it in the service, but we do want to place a flower upon those of you who are here for Bible study next Sunday.

Oh, I want you to pray for this crusade. I just believe that the time is ripe and the time is here for us to have a great harvest of souls and people saved. I've been praying and asking God to give me a series of special messages. I'm excited about preaching these messages. I want you to be here. I want you to be telling your friends about it. We're going to be having a lot of advertising about our pastor-led crusade that begins May 3—a lot of advertising. And so that advertising will be the opportunity for you to say to your friend, your neighbor, "Did you see this? Have you heard about that?" And then you'll take that as the beginning place to invite these people to come. Again, I want to say to those who are watching by television, we would be so honored, so thrilled, and so blessed to have you share our blessings with us in this pastor-led revival crusade. Remember it starts next Sunday. And so, obviously, you are not in worship service today, or you couldn't be watching on television, but I want you to be here next Sunday if at all possible.

Now today I want to speak to you about what I call "Dangerous Decisions." Oh, how you have to watch your decisions! I'm reading here in Genesis chapter 13, beginning in verse 5: *"And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents. And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together. And there was a strife between the herdman of Abram's cattle and the herdman of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled in the land. And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdman and thy herdman; for we be*

brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left. And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD,”—I take that to mean it was something like the Garden of Eden—“like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar.” It was like Eden and Egypt at the same time. “Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other. Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain,”—and note this phrase—“and pitched his tent toward Sodom. But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly.” (Genesis 13:5–13)

There was no city upon the face of the earth as wicked as the city of Sodom. And even today we name the vile sin of sexual perversion *sodomy*. And even the name *Sodom* seems to cause us to wince, as we shudder and think of the perversions that were in the city. But the Bible says, “*And Lot...pitched his tent toward Sodom.*” (Genesis 13:12)

We’re going to talk today about dangerous decisions. Your life is but the sum total of the decisions that you will make. If you want to know how your life will end up, it will be the sum total of the decisions you make. In the story that we’re going to read about Lot, we’re going to find the tragic story of a man who made some terrible decisions, and we’re going to see how they not only affected his life, but the life and the lives of those that he loved. And in this story we have a contrast between Abram and Lot. And for our purposes today, Abram is going to represent the spiritual man, and Lot is going to represent the carnal man. We could call our message, if we wanted to, “The Choices of a Carnal Man.” And there are three things I want you to notice as we look at this man Lot. First of all, I want you to notice Lot and his choice. And then, I want you to notice Lot and his character. And, finally, Lot and his calamity. I want you to see what happened to this man.

And before we get into the message, may I tell you, if you do not know who Lot was, Lot was the nephew of Abram. He went with Abram out of Ur of the Chaldees and traveled with him to Canaan. He was Abram’s nephew, and Lot was what we would call a saved man—a saved man. Now he lived in the Old Testament, but people were saved in the Old Testament as they are saved in the New Testament. And the Bible tells us very clearly, in 2 Peter the second chapter, that this man Lot was a righteous man; he was a justified man. (2 Peter 2:8) He had been saved, and he’d been born again. And yet I want to tell you that at the beginning, because after you hear the story I’m about to tell you, you will wonder if at all possible this man could have been a righteous man—if he could have been a saved man—to get himself into the terrible calamity and the mess

that he got himself into.

I. Lot and His Choice

Now, first of all, his choice. Let me review the background just a little bit. You remember now that Abram is a rancher now, a cattleman. He has flocks and herds; he has cattle and sheep—and Lot also. And there's not enough grazing land. There's not enough grass. There's not enough clover. There's not enough alfalfa. There's not enough Bahia for them all. And so they start a range war. And Abram's cowboys and Lot's cowboys are at one another's throat. And magnanimous Abram comes to his nephew Lot, and he says, "Now, Lot, we're brothers. We both love and serve the same God, and the Canaanite and the Perizzite are here in the land. And it won't do for them to see us arguing." You know, the devil had rather start a church fuss than sell a barrel of whiskey, hadn't he? Amen? He just loves to see it when God's people are arguing with one another. What a disgrace it is to the cause of Christ! And Abram knew better than that.

And so Abram was willing to suffer loss. God had already given him the whole land. Abram had the right to say, "Lot, you take this, and I'll take that." Or, "You can't have any, and I'll keep it all." But Abram, with that great marvelous spirit, said, "Lot, you just choose. If you want to go north, I'll go south. You want to go east, I'll go west. You just choose whatever direction you want to go." And the Bible says that "Lot lifted up his eyes and he saw the well-watered plains." Boy, he looked out there, and he saw that knee-high grass. He saw those lush pastures. He could just imagine his cattle sleek and well-fed. And he made a decision based upon one thing: materialism. And the Bible says that he "*pitched his tent toward Sodom.*" (Genesis 13:12)

Now there are three things I want you to notice about his choice.

A. A Very Selfish Choice

The very first thing I want you to notice about his choice is that it was a very selfish choice. Notice in verse 11, the Bible says, "*Lot chose him.*" (Genesis 13:11) That is, he chose for himself. He wasn't thinking about God. He wasn't thinking about Abram. He wasn't thinking about his family. He just chose for himself. He was more interested in his gold than he was in his God. He was more interested in his cattle than he was in his children. He was more interested in his fortune than he was in his family. And so he just simply chose for himself. And so the Bible says he "*pitched his tent toward Sodom.*" (Genesis 13:12) It was a terrible place to raise a family, but that was not his main concern. It mattered not to him that the place was exceedingly wicked. He just saw that green succulent grass. And so the very first thing I want you to notice about the choice of this carnal man: it was a selfish choice. And one of the marks of carnality is me first—taking Christ off the throne and putting self upon the throne.

B. A Seemingly Small Choice

But not only was it his selfish choice; it was a seemingly small choice. It wasn't all that bad, it didn't seem to Lot; it looked pretty good to him. Look in verse 10: *“And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain”—“all the plain”—“of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt.”* (Genesis 13:10) Now that's very interesting: *“as the garden of the LORD”* and *“like the land of Egypt.”*

Well, you know, Egypt, in the Bible, is a type of sin. And Lot had his appetite whetted for Egypt when he went down into the land of Egypt. But here it was. He said, “Boy, this is perfect. Here's a little bit of Eden and a little bit of Egypt.” Well, that's what the carnal man tries to do. You know, he tries to live in both worlds. He says, “You know, I can go down there. It's kind of like the Garden of Eden, but it's a little bit like Egypt. And, after all, I'm not going all the way into Sodom. And I can have my little bit of heaven right here, and I can have my little bit of earth right here. Boy, I'm going to take hold of God with one hand, and I'm going to take hold of the world with the other hand.”

That's what the carnal Christian tries to do. It was a seemingly small thing; it did not seem so bad. I mean, after all, he wasn't moving all the way into Sodom. He was just moving to the suburbs of Sodom. He just pitched his tent toward Sodom. And he and Mrs. Lot, doubtless, had a little conversation, and he said, “Do you really think we ought to make this move, honey?” And Mrs. Lot said, “Well, the kids could go to Sodom High; and, after all, that's a very good high school. And also, you know, of course, we would never really be a part of that city, but they do have some very fine entertainment in Sodom. And we could hook up the old chariot and be into Sodom in less than half an hour. And, you know, we don't have to move into Sodom. It's just a little small thing that we're doing: we're just moving to the borderlines of sin. We'll have our Eden and we'll have our Egypt all at the same time.”

C. A Shortsighted Choice

It was a selfish choice. It was a seemingly small choice. But it was a shortsighted choice, for before long you're going to find that he has not just moved toward Sodom; he is now living in Sodom. And if you were to turn to Genesis chapter 19, verse 1, you would find that this man Lot is now sitting in the gate of Sodom. (Genesis 19:1) Now, what does that mean: “sitting in the gate”? That means that he was a public official. That's what it means. He was a public official. I don't know whether it was as an alderman. I don't know whether he was a councilman. I don't know whether he was a mayor. I don't know what he was, but he had now so become a part of the city of Sodom that where at first he just pitched his tent toward Sodom, he is now a vital part of the life of Sodom. He is one of the official parts of the officialdom of Sodom.

And that's the way it is with sin. Sin starts small, but it ends big. And the *“bread of*

deceit is sweet...—the Bible says—“...but afterwards [a man’s] mouth shall be filled with gravel.” (Proverbs 20:17) He thought that he could live on the suburbs of sin and get along and get by with it. But let me tell you something, friend. You need to understand this. You can never ever judge a situation by where it is; you must judge a situation by where it is heading.

And so here was a man who saw something that seemed small, but it wasn’t small. It was like that little sliver of a rail that seems to lead the train off the main track this way. It’s such a small little sliver, but it makes the difference between east and west. And the time to deal effectively with sin is when it first rears its ugly head. At the point before Lot ever pitched his tent toward Sodom, he should have said an emphatic no. Winston Churchill said that communism should have been strangled at its birth. He was right. It should have been strangled at its birth. But we allow little sins to become big sins.

“Who is it knocks so loud?”

“A lonely little sin.”

“Slip through,” I answered.

Soon all hell was in.

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

II. Lot and His Character

Now we’ve noticed Lot’s choice. But his choice was because of his character. So notice with me his character. You see, all the choice did was to reveal his character. When God wants to know what’s in your character, He just gives you a test.

Have you ever gone out after a storm and seen a tree that’s fallen on the ground, and the tree looks so strong, and other trees have not fallen, and yet this particular tree fell? And then you get up closer, and you look at that tree, and you find out that it was rotten in the heart; the heart of the tree was rotten. Now you couldn’t see it from the outside, but on the inside, had you had x-ray vision, you would have been able to see that the heart of that tree was rotten. The storm did not cause that rottenness. All the storm did was reveal that rottenness. And God will send a test into your life—God will send a crisis into your life—and God will reciprocate with a choice in your life. And that choice—the way you make that choice—is going to be God’s way of revealing to you and revealing to the world your character.

Now, if God were to tell you next week, “I’m going to come to Bellevue Baptist Church and examine your character; next week I’m going to bring you each one into a room and personally interview you,” what would you do if you knew that—I mean, for a fact? Well, I’ll tell you one thing you’d do. You’d go home all this week and you’d be getting right. You’d be like these seminary students cramming for a final, wouldn’t you? I’ll guarantee

you, you would. You'd be checking it out; you'd be making absolutely certain—if God was going to test you, if God was going to try you, if God was going to examine you. If God was going to do that, you would want to be so right, so pure, so clean.

But that is not the way God examines you. God does not bring you into a room and put you down and interrogate you with one great big examination. The way God examines you is in a series of small choices. Your life is being examined right now. Today you're going to face some choices. They may seem like small choices, but it is whether you make those choices—and whether you make them right or wrong—that's going to determine your destiny as a Christian.

Now most of us won't have a chance to make the great decisions: whether or not America goes to war, whether we sell the Saudis that radar plane, or whether we invest millions in this thing or that thing. You won't be able to make those decisions. But there are decisions that each one of us makes. And remember that your life is but an accumulative record of your choices. Now the decision that this man Lot made so graphically reveals the weakness of his character.

III. Lot and His Calamity

Now the third thing I want you to see this morning as we study this scripture: not only his choice, and not only his character that was revealed by his choice, but I want you to see the calamity that came as a result of his choice. Now at first there didn't seem to be any calamity. Now I imagine, had we come up to him and looked at him, we'd say, "Boy, you know, you're a really successful man here. You are the mayor of Sodom, or the alderman in Sodom. You seem to be living in a very beautiful home. Your wife, your family—why, your daughters have married some of the leading citizens of Sodom! What a successful man you are, Mr. Lot! You've got money in Sodom First National. You are a member of that liberal First Church of Sodom Heights." Maybe he was on the finance committee of the Sodom Heights Church. And he has probably hobnobbed a little and drunk cocktails with the pastor of that church, and he's just doing really well. His children perhaps have been voted the "Most Likely to Succeed" in Sodom High, because their father, after all, is a very successful man. There he is, sitting in the gate. He looks so prosperous. He looks so successful. But he is, in the eyes of God, a colossal failure.

I want to read something to you. Turn to Genesis chapter 19. I'm embarrassed to read it, but I'm going to read it—Genesis chapter 19. I'm not embarrassed because it's the Word of God; I'm embarrassed because the way this man failed God. But I want you to notice, God is so fed up with Sodom and Gomorrah. And, incidentally, we're going to deal some more with Sodom and Gomorrah. We haven't finished paying our respects to Sodom and Gomorrah. But the way the people in Sodom were living was a stench in the

nostrils of God. And God sent two angels to warn Lot to flee from that city. And when those two angels came to warn Lot, they materialized as men, they appeared as men. And the sex perverts in Sodom saw those two men, and they wanted to commit their filthy abominations upon these two visitors from heaven. And they are there, and Lot has brought them into the house. And they're banging on the door with their unsatisfied lust; they're banging on Lot's house, and they're saying, "Let us in." And here's Lot on the inside.

Now I want you to listen to this pussyfooter. He says, "*I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly...*"—calling the filthy Sodomites his brothers—"*I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly. Behold now, I have two daughters*"—that is, "two virgin daughters"—"*which have not known man; let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as is good in your eyes:*"—that is, he was going to sacrifice his two daughters upon the altar of their lust—"*only unto these men do nothing; for therefore came they under the shadow of my roof. And they said, Stand back. And they said again, This one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge: now will we deal worse with thee, than with them. And they pressed sore upon the men, even Lot, and came near to break the door.*" (Genesis 19:7–9)

I'm not going to tell you any more of this sordid story right now, but what a tragedy! I told you when I began this message it would be hard for you to believe that this man Lot was a saved man, that he knew God. But what had happened? He had become so much a part of Sodom, he had sunk so low, he had made some decision so wrongly that he now lost his ability to make any decision rightly. His mind is warped and twisted by sin.

You say, "How could it have happened? Here's a man willing to sacrifice his daughters to the perversions of the Sodomites. How could it have happened?" Sin will warp your mind. I don't care if you are a Christian. It will warp your mind. There are three persons in your seat this morning: there is the person you are right at this moment; there is the person you could be for God, and there is the person you could be for evil.

Many of us have failed to understand what God could do through us if we'd let Him. Dwight L. Moody, on a trip to England, heard a preacher say, "The world has yet to see what God can do with, through, and in a man who is totally dedicated to Him." And Dwight L. Moody said, "By the grace of God, I will be that man totally dedicated to God." And God took Dwight L. Moody, a shoe clerk, and made a mighty world evangelist out of him.

I wonder if you would say that today: "I want to be the man I could be." You see, there's the man you are; there's the man you could be for God; but also there's the man you could be for evil. I don't think there's a one of you here today that realizes the propensity for evil that there is in you here. You say, "Well, I've grown past that." Well,

friend, “that which is flesh is flesh,” (John 3:6) and we still have that flesh with us. You take your eyes off of the Lord, you start making the wrong decisions in a small way, and it will amaze you and appall you the things that you will do.

I remember reading in the Old Testament about a man whose name was Hazael. And it was prophesied of him that he would commit certain atrocities, and it was prophesied of him that he would do such a thing as ripping up pregnant women, and so forth. And do you know what Hazael said? Hazael said, “Am I a dog, that I would do such a thing? Am I a dog, that I would do it?” (2 Kings 8:13) And then he did it. He had no idea of that evil, vile propensity. And you have no idea, dear friend, how low you can go.

I’m talking to you, Mr. Preacher. I’m talking to you, Mr. Deacon. I’m talking to you, Madam Sunday School Teacher. I’m saying to every one of us, there are three persons in your seat: there’s the person you are now, the person you could be for God, and the person you could be for vileness and for the devil. You take your eyes off of Jesus Christ, and I want to tell you there’s probably no limit to the vileness to which you can sink. David was a man after God’s own heart, and look at the vileness that got into David’s heart. That’s the reason the Bible says, “*Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.*” (1 Corinthians 10:12)

I’m amazed that the Bible calls this man over in the New Testament a man who had been justified and a man who had been saved. (2 Peter 2:7) What a horrible story it is! He had lost the ability to see the difference between right and wrong. A leader of a correctional school for boys said, “One of the great problems that we have in this school is that the boys that come to this school have absolutely no concept of right or wrong.” And do you know, we have a lot of this generation, we have a lot just right here in the city, they have no concept of right or wrong. Something has happened that has obliterated that distinction between right and wrong. I read in the newspaper where it was announced on the radio and over the high school PA system that our president had been shot, and the boys and girls in a particular school began to applaud—that the President had been shot! No ability to know the difference between right and wrong. Sin had so warped the mind of this man.

Now God begins to send judgment. Look, if you will, please, in verse 24. I’m not going to read the whole story, but look in verses 24 and 25: “*The LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven;*”—if you’re wondering how God feels about the sin of perversion, my dear friend, God left Sodom with its smoking ruins as an example for “*those that after should live ungodly,*” the Bible says—“*and he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground. But his wife look back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.*” (Genesis 19:24–26)

And then, skip down to verse 35. This talks about Lot's two daughters: *"And they made their father drink wine that night also: and the youngest arose, and lay with him; and he perceived not when she lay down, nor when she arose. Thus were both the daughters of Lot with child by their father"* (Genesis 19:35–36)—by an incestuous relationship.

Now, let me just talk to you about Lot's calamity. God sent judgment to Sodom. And the carcass of sin was now bloated and ripe for the vultures of judgment. And God would have spared that city if He could have found but fifty righteous people in it. But they could not even find fifty, nor forty, nor thirty, nor twenty, nor ten righteous people in the city. And God called Lot out of the city. And did you know that the two angels had to practically drive Lot out of the city? He's still there looking over his possessions. He's still there checking his bankbook. He's still there bidding his friends goodbye. And the angel has to say, "Lot, hasten out of this city." (Genesis 19:22) And you remember the story in Scripture, how his wife looked back, lingered, and was turned to a pillar of salt, as the fiery judgment overtook her and she was forever embalmed. We see Lot, he's up here in a cave now with his two daughters who have gotten their education in the world. His two daughters that he wanted to be sophisticated, his two daughters that he wanted to have the advantages of this world, they have become so infused with the philosophies of Sodom; so depraved and so carnal are their minds that they get their father drunk. They're up there hiding in a cave, and then the first sister goes in and lies with her father; and then the second sister: an incestuous relationship. And both of them become pregnant. Such a sordid story! Such a terrible story!

Here was a man, the Bible says, who just *"pitched his tent toward Sodom."* (Genesis 13:12) That's the reason I said you'd better not measure a thing by where it is, but where it's headed. I tell you, I'd rather be in the shoes today of some of you who are just little baby Christians who are headed in the right direction than some of you who are mature Christians but you're turning around and heading in the wrong direction. Listen, dear friend. You had better measure a thing, not by where it is, but by where it's headed. I want to ask you a question. Where are you headed?

Conclusion

Now, suppose today—suppose today—that we could bring Mr. Lot up here on this platform and interview him. "Lot, come and stand beside me right here. I want to ask you some questions. And, Lot, I want you to be honest." And so Mr. Lot stands here. "Lot, the first question I want to ask you before this congregation is this. Lot, you lived in Sodom for twenty years. Lot, you had money. You had prestige. You had position. You had power. But, Lot, I want to ask you a question. And answer it honestly, Lot. Were

you happy? I mean, Lot, did you have joy down in your heart?” And Lot would answer you and say, “No, I did not. To be very honest with you, Mr. Rogers, for twenty years I was perfectly miserable.”

You say, “Brother Rogers, how do you know he was miserable?” You just look at this scripture, 2 Peter 2:8, and the Bible says this about Lot—it says, “*That righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds.*” (2 Peter 2:8) He was a vexed man. Do you know what this word *vexed* means? The same word is translated in Revelation chapter 20 and verse 10 about those who are in hell, and it’s translated “tormented.” (Revelation 20:10) He tormented his righteous soul from day to day. He was a child of God, but life for him was hell on earth.

You put it down big and plain and straight: *the most miserable man is not the unsaved man; the most miserable man on this earth is a child of God out of fellowship with God.* The most miserable man is the child of God playing footsie with Sodom. *When God saved you, He didn’t fix you up where you couldn’t sin any more, but He sure fixed you where you couldn’t sin and enjoy it any more,* amen? And a carnal Christian is not a joyful Christian. He has no joy. “*That righteous man...vexed his...soul from day to day.*” Now, if you can hobnob with Sodom, if you can live in the suburbs of sin, if you can fellowship with Sodomites and the things of this world, and it doesn’t affect you, you’ve never been saved—you’ve never been saved.

“I want to ask you another question, Lot. Lot, how much influence did you have down there in Sodom?” You know, there are some people today who have the idea that in order to win the world we’ve got to become chummy with the world: cocktail evangelism. We sit around and swap dirty stories and swig beer with a fellow, and then after a while invite him to church, and maybe he’ll come, because he sees we’re a regular fellow. Maybe we can go to the dance floor and witness there a little bit. Maybe we can go to one of these discos on Saturday night and invite folks to new life on Sunday morning. Maybe that’s the way we’re going to win the world. “Lot, I want to ask you a question. How many did you win? Did you win a thousand?” “No.” “Lot, did you win fifty?” “Abram, when he took a census, couldn’t find fifty.” “Did you win forty?” “No.” “Did you win thirty?” “No.” “Twenty?” “No.” “Did you win ten?” He did not even win ten people to Jesus Christ. He was a complete failure. His influence was a complete failure.

Now I want to tell you something. When you get worldly, and when you become carnal, now you may be going to heaven, but a lot of people are going to be going to hell because you’ve failed to witness and have the power of God in your life as you ought to.

“Well, I want to ask you another question, Lot. Lot, you say that you were not really happy. And, Lot, you say that you didn’t have any influence on the world. Let me ask

you another question, Lot. What about your family? What influence did you have on your family?" His chin starts to quiver, his eyes rim with tears, and he says, "Mr. Rogers, as I look back now on it, as I see it from hindsight, I was such a fool. I lost my children. My daughters married Sodomites. And when I went to warn them and tell them that God was going to destroy Sodom with fire, they laughed at me. They mocked me. They called me a religious fanatic. I lost my daughters, and even the ones I got out of Sodom were so corrupt that horrible things happened. My wife turned to a pillar of salt. I lost my family."

"Well, Lot, let me ask you: Surely you salvaged something? Lot, you went down there a very wealthy man. You had a lot of flocks and herds. Lot, I want to ask you a question. How much of this world's goods did you take out of Sodom? How much material? How much wealth did you garner from Sodom?" And I can hear Lot as he answers and says, "I was a fool. I lost it all. I have been living up in a cave with my two daughters without one cent to my name."

Do you know what that's a picture of? As Lot got out of Sodom and fire destroyed Sodom, the Bible says that the carnal Christian is going to face the judgment of God and his life is going to go up as wood, hay, and stubble. He's going to be saved, yet so as by fire. (1 Corinthians 3:12–13) Everything that he lived for, dreamed for, and schemed for will be gone. Lot lost it all.

Abram didn't lose it all. Listen. After Abram told Lot, "You go east, I'll go west; you go north, I'll go south," and Lot went east, God appeared to Abram. And you can go back in the thirteenth chapter and read it. And God said, "Abram, Abram, you just stand here." He said, "Abram, you look to the east, look to the west, look to the north, look to the south. Abram, you see it all. Abram, I'm going to give it all to you. It all belongs to you, even that part which Lot took. Abram, it really belongs to you. Not a stick, not a stone, not a grain of sand belongs to him; it belongs to you. I'll give it to you and your posterity." (Genesis 13:14–17) Friend, it pays to serve Jesus. Abraham is still the possessor of that land, and in the Millennium, in the resurrection, it will be Abraham's land, for God gave it to him.

Let me tell you something, friend. When I was a kid, we used to have a little saying. Have you ever found something that belonged to somebody else, and they wanted you to give it back, and you say, "Finders keepers, losers weepers"? Did you ever do that? We used to say that: "Finders keepers, losers weepers." And then we wouldn't give it back. Well, let me tell you something. The Bible teaches something different. It is not "finders keepers, losers weepers." Jesus said, "*Whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall [find] it.*" (Mark 8:35) It is "losers finders, keepers weepers." Listen. Losers are the finders; the keepers are the weepers. "*Whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall [find] it.*" Abraham did

what God would have him do, and God rewarded him. Jesus said, in Matthew chapter 19: *“Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name’s sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.”* (Matthew 19:29)

“Thank you, Lot, for talking with me this morning. Lot, there’s one other thing I’d like to ask you. I have to preach this morning to a congregation of people who missed an hour’s sleep, and some of them are not paying much attention, Lot. So, Lot, as I close the message, Lot, what advice would you give to this congregation?” And Lot says, “There are two things I’d tell them. I would remind them to watch their decisions—that decisions determine destiny—and to watch the small decisions. I would teach them not to compromise with sin, to deal with sin when it first rears its ugly head.” “Thank you, Lot. You said you had two things to say. What other advice would you give?” “I would tell all of those Christians out there who are not walking with God to repent and get right before judgment falls—to repent and get right before judgment falls. Don’t be as foolish as I was and lose it all.”

Did you know that the Bible says that *“if we...judge ourselves, we [will] not be judged”*? (1 Corinthians 11:31) It’s our privilege this morning to do that.

The Foolish Father Who Failed His Family

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: Merritt Island

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 13:10–12; 19:7–26

*“hen Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east:
and they separated themselves the one from the other.”*

GENESIS 13:11

Outline

Introduction

- I. Worldly Compromise
- II. Wrong Companionship
- III. Wicked Corruption
- IV. Willful Calamity

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Introduction

I want us to think this morning about fathers. Would you be opening your Bibles, please, to the book of Genesis. We'll be studying from Genesis chapters 13 through chapter 19. And if you're not a father, but just a husband, there will be something for you. And if you're not a father, but a mother, there will be something for you. And there will be something for children, as we study the Word of God. But the emphasis this morning is going to be on our fathers.

Now I want us to think this morning on this subject: “The Foolish Father Who Failed His Family.” And this foolish father who failed his family was a man by the name of Mr. Lot.

Now there are many fathers today who are failing their families. I heard of a boy who came home from school, and he had to bring a note from the teacher. And the note said that he had been taken into the principal's office and whipped. The father said, “Well now, son, what were you whipped for?” He said, “Well, Dad, it's all right. It was something I deserved.” He said, “Well, just tell me, son, what were you whipped for?” He said, “Well, for using bad language.” He said, “Well, is that all? What did the teacher say?” He said, “Well, the teacher said, ‘Son, where did you learn to use language like that?’” He said, “Now, don't worry, Dad. I kept you out of it. I blamed it on the parrot.”

But I believe there are many people who are not learning it from the parrot; they're learning it from the parent, and they're learning it from the fathers. And there are some foolish fathers who are failing their families.

Now I want you to notice this story in Genesis 13 through 19 really is not only the story of a foolish father, but it's also the story of a wicked wife, and it's also the story of some delinquent daughters. And I think it would be well for all of us to listen to the tragic story of Lot and the tragic story of his family disintegration. And it's really in four steps.

I. **Worldly Compromise**

Step number one in the story of the foolish father we could call "worldly compromise." Notice Genesis 13—and I'm starting to read with verse 10: "*And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD,*"—why, it looked like the Garden of Eden—"*like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other. Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and*"—notice this next sentence—"*pitched his tent toward Sodom.*" (Genesis 13:10–12)

Now, what had happened? Well, Lot and Abram were relatives, and relatives don't always get along. And these relatives were not really getting along. Abram was the uncle, and Lot was the nephew. Both of them were very wealthy, and both of them had large herds of cattle, but there were arguments, primarily between Abram's herdsmen and Lot's herdsmen. And so good ol' Father Abram said, "Now, listen, Lot. My nephew, we're brethren. Let's not have any arguments, no strife. Look, here's the whole land. There's enough room for all of us. Now, Lot, you just decide which way you want to go. If you're going one direction, I'll go in the other." Wasn't that a wonderful spirit? It takes two to make an argument. And so he said, "I'm not going to argue, whichever way you want to go." And so Lot had the pick of all of the land.

Now he looked around, and he saw in the east the well-watered, beautiful, gorgeous plain. Now, if I were preaching a sermon just on this one text, I'd say, "Go west, young man! Go west!" But he looked toward the east, and it was beautiful. But it was the direction of sin, and the direction of compromise, because two of the most ungodly and wicked and licentious cities on the face of the earth were in the east: Sodom and Gomorrah. But the Bible says Lot "*pitched his tent toward Sodom.*" (Genesis 13:12) I do not believe, ladies and gentlemen, that this father ever intended to ruin his family. I do not believe, either, that he ever intended to move into Sodom. He just compromised. He simply pitched his tent toward Sodom. But you know as well as I from reading the story that, before long, Lot had ended up in Sodom. And what was the main driving force, and

what was the thing that caused him to go toward Sodom? It was materialism, the love of money. Lot put money and business first. And this was the first step in the downgrading and disintegration of his family. It was a worldly compromise.

“Did you say, Brother Rogers, this was a sin: to put money and business first?” Yes, it’s a sin. It’s a respectable sin. And most of the people in the congregation would say that it’s not a sin to make all of the money that you can.

Sometimes preachers even give this advice. They stand up before graduating high school classes and graduating college classes, and they give this advice; and it sounds like such good advice, such harmless advice, such innocuous advice. They say this: “Now, young people, take the talent that God has given you and make all of the money you can, just so you make it honestly, and then give God all you can.” Now, doesn’t that sound like good advice? “Make all the money you can, just so long as you make it honestly, and then give God all you can.”

But, my friend, it is wrong. And it is a sin before Almighty God for any man or any woman in this congregation to make all the money they can. Now it’s not wrong to make money. But any man who is making all of the money he can is not serving God all he can. He will be making money some of the time that he ought to be serving God. There’s a time to make money. There’s also a time to serve God. And any man who puts money first is an idolater. The Bible says plainly, clearly, without any equivocation, that covetousness is idolatry. (Colossians 3:5) The Bible says we are to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; not money first; not make all of the money we can first: “*Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness;*”—don’t put things first; put God first—“*and*”—then—“*all these things shall be added unto you.*” (Matthew 6:33)

What was Lot’s mistake? How did Mr. Lot first fail his family? What made him such a foolish father? What made him such a flop as a father? He put materialism—he put money first.

Now, don’t misunderstand me. It’s not a sin to make money. It’s not a sin to provide for your children. As a matter of fact, it’s a sin not to provide for your children. The Bible says, “If a man provide not for his own, especially those of his own household, he has denied the faith and has become worse than an infidel.” Don’t you let your children go hungry! That’s a sin before God.

And, also, it’s not a sin to have money. Some of the wealthiest men in the world have been Christian men, and some of the most godly men in the Bible were wealthy. Solomon, David, Abraham, Joseph: on and on we could go.

And nor do you have to have money to commit this sin. A man may be only making fifty dollars a week and be very, very covetous.

Nor are we saying that money is not important. It is very important. If you don’t

believe it, try and buy some groceries next week without it. Money is important—very important.

But what am I saying? I'm saying that the people in Brevard County are very guilty of putting money first: materialism; seeking first money, and therefore bringing to themselves sorrow.

Notice, in 1 Timothy chapter 6, verse 10: "*For the love of money*"—not money, the love of money—"*is the root of all evil*:"—a better interpretation of this is, "the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil"—"*which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*" (1 Timothy 6:10) Now, notice how that verse of Scripture is fulfilled in the life of Mr. Lot. You will find that few men on earth face the sorrows that Lot faced. And it all started with a worldly compromise and very respectable sin. All he did was simply say, "Well, I believe I'll go to the nice green pastures in the east." All he did was simply pitch his tent toward Sodom.

Oh, my friend, you put God first, and don't you worry about your family. If you put God first, if you "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness," God will take care of your family. You know what God said in Psalm 37, verse 25? King David quotes these words—he says, "Once I was young, and now I'm old; and yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor His seed begging bread." (Psalms 37:25) Your little children won't be going up and down the streets with a cup in their hand: not if you put God first; not if you're righteous; not if you seek first the kingdom of God.

Oh, it would be wonderful if some of you families would teach your children to tithe, and if some of you fathers and mothers would tithe! And let me say this right now: that tithing is not God's plan to raise money. God doesn't need your money. "*The earth is the LORD's, and the fulness thereof*" (Psalms 24:1)—the silver, the gold, the cattle on a thousand hills. If God wanted to, God could turn this church into solid gold just like that. Could He not? He can do anything. If He can turn water into wine, He could turn brick into gold if He wanted to. Tithing is not God's plan for raising money. Tithing is God's plan to save you from the damning, blighting, cursing sin of covetousness. Tithing is God's plan to teach you to trust Him. Tithing is God's plan to keep you from putting money and materialism first. You want to curse your family? You want to see your family pierced through with many sorrows? Then you keep on putting money first. You keep on following the spirit of this ungodly age, and you'll find out that all kinds of evil will come to your home.

What was the first step in the disintegration of Mr. Lot's family? I'll tell you what it was: it was a worldly compromise with a so-called respectable sin. He did not move into Sodom; he only moved toward Sodom. He did not steal; he only coveted. He only put materialism first.

II. Wrong Companionship

The second step: wrong companionship. First of all, worldly compromise. And then, wrong companionship. Notice Genesis 17, verse 9—the story goes on to tell us that Lot has now moved into Sodom. He has now become one of the big shots in Sodom. He sits in the city gate; perhaps he's now the mayor of Sodom. Everybody when they see Lot in the city of Sodom, they tip their hat, and they say, "Good morning, Mr. Lot. Good morning, Madam Lot. How are you? And how are all the little Lots?" And he says, "Fine, thank you." And he's become a wealthy, prosperous businessman. And perhaps he thinks God is really blessing him. He thinks, because he has all of these blessings, that the face of God is shining on him. He's getting along better now. He has more than he's ever had in his life. And so he thinks that God is blessing him, because he has all of these wonderful things at his fingertips. He does not know that he's about to lose them all. He's like a pig headed for the slaughter. But he thinks he has all of these things.

Now, notice this man who has moved into Sodom. In Genesis 19, verse 7, we read these words: *"And said, I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly."* (Genesis 19:7) Now that verse doesn't make much sense unless we get a little background. But what has happened? The way the people of Sodom were living was a stench in the nostrils of God. God was so fed up, God was so angry with the way the people of Sodom were living, that God said, "I'm going to destroy this city of Sodom with fire and brimstone." And God called two angels to come to warn the people of Sodom and warn Lot. And these two angels walked down through the city streets of Sodom, and the wicked men of Sodom saw these angels. And then these two celestial beings came into the house of Mr. Lot to abide. Lot said, "Come on in, fellows, and spend the night in here."

It was not long before there was a beating at the door. Lot went to the door to see who was there. And there were the men of the city of Sodom who were so perverted and so twisted and so warped into bestiality and sin that they were clamoring for the two angels to come out that the men of Sodom might commit immorality with them: vile, wicked, horrible! What do you think Lot did? I'll tell you what he did. And it's one of the most sickening sentences in all of the Bible. He said, "Now, fellows, you ought not to be doing that." That's what this verse says, *"I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly."*

Catch the tone of it now. Here was a man who had moved into Sodom, and Sodom had moved into him, and now he is calling vile, warped, twisted, bestial, licentious, immoral, wicked, slimy sinners his brethren. "Brethren," he says—"Brethren." "I pray you, my brothers." He has become like them. Not that he really rebukes them; not that he fusses at them: why, if you go on to read this, he says something even worse. Notice verse 8: *"Behold now, I have two daughters which have not known man; let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as is good in your eyes: only unto these men do nothing; for therefore came they under the shadow of my roof."* (Genesis

19:8) “They’re my guests, so don’t bother them. But, here, take my two teenage daughters, and do with them as you will.”

Now, who is Mr. Lot? Is Mr. Lot a man who has never known God? Is Mr. Lot a man with absolutely no moral sensibilities at all? No, the Bible says, in the New Testament, that Lot at first was a righteous man who vexed his soul with the wicked deeds of the Sodomites. (2 Peter 2:8) He was a man whose heart was grieved at this sin. But now, look how he has fallen. Look to where he’s gone. Why? Because he started keeping company with the wrong crowd. He moved into Sodom, and Sodom moved into him. You show me the crowd that you run with, and I’ll tell you the kind of a person you are or you will soon become. The Scripture says, “A companion of fools will be destroyed.” (Proverbs 13:20)

Notice, in 2 Corinthians 6, verses 14 through 17: *“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord”—what agreement—“hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore...”*—and this scripture, even though it’s not preached much today, is still true today—*“Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.”* (2 Corinthians 6:14–17) The Bible preaches separation. Some people looking for a pastor said, “Let’s call Brother So-and-So. He’d make us a good pastor. He’s such a good mixer.” God doesn’t want good mixers; He wants good separators. “‘Come ye out from among them, and be separate,’ saith the Lord.”

Now, listen to me. There are more ungodly people per square inch around here than most places. And, mister, if you’re not careful, you are going to take these people up for your bosom companions. You’re going to swap stories with them. You’re going to go to places of entertainment with them. Before long, you’ll be listening to lewd jokes. Before long, you’ll be talking about their deeds of immorality with somebody else’s wife. And, before long, your heart and your mind will be so rotten and so corrupt that you’ll be thinking just like them. “Oh,” you say, “no, not me.” Well, that’s what Lot would have said too. But, “Can a man take a fire in his bosom, and be not burned? Can a man go upon hot coals, and his feet be not burned?” (Proverbs 6:27–28)

Go back to 1 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 11. Why, even if a church member is not living as he ought, notice what God says here: *“But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolator, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.”* (1 Corinthians 5:11) God says, “You separate yourself from these people. You keep

yourself different. You keep yourself straight from these people.” Listen. There are people today who will so warp your mind, and you can go with them so long until what ought to amaze you will simply amuse you. And you will become unshockable, and sin will no longer shock you. And the world will call that sophistication, but the Bible calls it sin.

If there’s a crowd that uses vile language, if there’s a crowd that goes to the wrong movies and places of entertainment, if there’s a crowd that dresses immodestly, if there’s a crowd that uses the wrong language, you cut yourself off from the crowd. This does not mean that we’re not to witness to them. This does not mean that we’re not to pray for them. This does not mean that we’re not to visit their home and take to them the message of Jesus, even as our Savior did. But the Bible plainly warns that we are to come out from them and be separate. And if you don’t understand that, if you think you’re smarter than God, you’re just like Mr. Lot. Lot moved into Sodom, and Sodom moved into him, and he called the wicked men of the city of Sodom his brethren.

Oh my, look at the standards today that are toppling. The carcass of sin is ripe for the vultures of judgment. And God is going to judge America just like God judged Sodom. And we’d better be careful. Mr. Lot thought that he could go and hobnob with the people of Sodom; but he could not do it. And now he ends up allowing his daughters to go down into the depths of depravity.

III. Wicked Corruption

The first step: just simply, worldly compromise. The second step: wrong companionship. But the third step that inevitably follows is wicked corruption. Satan now moved Mr. Lot from the more subtle and more respectable sins of compromise and worldliness and wrong companionship into the more terrible sins of drunkenness and immorality and lewdness, and even incest with his own daughters. Satan is very clever.

“Who is it knocks so loud?”

“A lonely little sin.”

“Slip through,” I answered.

Soon all hell was in.

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Isn’t that the way the devil does it? Sin starts small, but it ends big. And the first sip from the cup of sin is sweet, but the dregs are very bitter. And I want you to see what happens: worldly compromise; wrong companions; and then, wicked, terrible, vile, licentious corruption.

The story is so wicked and so sordid that I hate to tell the whole story from the pulpit. But the Bible goes on to tell how this man had illegitimate children by his own daughters, committed incest with them; how he lay drunk in a cave. And yet the Bible

says he was a man who at first “vexed his righteous soul” (2 Peter 2:8) with the way those people were living. He said, “That’s terrible!” just like some of you are saying about what Mr. Lot did, “That’s terrible!” But I want to tell you that there is no limit to the sin that any man in the congregation can go to, or any woman in this congregation, if she allows herself, or he allows himself, to be constantly placed in temptation.

Right now sitting in your seat there are three persons. There is the person you are, the person you could be for the devil if you allowed yourself to be placed in temptation, and there is the Christian—the servant of God. Though little, do you realize how great you could be if you were totally surrendered to the Lord? There are three people in that pew right now. And Lot did not realize the instinct, the bestiality that was in him, the wicked corruption of his day that would drag him down so low.

Now, listen to me, fathers. Lot had some precious teenage girls. He could have saved those girls. Sure, he was living in a time of vileness and wickedness—and so are we. The Bible teaches that just before Jesus comes again it will be like it was in the days of Lot. Did you know that? The Bible says plainly: “As it was in the days of Lot, so will it be in the day of the coming of the Son of man.” (Luke 17:28–30)

And our day is like the day of Lot. Did you know that the Florida legislature is considering legalizing the sin of homosexuality? Did you know that? So that men can live together as husband and wife, and even adopt children, if they so choose. Did you know that? Did you know that there’s a rising tide of immorality coming in our nation? And did you know that there are people saying, “Why, this is no longer a sin. If a person wants to be this way, that’s their right. We believe in freedom.”

Do you know, my dear friend, my father, my mother, sitting here this morning, do you know what the number one health problem in Dade County among teenagers is? Is it dope? No. Is it liquor? No. Is it tobacco? No. Is it cancer? No. It’s pregnancy! The number one health problem! And the number two health problem, according to the *Miami Herald*, is venereal disease—among teenagers in Dade County. And who would doubt that it’s any different in our county? This is what Mr. Madder, Jr., who is the Director of the Maternal and Child Health Division of Dade County of Public Health has said—the *Miami Herald*, March 28, 1966. And he placed a part of the blame on going steady and automobiles. And last year there were 239 teenage pregnancies out of wedlock reported to his office alone. The youngest was a twelve-year-old girl. Eight were thirteen years old. Twenty-two were fourteen. Forty were fifteen. Sixty-six were sixteen. Fifty-six were seventeen. And forty-six were eighteen. And they came from nearly every junior and senior high school in Dade County. And many of them came from fine, well-to-do, church-attending families.

We’d better wake up. Some people get all excited when I preach on a subject like this. But let me tell you something else. Our young people are being fed and barraged in

magazines, newspapers, television, and from one another, and sometimes—heaven help us—even from college professors, that all of these things are all right. The head of the Department of Guidance at Columbia University declares that students say that the best way to avoid breaking laws is to do away with them: “Relax the rules, and you’ll prevent the violation.” “Morality,” they say, “is a personal affair. Each man is free to determine his own code of morals.” And the editor of one of our leading magazines has said, “Chastity is just another word for repression. And sex without love is not in itself evil. Anything you get pleasure from is good.” That’s the philosophy the kids are getting today.

Did you know there is an organization called The Student’s Resistance Federation? No doubt, that is communistically inspired. And this is the advice they are giving to students on the college campuses: “If you can really get organized on your campus, you can try the following. Number one: Publish an insulting satire magazine. Direct disobedience. Outright disrespect for all authority. Sleep-ins. Bring in coeds, and demonstrate publicly, if necessary, your refusal to accept outworn and stifling puritanism. Start a sexual freedom campaign around this idea. We will put you in touch with a New York lead for sexual freedom.” “Have your own revolution,” they’re telling us.

Is it any surprise that in Miami, Florida there is a church built around the cult of LSD, tied in closely with the idea of sex, called the Neo-American Church, where the people get their thrills in religious worship by taking LSD? Did you know that there are born in the United States 250,000 babies out of wedlock each year and criminal abortions have reached over one million a year? I’m talking about known criminal abortions. And most of the people in this congregation this morning lack the imagination to be able to understand the woe and the heartbreak and the anguish and the mental psychosis that comes from breaking God’s Commandment that says, “*Thou shalt not commit adultery.*” (Exodus 20:14)

Our nation is headed for the ash heap. The wicked shall be turned into hell, and every nation that forgets God. And, Mr. Father, your teenager is not immune. And if you don’t stop, and sit down and think, and start being a dad, and start teaching the Bible, and leading your children to Christ, and setting the right kind of example, and understanding there are more things in this world besides money and your prestige, you’re going to lose your children to the devil and to the world. God give us some fathers today who will wake up!

Oh, look at the corruption that happened in Mr. Lot’s family! The Bible says, when he finally got out of Sodom, he went to a cave with two of his teenage daughters—that’s all he had left—and in that cave he got drunk, and in that cave he committed immorality with his own daughters.

But Lot, he didn’t start out with immorality and sex; he started out with materialism.

He didn't move into Sodom; he only pitched his tent toward Sodom. But, my, how it ended up!

IV. Willful Calamity

Let me give you the final chapter and the last chapter. We'll call it willful calamity, because God Almighty said, "All right, that's it, Lot! I'm going to judge you, and I'm going to judge the city of Sodom. I'm going to rain down upon this city fire and brimstone. Get your loved ones! Get your things! Get your relatives. Let's go!" And the Bible says Mr. Lot went to his daughters and his sons-in-law, and he said, with tears in his eyes, "Children, come! God is going to judge this city." And do you know what his sons-in-law said? They said, "Ha! Listen to the old fool! He's a religious nut!" That's what they said. The Bible says, "*He seemed as one that mocked.*" (Genesis 19:14) And I can see the old man, with tears in eyes, saying to his precious little babies, the girls that he rocked on his knee, "Girls, Daddy did wrong. Come!"

Oh, mister, let me tell you something. You can spit in the face of God, put money and materialism first, and drink your cocktails, run with the wrong crowd, tell your dirty stories, and stay out of church, if you want to. But the time will come when God is ready to judge this world, and you would give all that you possess, all of those things, if your children would only turn to God and come and go to glory with you. But it will be too late then. I want to warn you while your children are young, you'd better denounce the things of this world. There's coming a time when you'll go to preach to them, and you'll go to talk to them, and they will laugh in your face.

He lost his daughters. He lost his wife. I'm sure he loved her. I'm sure she was precious to him. But the angels said, "When you come out of the city, don't turn back." She came out of Sodom, but Sodom never came out of her. She could not bear to leave. As she's fleeing on the plain, the Bible says she turned back just to get one fainting glimpse. (Genesis 19:26) After all, her daughters were still there. Her socialite friends were still there. Her beautiful mansion was still there. And she turned and looked back, and she was turned to a pillar of salt. One preacher preached a sermon on this subject and called it "The Woman Who Died Doing the Twist." She turned around to look back.

Lot lost his wife. He lost his children. He lost his influence with the men of that city. Do you know what God had said to Abram? God said to Abram, "Abram, if you can find ten righteous people, I'll spare that city." (Genesis 18:32) Ten! That's all: ten! If Lot had simply won his wife, his daughters, his sons-in-law, and several friends, he would have had ten. Did you know that he could not even convert ten men? You old backslider, you go out here and try and witness for the Lord, and you know what they'll say to you? They'll say, "*Physician, heal thyself.*" (Luke 4:23) That's what they'll say. And here was

a man who so completely lost his influence that a whole city went to hell. Not even ten people could he claim! He couldn't hold back the judgment of Almighty God.

He moved to Sodom because of materialism, but he lost all that too. He ended up living in a cave. Jeremiah 17, verse 11: *"He that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool."* (Jeremiah 17:11)

Conclusion

Oh, God, give us some fathers! Don't you realize, mister, that, if men will stand up for God, women and children will? Don't you know that? Have you ever known a man who was truly godly—a praying, dedicated, Christian man—whose wife and children would not follow him? Never! Oh, there may be some man who starts late in life, or there might be some man who's a hypocrite, but you watch it when a man says, like Joshua of old, *"As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD,"* (Joshua 24:15) the little lady says, "Amen!" and the kids say, "That's right, Dad!"

I'm speaking to some men today who are failing God, and failing their children, and will take their children into hell, unless they change; some men who think more of their job, and their pleasure, and their home, than they do God; some men who have a cotton string where they ought to have a backbone. God, give us men! Give us Christian dads! One of these days, dear sir, unless you get your values straightened out, you may lose everything that you hold dear. And right now you may be riding the crest of a wave. Mr. Lot did famously for quite a while. He was one of the leading citizens in Sodom. He thought everything was going his way, but then everything collapsed around him like a house of cards, like a sandcastle on the beach when the tide comes in. Take a long look. Have you been a praying dad, a clean dad, a kind of a father who says to the wife and children, "Let's go to church; let's pray; let's study the Word of God"?

Is It Really Just a Small, Small World?

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: June 22, 1997

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 13:12–13

“But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly.”

GENESIS 13:13

Outline

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Conclusion

Introduction

Turn to Genesis chapter 13. The title of the message: “Is it Really Just a Small, Small World?” Genesis chapter 13, verses 12 and 13: *“Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom. But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly.”* (Genesis 13:12–13) Is it really just a small, small world? Worldliness—worldliness—is a great problem in the twentieth-century church. The church has become worldly, and the world has become churchy, and it’s so hard to tell the difference between the church and the world. *We hear a lot about the separation of church and state; we need to hear more about the separation of church and world.*

Now, here's what God's Word says, in 1 John chapter 2, verse 15: *"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."* (1 John 2:15) Now, when we say "the world," what do we mean by the word *world*? It's a translation of the Greek word *kosmos*. And when the Bible tells us not to love the world, it's not talking about Planet Earth. God made Planet Earth, and God said that is good. All of nature is the handiwork of Almighty God. And this is a beautiful world that God has made, amen? And when God says, *"Love not the world,"* He's not talking about the people of the world, because God loves everybody. Red, yellow, black, and white, they're precious in His sight. And the Bible says, *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son."* (John 3:16) He's not talking about the planet; He's not talking about the people. But when the Bible says, *"Love not the world,"* He's talking about a system, an ungodly system. The word translated "world," I say, is the word *kosmos*, and it means "order"—"order." It has the idea of a philosophy, a system. For example, we speak of the world of finance. We speak of the world of sports. We speak of the world of fashion. What we're talking about now is not a people and not a place, but we're talking about a system, a *kosmos*. When a woman puts on her cosmetics, what is she doing? She is putting her face in order. Now there is a certain system that the Bible says that those of us who are children of God must not love and indeed we must come out of, as we're going to see very clearly.

Now, let me tell you four things about this world before we get into the text itself. This world—this world system—has a prince. Now, don't forget this. I want to give you some scriptures; I'm going to have many scriptures today. Don't try to turn to them; simply jot them, if you will, on a piece of paper.

A. The Prince of This World

First of all, the prince of this world. And Jesus had much to say about the prince of this world. The prince of this world is Satan himself. John chapter 12, verse 31—Jesus said, *"Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out."* (John 12:31) Now He was talking about Satan, who would be defeated at the cross, and Jesus called him *"the prince of this world."* In John chapter 14 and verse 30, the Lord Jesus said, *"The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me."* (John 14:30) That is, there was nothing that Satan could accuse Jesus of. But Jesus called him *"the prince of this world."* In John chapter 16, verse 11, Jesus said, "Judgment is coming, judgment is sure, because..."—He says—*"because the prince of this world is judged."* (John 16:11)

So what I'm saying is that this world system has a prince. That's the reason the Apostle Paul said, *"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities..."*—that is, a system that has a prince over it—*"against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world."* (Ephesians 6:12) Satan has many underlings who call him master. Satan has an intricate organization.

He has a network of worldly wickedness, and Satan is *“the prince of this world.”*

B. The Philosophy of the World

Now the world has a prince. His name is Satan. Jesus told us that. But not only does the world have a prince; the world has a philosophy. That’s very important that you understand this. There is an enticing network of ideas and values that are skillfully woven together to entrap the most innocent of people. The Bible says, in 1 Corinthians chapter 3, verse 19, that *“the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.”* (1 Corinthians 3:19) Now that tells us two things: first of all, this world has its wisdom; number two, that God scoffs at the wisdom of this world. Again, 1 Corinthians chapter 7 and verse 31, the Bible speaks of *“the fashion of this world, which is passing away.”* (1 Corinthians 7:31) This world has its wisdom; it has its fashion. It goes from the schoolhouse to the statehouse, from Madison Avenue to Wall Street. It may appear in theme parks.

C. The Purpose of This World

It may seem innocent and sometimes beautiful, but this world has a prince, this world has a philosophy, and this world has a purpose. Are you following me? A prince, a philosophy, and a purpose. What is the purpose? It has a calculated plan. It has an unwavering purpose. And what is that purpose? It is unutterably hostile to the things of God—unutterably hostile to the things of God. Now, listen carefully, because I’m trying to give you the Word of God clearly. Jesus, speaking of the world, said, in John chapter 7 and verse 7, *“The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.”* (John 7:7)

Now everybody will hear a lot about the loving Jesus, the accepting Jesus, the nonjudgmental Jesus. But that’s not the Jesus of the Bible. That is not the Jesus of the Bible. Jesus said, *“The world hateth me, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.”* And then the Bible says that the world cannot understand what Jesus has to say, in John 14, verse 17. Jesus said the Holy Spirit is coming: *“Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him.”* (John 14:17) You talk to a moral worldling about the things of God, and he will say, *“Hey, I don’t agree with you. I don’t see it that way.”* And he, my friend, is not lying. He cannot see it. The world hates the things of God. He doesn’t understand it.

“Now,” you say, *“Pastor Rogers, isn’t everybody supposed to love us?”* No. Is that a surprise to you? John chapter 15, verse 18: *“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.”* (John 15:18) You cannot—you cannot—be a friend of Jesus and a friend of this world. Put this one down big, plain, and straight—James chapter 4 and verse 4: *“You adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?”*—that means *“warfare”*—*“whosoever therefore will be a friend*

of the world is the enemy of God." (James 4:4) Now this world has a purpose. It is a system calculated to capture the hearts and minds of many people. And one day this system will enthrone Satan's superman, the Antichrist.

D. The People of This World

It has a prince. It has a philosophy. It has a purpose. And it has a people. There are people of this world. Jesus called them, in Luke chapter 16 and verse 8, *"the children of this world."* (Luke 16:8) Now, understand this: that we are in the world, but we are not of the world. Now we are twice-born; they are once-born. And we're going to find ourselves going against the tide most of the time. We are members of the human world. We live in the physical world. But we do not belong to this world's system.

Does that surprise you? Did you think that we were to be saved and on the way to heaven, but just a part of this world system? May I tell you clearly from the Word of God that separation from the world and separation unto Almighty God is the first duty of any believer. Separation from the world and separation unto God is the first duty. The Bible tells us, in Romans chapter 12 and verse 2, we are not to be conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of our mind. (Romans 12:2) Jesus said, in John 15, verse 19, *"I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."* (John 15:19) We talk about a worldly Christian: Billy Sunday used to say it would be like talking of a heavenly devil.

Now the Apostle John has warned us—1 John 2, verses 15 to 17— *"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."* And then John tells us what the world is: *"For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."* (1 John 2:15–17)

Now all of that is an introduction to the message today, because the message today is going to be an illustration of this principle, this principle that there is a system, an ungodly system. It has a prince. It has a philosophy. It has a purpose. And it has a people. Now, if you are a child of God, I want to tell you clearly and plainly you're going to find yourself in conflict with this world. And you're going to find out, as a child of God, you're not to be in collusion with this world; you're to be in collision with this world. Now that may not suit you. You may say, "I don't like that; I don't want that." And that will be your choice; that will be your privilege. But I am telling you as clearly and as plainly as I know how—and God help me to say it—you cannot be a friend of this world and a friend of Jesus at the same time. And the same world that crucified Jesus will break your neck if it can, if you stand up for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now there was a man who loved God: his name was Lot. And that man tried to be a friend of the world and a friend of God at the same time, and it got him into horrible

problems. Now what happened is this: that Lot, who was the nephew of a man named Abraham, whose name at this particular time was Abram—it had not yet been changed to Abraham—Lot and Abram were uncle and nephew. They lived in the land of Canaan, and there came a range war between Lot’s herdsmen and Abram’s herdsmen. And Abram was the magnanimous rich uncle. And so he said to Lot, “Lot, there ought not to be any strife between us. Not only are we related in the family, but we’re in the family of God. Let there be no strife. Lot, you just choose. Whichever way you want to go, you go. If you go this way, I’ll go that way. You go north, I’ll go south. You go east, I’ll go west. Whichever way you want to go, just simply go.” And the Bible tells us that Lot pitched his tent toward Sodom. Notice, if you will, in Genesis chapter 13, verse 10: *“And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other.”* (Genesis 13:10–11)

I. The World Has Its Charming Persuasions

Now what happened is this: that Lot was charmed by this world. Here’s the first point in the message: the world has its charming persuasions. Write that down. The world—the world—has its charming persuasions. Now the place that Lot wanted to go to was beautiful and delightful and luxurious and tantalizing and charming and persuasive, but Sodom stood for all that God hated, because there was a sin in Sodom. It was the sin of homosexuality, and it was absolutely contrary to the Word of God.

Now, never argue with me about this, because I will not argue with you about it. I’ll point you to the Word of God and step out of the argument. Let me give you God’s Word—Leviticus chapter 18, verse 22: *“Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination”*—*“it is abomination.”* (Leviticus 18:22) Now I didn’t make that up. I am a preacher of the Word of God. The argument is not with me, it is not with a Baptist; it is with the Word of God for yea or nay.

Now that which is an abomination to God has become a source of pride to other people. Isaiah chapter 3 and verse 9: *“The shew of their countenance doth witness against them; and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not. Woe unto their soul! for they have rewarded evil unto themselves.”* (Isaiah 3:9) When perversion goes on parade, God says, “Woe” unto these people. When they hide their sin as when they show their sin as Sodom, *“the shew of their countenance doth witness against them; and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not.”* How does God feel about this sin? Romans chapter 1, verses 24 to 28: *“Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies*

*between themselves: who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and serve the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. 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: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. 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 1:24–28) And then God concludes this passage in verse 32, where He speaks of people “*who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.*” (Romans 1:32) That is, they get their entertainment this way. Not only do they do it, but they “*have pleasure in them that do them.*”*

Now, again, I want to remind you what God said about Sodom in Genesis 13, verse 13: “*But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly.*” (Genesis 13:13) But here was a man, his name was Lot; and the world, to Lot, had its charming persuasions.

Now Lot moved toward Sodom. Sodom was Satan’s masterpiece. Remember what John said—1 John chapter 2, verse 16: “*For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.*” (1 John 2:16) Think about Sodom, and think about some other places that you might know. There was the lust of the flesh: Sodom with its pleasures. There was the lust of the eyes: Sodom with its possessions. There was the pride of life: Sodom with its philosophies. And so Lot becomes a friend of Sodom.

Now, what does that have to do with me? What does that have to do with you? Well, the same forces that had their charming persuasions to pull away Lot, those same forces are working on the people of God today daily.

II. The World Has Its Controlling Power

First point: The world has its charming persuasions: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—gloriously beautiful, unspeakably wicked. Second point: The world has its controlling power—the world has its controlling power. Now the Bible says, in Romans chapter 12, that we’re not to be conformed to this world. (Romans 12:2) This world will squeeze you into a mold, but it will happen very subtly. Let me give you four steps in Lot’s life.

A. Direction

Step number one: direction. Look, if you will, in verse 12, and the Bible says, the last part of that, “*And [Lot] pitched his tent toward Sodom.*” (Genesis 13:12) Now,

underscore that: *“pitched his tent toward Sodom.”* Now all this was a direction, just moving toward Sodom. Now he’s not in Sodom; he’s just taking a step toward Sodom. And I would ask every mother and father, I would ask every teenager here today, have you done that? Have you taken just simply a step toward Sodom? Have you begun to move in an ungodly direction?

B. Decision

First, direction. And then, decision. In Genesis chapter 14 and verse 12, the Bible says there that Lot *“dwelt in Sodom.”* (Genesis 14:12) Now, remember, first of all, there was direction; and then, there was decision. He decided to move into Sodom. I don’t know what happened. He just moved closer and closer and closer. Soon he was living in the suburbs of Sodom, and finally he said, “Well, it would be a whole lot simpler if I just simply moved into Sodom. I don’t have to partake of their sins.”

C. Deception

Direction. Decision. And then, deception. What has happened to Lot, now, his conscience has become dull. He finds himself very much at home in Sodom. What once used to amaze him now amuses him, and he now has a conscience that is dull. He has become a solid citizen of Sodom. As a matter of fact, he becomes a VIP. He finds himself on the city council. In Genesis chapter 19 and verse 1, the Bible says he’s sitting in the gate of Sodom. (Genesis 19:1) Now what that means—“sitting in the gate”—is the same thing as saying he’s in the courthouse. That’s where the business is being done. First of all, direction. Then, decision. Then, deception. He now is so deceived that he cannot see what is happening in Sodom.

Now, you see, Lot was a good man; he was a godly man. But I want you to see how the devil deceived him and finally destroyed his testimony and everything else. He moves into Sodom. He becomes a leader of Sodom. His wife is high up in Sodom society. His girls go to Sodom High—maybe they’re cheerleaders there. They begin to date the boys of Sodom. And now here is a man who has become a solid citizen of Sodom, and now he is calling the men of Sodom his brothers. He has sunk so low.

“Who is it knocks so loud?”

“A lonely little sin.”

“Slip through,” I answered.

Soon all hell was in.

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Lot moved into Sodom, and Sodom has moved into Lot.

III. The World Has Its Corrupting Pollution

Now, here’s the third thing: The world has its corrupting pollution—the world has its

corrupting pollution. You cannot play with fire and not be burned. Now what happened is this: God sent two angels to warn Lot. And God, may I say, though I'm no angel, God has given me to warn you. But God sent two angels to warn Lot of the coming judgment on Sodom. But when those two angels came to Lot's house, the sex perverts of Sodom tried to commit sodomy on those two angels. It's one of the most sordid stories in all of the Bible. And Lot, on the inside of the house, said, "Come into this house quickly. Get out of the streets of Sodom. You don't know what's about to happen to you." These are holy angels who have taken the form of human beings, and they are pulled into the house of Lot. And Lot goes out to the milling, angry crowd of Sodomites outside of his house, and Lot says, "Listen. These men are my guests. Don't do this to these men. I have two virgin daughters who've never known a man. I will give you my daughters. Do to my daughters what you will."

Can you imagine? Can you imagine? A man who simply pitched his tent toward Sodom is now sacrificing his daughters to the lusts of the Sodomites. You read about it in Genesis 19, verse 4: *"But before they lay down, the men of the city, even the men of Sodom, compassed the house round, both old and young, all the people from every quarter: and they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men which came in to thee this night? bring them out unto us, that we may know them."* That's a euphemistic way of saying, "that we may commit sodomy with them." *"And Lot went out the door unto them, and shut the door after him, and said, I pray you, brethren..."*—now he's calling them brothers—*"I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly. Behold now, I have two daughters which have not known man; let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as is good in your eyes."* (Genesis 19:4–8)

May God have mercy! Here is a man who has sunk so low. The angels say to Lot, "Lot, we're going to destroy this place with fire and brimstone. Lot, you've got to get out of Sodom, because God is going to rain fire and brimstone upon Sodom." But do you know what? Lot just lingers in Sodom. It's so hard for him to give up Sodom. In Genesis chapter 19, verse 16, the Bible says, *"And while he lingered..."*—I can hardly believe this—*"while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the LORD being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city."* (Genesis 19:16) They had to say, "Come on, Lot! Get out of this place! Come on! Come on! Come on! God is going to destroy this place with fire and brimstone!" And Lot, now so in love with Sodom, can hardly bring himself to leave Sodom. The world had wrapped its sticky fingers around Lot's heart.

His wife was so full of the love of Sodom that she could not bear not to look back. And the Bible says, in Genesis chapter 19, verse 26, *"But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt."* (Genesis 19:16) Here was Lot's wife, who

had lived in Sodom so long that she had the devil's initials carved on her heart. She was covered with the slimy fingerprints of Sodom. She had to look back upon her darling city.

And it gets worse. I'm not even going to go into this, but Lot's own daughters got him drunk, and he committed incest with his own daughters in a drunken stupor. That, my friend, is the pollution of the world. We talk about the world with its persuasions. We talk about the world with its philosophies. But, friend, this is a dirty world. It is a dirty world. It is a dirty world, and it will pollute you. You cannot play with fire and not be burned.

IV. The World Has Its Costly Price

Now, here's the final thing. Not only the world and its corrupting pollution, but think with me for a moment about the world and its costly price—the world and its costly price. What did God do to Sodom? God burned Sodom with fire and brimstone. Turn this time to Genesis chapter 19, and look, if you will, in verse 24: *“Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven.”* (Genesis 19:24)

Now, every now and then, somebody will call a preacher a fire and brimstone preacher. Hey, folks, I'm just reading this, okay? I'm just reading this, okay? This is the Word of God. If you don't like it, take it up with God. Don't take it up with me. If it makes you angry, you come and apologize to me, and I'll forgive you, okay? *“Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven; and he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground.”* (Genesis 19:24–25) The world has its costly price. God's judgment fell upon Sodom and upon all of this ungodly system. There was a shower of red rain. If you were to go to Israel, as I've done, today you could go to the southern part of the Dead Sea. It was once a beautiful and fertile place. It is nothing but absolute barrenness, because God destroyed it with what could have been the first atomic blast here upon this earth.

“Do you believe that literally happened?” Well, let me tell you that Jesus believed it happened. Let me give you what Jesus said about it. In Luke chapter 17, verses 28 through 30, Jesus is saying, that as it was in the days of Lot it's going to be in the last days before He comes back to this earth. Jesus prophesied the Sodomite revolution of the last days. Luke chapter 17, verse 28, *“Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.”* (Luke 17:28) *“The Son of man”* is a term for Jesus. It speaks of Jesus. Now, listen, folks. There is no other authority than the Lord Jesus Christ. And Jesus said clearly and plainly

that as it was in the days of Lot, it is going to be in the last days just before He comes.

Simon Peter and Jude both speak of this. Peter said, in 2 Peter chapter 2, verse 6, that *“turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, [God] condemned them with an overthrow,”*—now, listen—*“making them an ensample to those that after should live ungodly.”* (2 Peter 2:6) Do you understand that? I say, do you understand that God left Sodom with its smoking ruins as an example, *“as an [example] to those that after should live ungodly.”* And Jude verse 7 says this: *“Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.”* (Jude 1:7) It is utter desolation. Lot loved the wrong world.

I’m talking now about the price that he paid. Let me tell you it cost him in three areas primarily.

A. It Cost Lot in His Faith

First of all, in the area of his faith—of his faith. He was a man who loved God. In this story you will find God speaking to Abram, but you don’t see God saying a word to Lot. Lot is blinded by sin. God finally comes to Lot and pulls Lot out before the fire and the brimstone fall. But Lot does not have the fellowship with God that Abram had. Abram was a friend of God. Lot, when he was in the world, was the enemy of God. “Friendship with the world is enmity with God.” (James 4:4) Now, when God saves you, precious friend, when God saves you, if you do not come out from the world, if you do not live a separate and a godly life, you’ll never have any joy; you’ll never have any strong faith. *When God saves you, God does not fix you where you cannot sin anymore. God just fixes you where you cannot sin and enjoy it anymore.* And the Bible says that this man Lot, *“vexed his righteous soul.”* (2 Peter 2:8) *He had just enough religion to make him miserable in the world, and just enough worldliness to make him miserable in his worship*—and he was miserable in both halves of his life.

B. It Cost Lot in His Family

It cost him in his faith. It cost him in his family. He lost his family. I believe Lot’s family is in hell. I believe his wife is in hell. I believe his daughters are in hell. I believe his sons-in-law are in hell. Lot, when he finally understood what God was going to do to Sodom, Lot tried to warn his family. And listen to this—Genesis chapter 19, verse 14: *“And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons in law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law.”* (Genesis 19:14) They laughed at him. “Ha, ha, ha! Who are you, Mr. Lot, sitting in the gate? Who are you to tell us to get out of this city, you self-righteous bigot?” They laughed at him.

And there are some of you. You may go to heaven, you may be saved, but you are

such a rotten moral worldling that your loved ones are going to die and go to hell, because they stumble over your rotten testimony—your rotten testimony. They laugh at you. You come and talk to them about Jesus Christ, and they see you living with one foot in the world and one foot in the church.

C. **It Cost Lot in His Fortune**

Here was a man. He suffered the loss in his faith. He suffered a loss in his family. And he suffered the loss in his fortune. Oh, he was a businessman—and there's nothing wrong with business. He was a wealthy man. There's nothing wrong with wealth. Abram also was a wealthy man. But I'm telling you this, friend: it all went up in smoke. And when it went up in smoke, he had nothing left in this world or the world to come. The Bible says there in the New Testament that when we come to the Judgment Seat of Christ, *"If any man's works shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire."* (1 Corinthians 3:15) What a picture of Lot! He got out of Sodom with his coattail smoking. And all that he dreamed for and schemed for and loved and worked for, it was lost. It went down the tube.

Conclusion

Now, let me say this about Disney. Let me say this about this company that has decided openly that it's going to promote homosexuality. What does that have to say about those of us who are children of God? Do you think that we're going to change Disney? I don't think so. That's not the point—that's not the point. The point is we don't want Disney to change us. That is the point. You say, "Pastor Rogers, I don't believe in boycotts." I believe you do. I've been boycotting some things for fifty years. Do you know what I boycott? Bars. I don't go in them. I just don't. Well, I might have to go in one to make a phone call or something like that. On a Sunday morning I've preached in a bar where they cleared everything out—on a trip overseas—sanctified it, and drove every demon out, and preached Jesus in there. But I mean, as a way of life, there are just certain things that I don't do. I think of these pornographic palaces. How many of you boycott those? Let me see your hand. Okay, you've been doing that for a long time. That's not anything new. You see, we're not trying to change them. We don't want them to change us. Oh, we would change them if we could, but that's not the purpose. We're just simply saying that's God's business. God will judge. We're not the judges.

You know what they tell us? When their television program promotes homosexuality, do you know what they say? "Hey, if you don't like it, turn it off." "Okay, we will." They say, "If you don't like it, don't go." "Okay, we won't." And that frustrates the fire out of them, because they say, "Oh, no, you don't have any right not to go." Methinks they're a little hypocritical. Now we're not going to change them, because money is a powerful thing.

The Union soldiers were riding through a Confederate cornfield. Little Granny was there. She was so angry to see those Union soldiers riding through that Confederate cornfield she got a poker from the hearth and ran out with that poker in her hand. Somebody said, “Granny, come back in. You can’t stop them. You can’t do any good.” She said, “I can let them know whose side I am on”—“I can just let them know whose side I’m on.”

“Well,” you say, “but, pastor, there are a lot of things that are worse.” That is true—that is true. But few things more dangerous. Now, understand that.

When a rattlesnake is in the jungles, we say, “Children, be careful. Don’t go down there.” When a rattlesnake is in the zoo, we say, “Be careful. Don’t go in that cage.” But, friend, what Satan has done is to put a rattlesnake on the playground—a rattlesnake on the playground. The jungle may be worse, but the playground may be the most dangerous.

Frankly, I feel betrayed—I feel betrayed by those who would say, “We’re family entertainment. Come and we’ll teach you how to lower your standard against that which God calls an abomination.” You say, “Pastor, are you telling me what I must do?” Nope. I’ve been a pastor long enough to know I can’t control you. If I could, you would all tithe and all be here on Wednesday night. Hey, I can’t control you. And we’re not going to sit around judging one another and say, “Ah, ah, ah, he did this,” or, “he did that.” That is not the purpose. We are going to judge each one ourselves, and we’re going to pray and say, “Lord, what would you have me to do?”

How You Can Get Victory

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: June 25, 2003

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 14:11–16

“And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan.”

GENESIS 14:14

Outline

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Introduction

Take God’s Word and turn, please, to Genesis chapter 14, and look up here. I said tonight we’re going to be speaking about war. We are at war. Now I’m not talking about Iraq, Iran; I’m not talking about Afghanistan. I’m not talking about some far-flung battlefield. There’s a war in Memphis. It involves you. You are a combatant. It is an invisible war. It is a treacherous war. It is a war with the world, the flesh, and the devil. And we’re going to find an episode in the life of Abraham—called, in the scripture that I’m about to read to you, Abram; that was his name before it was changed to Abraham—we’re going to find out that Abraham faced the world, the flesh, and the devil. We’re going to find out how he got victory, and how you can get victory. That’s what the message is all about.

Now I’m reading in Genesis chapter 14, beginning in verse 11: *“And they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their victuals,”*—that is, their food—*“and went their way. And they took Lot, Abram’s brother’s son, who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed. And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew;”*—now that’s Abraham; they’re just calling him Abram right here—*“for he dwelt*

in the plain of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol, and brother of Aner: and these were confederate with Abram. And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan. And he divided himself against them, he and his servants, by night, and smote them, and pursued them unto Hobah, which is on the left hand of Damascus. And he brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people.” (Genesis 14:11–16)

Now I know that’s one of your favorite passages in all the Bible, and I know you’re very conversant with it; but let me give you the background of this passage of Scripture. There are four kings who have attacked five cities of the plains, and they defeated them. By the way, this is the first war that’s mentioned in the Bible. Now the Bible’s full of all kinds of wars, but this one right here in Genesis chapter 14 is the very first war that is there. Now Lot, who was Abram’s nephew, called him in this passage his brother; but he’s speaking here in a very generic term when he calls him his brother, and says that he had gone down to Sodom.

Now Lot had no business in Sodom. Sodom was a swinging, vile, wicked city. But Lot went down there out of the will of God, pitched his tent toward Sodom, finally ended up in Sodom, and got into serious trouble in Sodom. He was in the wrong place. He was carried away with the Sodomites, and just became a reprobate, as it were. The Bible says, *“A companion of fools shall be destroyed.”* (Proverbs 13:20)

You show me the people that you keep company with, I’ll tell you the kind of a person you are or that you will soon become. And the Bible says, in 2 Timothy chapter 2, verse 26, that we can be taken snare or captive. Listen to this verse: *“And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.”* (2 Timothy 2:26)

I. Abram Faced the Devil

Now what had happened is this: that Lot down in Sodom had been taken captive by these pagan kings. Now these pagan kings were ungodly demon worshippers, and they represent the power of darkness and the power of Satan, who does take people captive. We have members of our church who have pitched their tent toward Sodom and who have been taken captive by the devil. Now Lot represents a lot of people who don’t deserve to be rescued but who need to be rescued. They desperately need deliverance.

And so here’s a kindhearted Abram, who is going to go down and deliver his nephew, called here his brother, from the hand of these wicked, malevolent kings. Lot went down there for the wrong reason. Abram went down there for the right reason. God did not protect Lot. God did protect Abram. There’s a difference. God protected

Joseph when he was down in Egypt, because he was doing God's business down there. God protected Daniel when he was in Babylon, because he was doing God's business in Babylon. God protected Nehemiah when he was in Persia, because he was doing God's business in Persia. God protected Paul in Corinth, because he was doing God's business in Corinth.

I have a preacher friend that I met at the convention this past week, who is establishing a wonderful church in Las Vegas, Nevada. And, in my estimation, that's not a good place to live, unless you're there on the King's business—you're on the King's business. He's down there to establish a church for the Lord Jesus Christ. Lot had gone to Sodom for wealth—not for witness, and not for worship. Now Abram went to Lot's aid. Abram could have said, "Lot mistreated me. He got himself into this mess. Let him stew in his own juice." But Abram knew that not only was Lot his nephew, but, spiritually, Lot was his brother.

I wonder if you have a brother like that, a sister like that, who's away from God, who's been taken captive by the devil, and you need to go and deliver him. Let me give you another scripture here that may pertain to this—Galatians chapter 6, verse 1: *"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."* (Galatians 6:1)

Stop right now. Time out. Do you know somebody that you're personally related to that was once a faithful member of this church, serving the Lord, who has been taken captive by the devil? Would you ask God to give you the spirit that Abram had, that you might invade the devil's territory and receive this brother back? Look in verse 14: *"And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan."* (Genesis 14:14)

Now Abram knew that there was a time when he got away from God, and God pursued him and brought him back. Abram, you remember, went down to Egypt at the wrong time, and God had mercy upon him. And now here's a man who's been forgiven, who's willing to forgive and restore somebody else. That's what the Bible means when it says, *"Be ye kind...tenderhearted,"*—compassionate—*"forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."* (Ephesians 4:32)

Now Abram, I say, could have said, "Lot, buddy, I told you not to go down there. You chose. You went the wrong way. That's your own problem." Folks, there are four levels of life. And, first of all, there's evil for good. You just return evil when people do you good. That's satanic. There's also evil for evil. That's an animal. You kick an animal, and he'll bite you back. And then, there is good for good. That's human. Somebody does you good; you do them good. But good for evil: that is heavenly, and that's what Abram is doing. He's going down here overcoming the devil, and he went to war against

these satanic forces. And he went in the strength and power of God, and he delivered a brother.

Folks, listen. The devil is out after Bellevue Baptist Church. You say, “Pastor, is something going wrong?” No, he’s been out after this church for one hundred years. And he’s out after it today. And it is our responsibility, if we’re spiritual, to do the same thing that Abram did and to go after these brothers and sisters and bring them back.

II. Abram Faced the World

Abram faced the devil: these four kings. Number two: Abram faced the world. Look now in verse 17: *“And the king of Sodom went out to meet him after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer, and of the kings that were with him, at the valley of Shaveh, which is the king’s dale. And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said,”*—that is, Melchizedek said—*“Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: and blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him”*—that is, Abram gave to Melchizedek—*“tithes of all. And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself. And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich: save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men which went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion.”* (Genesis 14:17–24)

“Now, pastor, what is all of this about?” Well, remember, Abram came against these demon-possessed kings to rescue a brother. He came against the devil. So must you. Now he’s coming against the world. You say, “Where do you see that here, pastor?” Well, after this battle—we don’t have time to get into the battle—well, after the battle, Abram met two kings. He met the king of Sodom and he met the king of Salem: two kings. One represents the world, and the other represents the kingdom of God. Sodom represents the world and its influence and power. The king of Salem, whose name was Melchizedek, represents the Lord Jesus Christ. Look again in verses 17 and 18: *“And the king of Sodom went out to meet him after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer, and of the kings that were with him, at the valley of Shaveh, which is the king’s dale. And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God.”* (Genesis 14:17–18)

Now the king of Sodom, we know what Sodom was. Sodom was a wicked city. He must have been a pretty wicked man to be the king of Sodom. He was the Saddam Hussein of his day. But who is this Melchizedek, the king of Salem? Well, the word

Salem means “peace.” Now, put in your margin Hebrews 7, verses 1 through 4: “*For this Melchisedec...*”—now this is the New Testament explanation of who Melchizedek is—“*For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like*”—now, listen to this—“*unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually. Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.*” (Hebrews 7:1–4)

Abram comes against demon-possessed kings. He wins the battle. Right after the battle with the devil, he meets the world: two kings, the king of Sodom and the king of Salem. Again, I want to tell you that the king of Salem, Melchizedek, pictures the Lord Jesus Christ. I’m not reading into that. That’s what the writer of Hebrews says. Let me show you how Melchizedek is a picture of Jesus. Melchizedek was a priest-king. Jesus is our Priest-King. Jesus rules from the throne of grace. Melchizedek was the king of peace. Jesus is the Prince of Peace. Melchizedek’s name, by interpretation, also means “righteousness.” Jesus is the King of Righteousness. Melchizedek is listed in the Bible as having neither father, nor mother, heritage, lineage, nor descent of days. He just appears out of nowhere. Here’s a king. The Bible doesn’t give his genealogy. And that represents the eternity of the Lord Jesus Christ who is forever King, as Melchizedek pictures Jesus the eternal King.

So, in the Old Testament, over and over again, you see pictures of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now these two kings come, and Abram is faced with a choice. Who is he going to serve? Who will have his allegiance? And he faces the choice that you’re going to face tomorrow when you go to work. Tomorrow you’re going to face the king of Sodom, and you’re going to face the king of Salem. You’re going to face Jesus, and you’re going to face the world. Now what Abram did to show that he had made the right choice, he paid a tithe to Melchizedek.

By the way, people tell you that tithing is not taught in the New Testament. Well, you’d better go back and look in Genesis 14, and then in Hebrews chapter 7, and the Bible says, “Consider how great a man this was to whom Abram gave a tithe.” In reality, Abram was tithing, in type, to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, why did Abram give a tithe to Melchizedek? Abram knew that his deliverance and all that he had belonged to God, and this king was a priest of the Most High God. Are you a tither? No, don’t lift your hand. But if you’re not a tither, shame on you! A tithe is one-tenth of all that God has blessed you with. That doesn’t mean that the other nine-tenths belong to you. It all belongs to God. But the tithe is the symbol and the emblem

that it all belongs to God.

Now, let me tell you why Abram tithed to Melchizedek.

1. Abram Tithed Because of the Grace of God

Number one: because of the grace of God. Look in verse 18: *“And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God.”*

(Genesis 14:18) Now, what does bread and wine remind you of? What do you think bread and wine typifies here? It pictures the blood and body of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. You know one reason I enjoy tithing? A tenth is not much to me when Jesus gave everything for me, amen? You think about it. I mean, why would I quibble about a tenth for the One who laid down His life for me?

I hear people say, “Well, you know, those people in the Old Testament were under law. We’re under grace.” Well, friend, *anybody who would let a Jew under law do more than he would do under grace is a disgrace to grace*. That’s a good place to amen, but you must not be tithing. So I’ll say it again, and all the tithers can say amen. Anybody who would let a Jew do more under the law than he would do under grace is a disgrace to grace. All right now, that is so true. How are you going to out-give the One who laid down His life for you?

2. Abram Tithed Because of the Greatness of God

Now one reason that we tithe is because of the grace of God. The second reason is because of the greatness of God. Look in verse 19: *“And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth.”* (Genesis 14:19) Do you know what the tithe represents? Friend, the tithe represents that God owns it all. Don’t talk about your house, your car, your job, your clothes. It is not yours. *“We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.”* (Psalms 100:3) And the One who owns the sheep owns the wool, amen? The One who owns the sheep owns the wool. God is the possessor of heaven and earth. Tithing is a way to show that our money is not our money. It belongs to God, because God is our God.

A. Abram Tithed Because of the Goodness of God

Why did Abram do this? Because of the grace of God: the bread and wine. Why did Abram do this? Because of the greatness of God: He’s the possessor of heaven and earth. Why did Abram do this? Because of the goodness of God. Look in verse 20. Melchizedek said, *“And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he”*—Abram—*“gave him tithes of all.”* (Genesis 14:20)

Has not God been good to us? Has not God given us victory day by day by day? Is it any big thing that we give Him a dime out of every dollar, when He already owns it all, and when He laid down His life for us and has delivered us? And so we tithe. Abram’s gift was an acknowledgment of God’s goodness in giving him the victory. It was a thank

offering.

B. Abram Tithed Because of the Glory of God

Now I'll give you the fourth reason that he did it: not only because of the grace of God, and the greatness of God, and the goodness of God, but because of the glory of God. Look in verse 21: *"And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself."* The king of Sodom has already been defeated, and he's coming to barter with Abram. He's saying, "Look, Abram, you take all the wealth. I don't care about that. I'll give you all this good stuff. Just let me take the people: the captives, the slaves." *"And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth,"*—that is, "I've made a covenant, God. I said, 'God, you're the Most High God; you're the possessor of heaven and earth.'" And here's what Abram said to God—*"that I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich."* (Genesis 14:21–23)

The king of Sodom wanted to be cozy with Abram, make a little deal with Abram. You know, Satan is willing to give up anything and negotiate if he can only enslave souls. And Abram said, "Look. I'm not going to take anything from you, lest I lose my testimony. When I am tithing, I am showing you, Mr. King of Sodom, that I'm not dependent upon you to meet my needs; I am dependent upon Almighty God. And I'm not going to take anything from the devil." And what Abram is doing right now is representing Matthew chapter 6, verse 33, which says, *"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."* (Matthew 6:33)

And, friend, I want to say something, and I want you to listen very carefully. If I put things between me and Jesus, that's idolatry. That's all idolatry is: putting anything between me and Jesus. If I put Christ between me and things, that's victory. If I put things between me and Jesus, that's idolatry. If I put Jesus between me and things, that's victory. Now that's what Abram did. He just said, "Look. I lifted my hand to God. I'm not going to take anything from you, king of Sodom. I'm seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." And Abram said, "Look. I've gotten it settled. I've already lifted my hand to the King of kings."

Now the king of Sodom said, "If you will give me, I'm going to pay you." The king of Salem says, "If you will honor me, I will bless you." Here's the truth in all of that: God gives the blessings, and Satan takes them all away.

III. Abram Faced the Flesh

Now, here's the third thing. Here is Abram. He's in a war. He comes against demon-inspired kings, and he wins the victory over the devil. He comes against two kings: the

king of Salem, the king of Sodom. He yields to the king of Salem: victory over the world. Then he's going to face the flesh—the flesh. Now, go to chapter 15, and look, if you will, in verse 1: *“After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.”* (Genesis 15:1) Now Abram, who is tempted to be afraid, he may have begun to think, “What if these four kings regroup? What if they come back? What if they counterattack?” And he's going through a time of tension. He'd been through a time of strain. The great coach of the Green Bay Packers, Vince Lombardi, said, “Fatigue makes cowards of us all.”

God comes to this man now, and God says, “Abram, don't be afraid. I am your provision. I'm also your protection. Not only am I your sufficiency; I am your security.” The Almighty is the I AM for your fears. Look, if you will, in chapter 15, verses 2 through 6, and watch this: *“And Abram said, LORD God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed:”—that is, “I don't have any children”—“and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir.”* That is, he's talking now about not Sarah's child, but Hagar's child. *“And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.”* (Genesis 15:2–6)

Now Abram is getting impatient in his flesh, and God tells Abram to look up to the stars. Abram is wondering, “Lord, where is this descendant that you promised me? Where is this heir that you promised me?” And God says, “Abram, just look up at the stars. Can you count the stars?” “No, Lord, I can't count the stars.” “And, no, you're not able to count the descendants that shall be yours.”

God says, *“I am,”* first of all in verse 1: *“I am thy shield.”* And then He says, in verse 5, “I shall.” And He is the One who is going to take care of Abram. He's going to take care of Abram's future and his fears, and He's going to give Abram victory over the uncertainties of the flesh. Let me just mention quickly the kind of victory he has: victory over the fears of the flesh—that's 15, verse 1; victories over the impatience of the flesh—that's chapter 15, verses 2 through 6; and victory over the uncertainties of the flesh—chapter 15, verses 7 and 8.

“And he said unto him, I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it. And he said, LORD God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?” (Genesis 15:8) And God dealt with Abram's doubt by making a blood covenant with him, in verses 9 through 17. I wish we had more time to get into that. But, folks, as you study this chapter—and I'm getting right close to the end—as you study

this chapter, you're going to find out that for our fears, God says, "I am." For your impatience, God says, "I shall." For your uncertainties, God says, "I already have."

Now the Bible is God's way of helping you finding out what God has already done for you. Now faith is, first of all, the way to be saved. Look, if you will, in chapter 15, verse 6: *"And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness."* (Genesis 15:6) And look, if you will, in the New Testament, in Romans 4, verses 1 through 5: *"What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."* (Romans 4:1–5)

Conclusion

Faith is a way to be saved, and faith is the way to live in victory after you have been saved. Now this is an interesting study to me, because Abram way back over here in the Old Testament comes against the devil, he comes against the world, and he comes against the flesh, and in all three he wins the battle by faith.

Faith Is the Victory

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: February 18, 1900

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 14:11–24

“And he brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people.”

GENESIS 14:16

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Conclusion

Introduction

Take God’s Word and turn with me this morning, please, to Genesis chapter 14. May I tell you, dear friend, there is a war going on. Donald Gray Barnhouse called it the invisible war. It is an unseen battle that is very real. We’re not fighting flesh and blood, but principalities and powers. (Ephesians 6:12) The war is against you, against your family, against your loved ones, against your future, against life, truth, beauty, holiness, and everything that you hold dear, or should hold dear. Listen to me. You cannot afford to be neutral, and you dare not be ignorant, in this battle. Now we’re studying about faith. And in this battle the title of our message this morning is this: “Faith Is the Victory.”

We’re up against the world, the flesh, and the devil. Now the world is the external foe. The flesh is the internal foe. The devil is the infernal foe. And all of these are warring against the child of God. In the passage that I have today I want to show you how Abram went up against those same three enemies, and how he gained the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil: how faith was his victory—now, listen—and how faith can be your victory.

I. Abram Overcame the Devil and Rescued a Brother

First of all, I want to show you how Abram overcame the devil to rescue a brother. If you're making notes, write it down: overcoming the devil to rescue a brother. I'm going to break into the message at Genesis chapter 14, about verses 11 and 12. Now, when I break in, let me give you the background of where I'm going to break in, just simply to save time. There's a war that is going on—and, by the way, this is the first mention of a war in the Bible—and there are four kings who have attacked five weaker kings, called kings of the plain. And there's a battle, and in this war the four kings overcome the five kings. Now, with that in mind, I'm breaking in, in Genesis 14, verses 11 to 15: *“And they”—that is, the four kings—“took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their victuals,”—that is, boys and girls, their food—“and went their way. And they took Lot, Abram’s brother’s son,”—that is, Abram’s nephew—“who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed. And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew;”—by the way, here’s the first mention of the word Hebrew in the Bible, and it means “one beyond the river”; that is, “the stranger”—“for he dwelt in the plain of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol, and brother of Aner: and these were confederate with Abram. And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive...”—notice he doesn’t call him his nephew now; he’s his brother, that is, his brother in the Lord—“when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan. And he divided himself against them, he and his servants, by night, and smote them, and pursued them unto Hobah, which is on the left hand of Damascus.”* Now, here’s the key verse—Genesis 14, verse 16: *“And he brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people.”* (Genesis 14:11–15)

Now Abram here has gone after his brother Lot—actually his nephew, but his brother in the Lord. And Abram goes after him. Well, how did Lot get in this mess to begin with? Remember, if you are a Bible student, or if you're not a Bible student, let me tell you that Lot went down to a wicked city named Sodom. By the way, sodomy is a horrible and a vile sin against Almighty God. And God finally had to destroy Sodom with fire and brimstone. But Lot went down to Sodom.

Now, why did he go down to Sodom? Well, he went down there for wealth: not to worship, not to witness, but for wealth. He just pitched his tent toward Sodom, because the grass was knee deep in Sodom, and he had a lot of cattle and so forth. And that's why he went down there. And he got in trouble in Sodom, as we're going to see. First of all, he got into Sodom, and then Sodom got into him.

“Now, are you telling me, pastor, that the children of God can't go to wicked places without getting in trouble?” Oh, no, if you're a child, you can go to a wicked place

without getting in trouble. It all depends on why you go there. You can find out in the Bible that Joseph was down in Egypt. He didn't get in trouble, and he was an ambassador for the Lord down in wicked Egypt. You find in the Bible where Daniel was in Babylon. He didn't get in trouble. He stood up for the Lord Jesus down in Babylon. You find out that Nehemiah went to wicked Persia, but there in Persia, Nehemiah witnessed for the Lord and became an ambassador for God down in Persia. I read where Paul was in Corinth, the most wicked city on the face of the earth. It was the Las Vegas of its day. And he went to Corinth, but there he testified for the Lord Jesus. But what happened to Lot was that Lot went down there for the wrong reason, the wrong motive; he went down there and became captive of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Now word comes to Abram that Lot has been taken captive in this battle. Now he's down in Sodom, and the king of Sodom is captured, all of these people, and they just take Lot and his family, lock, stock, and barrel, and carry him away. What a wonderful, wonderful illustration of the truth that a companion of fools will be destroyed! (Proverbs 13:20) I want to say to every young man in here, you watch the crowd that you travel with. When you get down in Sodom, what happens to Sodom is going to happen to you, whether you're saved or lost. And so the Sodomites are captured by these four kings; they're carried away by these four kings, and they're carried away into captivity.

Now word comes to Abram. Now, what does Abram do? You know what Abram could have done? He could have said, "That sorry rascal Lot! It's just his fault! It's just his problem! He has mistreated me, he has abused me, and he has been selfish toward me. Let him go." Let me tell you something, dear friend. Every one of us right now knows a brother who has been taken captive—every one of us right now. And if we think of it, we know a sister who's been taken captive too—I mean, somebody who is a brother, somebody who is a sister, or somebody who loves God, and yet they have been taken captive by Satan.

How are you going to react to that person? May I tell you the four levels of reaction. First of all, you could just react at the lowest level of all. And do you know what the lowest level is—the lowest level of living? It is the satanic level: when you return evil for good. That's what Satan does: to return evil for good. Abram wasn't on that level. Or you could be on an animal level. Do you know what the animal level is? That's to return evil for evil. If you kick an animal, he'll bite you. That's just evil for evil. And just, "You get me, and I'll get you." Or you could be on the next level, which is good for good: "You scratch my back; I'll scratch yours." That's the human level. Somebody's good to us; we're good to them. But, oh, my dear friend, the highest level, the God-like level, the divine level, is to do good for evil.

Now Lot had done Abram evil, but Abram is going to do Lot good. He's going to go and rescue his brother. No longer does he call him his nephew; now he calls him his

brother. I want you to take your Bibles and turn with me to the New Testament and see what the New Testament has to say about this principle. Turn with me to Galatians chapter 6 and verses 1 and 2; just fast-forward over now to Galatians chapter 6 and verses 1 and 2. Now, notice what it says—you could put Lot's name right here in these two verses: "*Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault...*"—now the word *overtaken* here literally means "to be captured," just like Lot was captured—"if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual,"—that's Abram—"restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." (Galatians 6:1–2)

Now the devil is in the business of taking people captive. But the Bible says that we who are spiritual are to restore such a one. Let me tell you something, friend. Good men may fall. Don't forget it. Everybody that falls is not necessarily a bad person. The word *overtaken* here means somebody who has been ambushed, somebody who has been surprised by sin, ambushed by the devil, and sabotaged by Satan. Good men can fall. The Bible says, "*if a man be overtaken in a fault,*" and the idea is one who is a brother overtaken in a fall.

Not only can good men fall, but good men can be restored. Good people can be restored, and they can be brought back. If you study the Bible, you can find a lot of good men who fell and came back. Jonah, who ran away from the Lord when he was supposed to go preach to Nineveh—you remember, he was swallowed by a whale; he spent the night on a foam blubber mattress—Jonah was restored. You can read in the Bible about Samson, the heavyweight champion of the Old Testament. Samson, who sinned against God, fell asleep in the lap of Delilah and got his hair cut and all of that. And the Bible teaches that God restored strength to Samson. And God used him more in his death than He did in his life. God restored Samson. Simon Peter cursed, swore, and denied the Lord. And yet Simon Peter, who cursed, swore, and denied the Lord, was the mighty apostle of Pentecost, and he was restored. David was a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14), who committed adultery and manslaughter, yet God restored and used again David, the man after God's own heart.

So what I'm trying to say is this: that good men may fall, and good men may be restored. What do you do when a brother like Lot is taken captive? What do you do? Do you just say, "Well, it's none of my business"? What do you do? Do you condemn him and criticize him? Somebody said, "The church is the only army that shoots its own wounded." What do you do? Do you come tell the pastor so the pastor can do something about it? Is that what you do? What do you do? Do you give him a lecture and tell him, "Shame on you for being captured with those Sodomites; you had no business being down there to begin with," and just increase his burden and his guilt? What do you do? Well, the Bible says that, "*you which are spiritual...*"—now you just

classify yourselves today whether or not you're spiritual—"you which are spiritual restore such a one."

And let me tell you how you are to restore him: the same way that Abram restored Lot. You are in a battle with Satan himself. And may I tell you, my dear friend, the way that you are to restore him?

A. Restore Him Gently

First of all—look at it here; we're in Galatians chapter 6—the Bible says to restore such a one in the spirit of meekness. Do you see that? Do you know what the word *meekness* means? The word *meekness* has the idea of gentleness. Actually, it is translated in some places as "gentleness." You see, the word for *restore* is the word for setting a broken bone. Have you ever had a bone broken? Well, one thing you want is tender loving care when that bone is being broken and when that bone that is broken is being set again. And so you can't be harsh and overbearing. Now you can be harsh with Satan. You can be overbearing with Satan. And Abram went to war against these wicked kings that represent the devil himself. But with Lot he was gentle. You'll never restore anyone unless you restore him with meekness or gentleness. So you're to restore him gently.

B. Restore Him Humbly

I will tell you how else to restore him. You're to restore him humbly. The Bible says to "restore such a one in the spirit of meekness,"—listen—"considering yourself." (Galatians 6:1) Now you just look around and you look within. There is not a one of us that is not capable of falling—not a one of us: not you, not you, not you, not you, not me, not any of us. And, you see, he's a child of God. He's bound to be under burden. What has happened to him if he's been carried away captive of the devil? Well, his fellowship with God has broken. His conscience is bothering him. There's shame and humiliation. There is the accusation of the devil when the devil tells him, "You're no good. You never were saved. You'd be better off dead." There's that inward misery that comes. Dear friend, these people are under a burden. And we're to restore them sympathetically. We're to bear one another's burdens.

And so, what did Abram do? My dear friend, go back, if you will again, to the passage of Scripture in Genesis chapter 14. The Bible says here, in verse 16, that he went to war, and he brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot, and his goods and the women also and the people. God help us! God help you! There are so many members of this particular church that need you. You say, "Adrian, I'll get their names for you." My dear friend, there are not enough Adrians to go around. You need to find out who God has given you for an assignment. "Brother Rogers, what's more important: to win a lost soul or reclaim a saved one?" Which wing of a bird is the

most important? My dear friend, in all of our trying to win people to Jesus Christ, let's not forget our broken brothers who have been taken captive by the devil. Abram said, "He's not just my nephew; he is my brother. And I'm going to war for him." I want to tell you, dear friend, our battle is with Satan, who has taken them captive. And so Abram, by faith, overcame the devil to restore a brother.

II. Abram Overcame the World and Received a Blessing

Second point: By faith, not only did he overcome the devil to restore a brother, but also by faith he overcame the world to receive a blessing—one, to restore a brother; and two, to receive a blessing. Now, continue to read here in Genesis 14, verse 17: *"And the king of Sodom went out to meet him after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer, and of the kings that were with him, at the valley of Shaveh, which is the king's dale."* (Genesis 14:17) That is, Abram is coming back now. He's rescued Lot. The king of Sodom sees Abram coming. He sees that Abram is victorious. And this king of Sodom, who normally would not have given Abram the time of day, comes out to meet the victorious Abram. Now out there in a valley somebody else comes that day. There were two kings that appear that day. *"And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God."* (Genesis 14:18)

Now, folks, there's something very beautiful here, and I want you to see it. Abram is victorious. He's coming back. What he has done is to rescue a brother, and now as he comes back victorious and two kings meet him: the king of Sodom and the king of Salem—the king of Sodom and the king of Salem. Now Sodom is the wicked king. Sodom stands for everything that is vile and wicked in the Bible; it stands for the world. And now along comes the king of Salem.

Now the king of Sodom has a name, and the king of Salem has a name. The king of Salem has an unusual name. His name is Melchizedek. The king of Sodom represents the world. The king of Salem represents the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. You say, "Pastor, are you certain of that?" Absolutely certain! Let me show you something. Turn in your Bibles to Hebrews chapter 7 for a moment—Hebrews chapter 7—and begin with me in verse 1. And here you're going to find a description of Melchizedek—Hebrews 7. All right, here it is—Hebrews 7, verses 1 to 4: *"For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him..."*—underscore that—*"and blessed him; to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all."* That is, he tithed to him. *"First being by interpretation King of righteousness;"*—now, that is, Melchizedek was king of righteousness—*"and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life;"*—but now, listen to this and underscore it—*"but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually."* And

now, here's the bottom line: "*Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch*"—or father, ruler—"*Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.*" (Hebrews 7:1–4)

Now, what is the writer of Hebrews telling us? He's telling us that the man who met Abram when he came back represented Jesus Christ. He was an Old Testament type, or picture, of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, why was he a type of the Lord Jesus Christ? Well, first of all, he was a priest-king. Normally, in the Old Testament, you could only be a priest or a king; you couldn't be a priest-king. But Jesus is both priest and king. He was a priest-king. And so he was also the king of peace. So is my Savior. You know what the word *Salem* means? "Peace." And so he is the king of Salem; he's the king of peace. And then the name *Melchizedek* means "righteousness." So he was the king of righteousness. Now you think about it. He was a priest. He was a king. He was the king of peace. He was the king of righteousness. And then he's represented as an eternal king, because the writer of the book of Hebrews says that he's shown in the Bible without father or mother. He doesn't tell how old he was, when he was born, or when he died—his birth or his death; neither one are recorded in the Scripture. And because none of that is recorded, it just seems as though he always was. And there again he becomes a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal King.

Now Jesus is the King of peace, Jesus is the King of righteousness, Jesus is the eternal King, and Jesus, my dear friend, is the Priest-King. And so Abram meets Melchizedek, who stands for the Lord Jesus. Two kings, the king of Sodom and the king of Salem: the world and the Lord. And he meets those two kings. Now I say that he overcame Satan to restore a brother. He overcomes the world now to receive a blessing, because he went to the right king, and he got a blessing. My dear friend, always—today, tomorrow, and the rest of your life—these two kings are going to be meeting you after every victory; after every victory you're going to meet the king of Salem and the king of Sodom. One wants to bless you, and the other wants to rob you. And you're going to meet these two kings day by day. Abram met them, and he overcame and received a blessing—he received a blessing. He overcame the world to receive a blessing.

Now, what did he do? Well, he met Melchizedek. And Abram now is walking by faith, and he sees what Melchizedek represents, and so he says to Melchizedek, "I'm going to give a tithe to you." Here's the first mention of tithing in the Bible. And for those of you that think that tithing is only for Jews under the law, this was four hundred years before the law. Abram meets him. Remember now, he represents Jesus. And he gives a tithe to Jesus. He gives ten percent of all the spoils of the battle.

Now, why does he do that? May I give you four reasons he did that? And I want you to look very carefully here.

A. The Grace of God

The very first reason I want to mention is the grace of God. Look, if you will, in Genesis 14, verse 18. Oh, listen. This is such a blessing to me. The Bible says, *“And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God.”* (Genesis 14:18) Do you see the Lord’s Supper right here? Do you see a picture of the broken body and the shed blood of our Lord Jesus Christ right here? Because these are the elements we partake of when we take the Lord’s Supper. And here tucked away in the book of Genesis is a picture of Melchizedek, our High Priest, our Priest-King, offering Himself, bread and wine. And Abram recognized that. And Abram seized the grace of God. And that makes him want to worship the king of Salem.

B. The Greatness of God

But not only, dear friend, the grace of God, but he also sees the greatness of God. Look in Genesis 14, verse 19: *“And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth.”* (Genesis 14:19) Do you know what Abram recognized? Everything belongs to God. When you bring your tithe here on Sunday morning, do you know what you’re saying? “God, I believe it all belongs to you. You’re a great God, and you possess the heaven and the earth.” There’s nothing, my dear friend, that you have in your pocket or your bank account that’s yours; it all belongs to God. Say amen. Say amen. Listen. What he saw in bread and wine was the grace of God. What he saw was the God Most High; that is, the greatness of God.

C. The Goodness of God

And then, not only did he see that, but he saw the goodness of God. Look in verse 19 that says, *“And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth.”* (Genesis 14:19) Listen. He says, “God has been so good to you, Abram. He has given you the victory.”

Now one of the reasons that we ought to trust God in our finances is that God is good to us. God is the God who gives us the victory. Some people say, “Well, tithing is for Jews under the law. I’m under grace.” My dear friend, *any Christian who’d let a Jew do more under law than he does under grace is a disgrace to grace.*

D. The Glory of God

He sees the grace of God. He sees the greatness of God. He sees the goodness of God. And then, oh, my dear friend, there is the glory of God. Look in Genesis 14, verse 21: *“And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself. And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich.”* (Genesis 14:21–23)

Now what the king of Sodom says: “If you’ll just divide up with me, we’ll just do business together.” Abram said to the king of Sodom, “I don’t want anything that’s yours. I don’t even want one of your shoelaces. I don’t want anything that belongs to you, king of Sodom. I don’t want you going around saying you made Abram rich.” What Abram was saying is, “Look, I am tithing to the Lord. And I’m trusting Him and not you to take care of me. My testimony is at stake, and I want to live for the glory of my God.”

My dear friend, there were four motives there that day that Abram had in his heart. There was the grace of God. There was the greatness of God. There was the goodness of God. There was the glory of God. And he met these two kings: the king of Salem and the king of Sodom. And you’ll meet those two kings. You’ll meet them today. And the king of Salem says, “I want to bless you.” The king of Sodom says, “Give me.” You make up your mind, dear friend. How did Abram overcome?

III. Abram Overcame the Flesh and Renewed a Belief

Listen, dear friend. I’ll give you the third point, but I won’t preach it. Abram overcame the devil and rescued a brother. Abram overcame the world and received a blessing. And Abram overcame the flesh and renewed a belief. We’ll talk about that, hopefully, on another occasion.

Conclusion

Let me ask you this question, dear friend. Do you know the Lord Jesus? Just look right up here; don’t gather your books. You say, “Well, I already do. This is not important to me.” Well, if you already know Him, you begin to pray for those who don’t. Do you know the Lord Jesus? Are you saved? I didn’t say, “Are you a Baptist, or Methodist, or Presbyterian?” Are you saved? Do you know that your sin is forgiven? Do you know if you died right now you’d go to heaven? You can know it by opening your heart and receiving Christ as your personal Lord and Savior.

The Problem in the Middle East

By Adrian Rogers

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Main Scripture Text: Genesis 17:1–8

“Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.”

GENESIS 17:5

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Introduction

I just thought that I would bring to you tonight a report from Israel, as this thing is on my heart. And we're so concerned about what is happening in the Middle East, as I know that you are, and I just thought again tonight that we would study from the Word of God the problems in the Middle East. We'll just call our message tonight "A Report from Israel," but actually it will be a Bible study, and I'll be doing more reporting from the Scriptures than I will from our recent trip, because I want you to get things from a biblical background and a biblical perspective.

I. The Problem in the Middle East and Its Roots

And, first of all, I want you to notice with me the current problem in the Middle East and its roots. Now the roots to the problem in the Middle East go all the way back to the book of Genesis, so turn to Genesis chapter 17 for just a moment—Genesis chapter 17—and we'll begin reading in verse 1: *“And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying, As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many*

nations. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee. And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.”
(Genesis 17:1–8)

All right, here’s the scripture. God is making a promise to Abraham, and God says to Abraham, “I’m going to make an everlasting covenant with you.” Now this problem that we have in the Middle East here goes all the way back to the time of Abraham.

I read of a man who was talking to a Baptist one time, and he was telling the Baptist that his denomination went all the way back to the time of Christ. And the Baptist said, “Well, that’s nothing. We Baptists go back before that: we go all the way back to John the Baptist.” And this man said, “Well, I hear you go even further back than that: you go all the way back to Abraham when he said to Lot, ‘You go your way, and I’ll go mine.’”

And I think that perhaps the Baptists go all the way back that far. But whether they do or not, I know that this problem in the Middle East goes all the way back to Abraham. For God said to Abraham, “I will make of thee a father of many nations.” And then God said to Abraham, “I’m going to give you the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession.”

Now the Israelis have never ever really taken all that God gave Abraham, because in another place God gives the dimensions of this land that He gave to Abraham: from the great Lebanon mountains all the way down to the river of Egypt, and from the Mediterranean all the way to the Euphrates—a great area, the entire area of the Middle East that God gave to Abraham. And the Bible says that God gave it to him for an everlasting covenant, an everlasting possession. All of this land was given to Abraham and to his seed, to his descendants.

Now that was about 4,000 years ago, but God made a promise, and God said, “It’s for you, Abraham, this land, and also for your descendants.” But now here is the problem. Abraham had two sons. One of them was named Ishmael, and Ishmael was a descendant of an Egyptian slave woman; and then Abraham had another son whose name was Isaac, and Isaac was the son of Sarah. And so one child, who was the progenitor of the Arab nations, his name was Ishmael, who was born of an Egyptian slave woman; and another son, who was the progenitor of the Jewish race, Isaac, was born of Sarah.

Now both of these claim to be Abraham’s descendants, and both of them claim that the land belongs to them. Well, to whom does the land belong? And how shall the

question be settled? Is it going to be settled by the United Nations? Not at all. Is it going to be settled by Mr. Reagan and Mr. Sadat? Not at all. How is it going to be settled? It's going to be settled by the Word of God. And if you want to know to whom the land belongs, why, just look here in Genesis chapter 17, verse 19: *"God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him"*—that is to the Jews. *"And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation."* But now, you just put a star by verse 21 that's coming up here: *"But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year."* (Genesis 17:19–21)

Now God makes no bones about it. God says just as clearly as black print can say on white paper that the promise and the possession goes, not to Ishmael, not the Arabs, but to Isaac and to the Jews. Look again in Genesis 21, if you will, verses 9 to 13: *"And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking. Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac. And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son. And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called. And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed."* (Genesis 21:9–13)

Now early in the tent of Abraham there was a fight between the Arab and the Jew, between Ishmael and between Isaac, and God said, "Now I loved Ishmael." And don't you think for one little moment that God doesn't love the Arab nation. God does love the Arab nation. And when you pray for peace in Israel, be certain to pray for the Arabs that they might come to Christ. And don't think that the Israelis are always right and the Arabs are always wrong. That's not it. But in the sovereign mind and will and purpose of God, when God chose Abram, and gave him a new name, Abraham, God said clearly, immutably, unmistakably, irrevocably, that, "My covenant is with Isaac." And God gave the land to Abraham. And God made it, and God created it, and God can give it to whomsoever He will. And it makes no difference what the United Nations has to say about it. It makes no difference what the Balfour Declaration has to say about it. It makes a difference what God has to say about it.

Now men today think that perhaps they're smart enough to settle this problem in the Middle East by human ingenuity. An example of that is found in the book of Joel. And look in Joel chapter 3 for a moment, and you're going to see how man has tried to settle this question. God makes a very amazing prophecy in the book of Joel chapter 3,

beginning in verse 1: *“For, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem,”*—now he’s talking about the time when the Jews come back into the land; actually, he’s talking about this present time—*“I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat...”*—that’s just another name for the Valley of Armageddon, where the great battle is going to be fought. God says, “I’m going to bring all of the nations into the Josaphat Valley.” It’s called the Josaphat Valley, the Valley of Jehoshaphat, the Valley of Jezreel, or the Valley of Armageddon; it’s the same place. He said, “I’m going to bring them there, and I am going to judge them.” Now, why is God going to judge them? It’s because of what the nations have done. And what have the nations done? Listen to this—*“I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there”*—now this word *plead* doesn’t mean that God’s going to be on His knees before them. It’s an old English word that means that God is going to chastise them there—*“for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land.”* (Joel 3:1–2)

Now, you just underscore that last phrase. They, the nations, divided the land, and they said, “This part is for the Jew, and this part is for the Arab.” But God said, “It’s my land. You don’t have any right to divide it. You, the nations of this world, have no right whatsoever to say what will be done with my land. It’s my land.” And God says, “I gave it to Abraham through Isaac and through his seed for an everlasting possession.”

May I say, ladies and gentlemen, in spite of all of the machinations and figuring and workings of the minds of modern man, and in spite of what everyone is trying to do in the Middle East right now, the problem will never ever be settled apart from the Word of God. And so that is the problem. The problem is that we have two groups of people who are vying for the same land: the descendants of Abraham, one through Isaac and one through Ishmael. Now that’s the current problem.

II. The Prophecy Concerning Israel

Now, let’s talk about the prophecy concerning Israel. How is it going to be resolved? What is going to happen? Well, I want you to go back now and just review with me, if you might, what God prophesied would happen to the nation Israel. It’s all written in a book. And the Jew is the man of destiny; he’s the man of prophecy; he is God’s blueprint; he’s God’s yardstick. And it’s so interesting to study the history of the Jewish nation.

A. Rebellion

After God gave the Jew the land, I want you to notice four steps in Israel’s history. The first step is what we’ll call rebellion. You see, God gave the Jew three things. God gave the Jew a land, a law, and the Lord—those three. What did he do with the land? Well,

he defiled the land. What did he do with the law? He defied the law. What did he do with the Lord? He denied the Lord. He just rebelled against the Lord.

Now Moses knew that the Jew would rebel against the Lord. And I'm not going to give you a text for this, because it would take me about three chapters to read it; but you just go home and read Deuteronomy 27, 28, 29, and 30, and you'll find out that God says there's coming a time when the Jew is going to rebel. God knew that they would. God placed them in this handsome, beautiful land, gave them the law, and wanted to be their Lord; but the Jews rebelled. And so the very first chapter in the history of Israel is what we call rebellion.

B. Retribution

And then, the very next step in the history of Israel is what we will call retribution. Well now, God has to judge the Jew, and He has to judge the Jew very severely. I want you to look, if you will, for a moment, please, in Leviticus chapter 26 in the Word of God, and I want you to see what God said would happen to the Jew if the Jew turned from the Lord, knowing that he would. Leviticus chapter 26, beginning in verse 31—and God says, *“And I will make your cities waste, and bring your sanctuaries unto desolation, and I will not smell the savour of your sweet odours. And I will bring the land into desolation: and your enemies which dwell therein shall be astonished at it. And I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you: and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste.”* (Leviticus 26:31–33)

One of the things that so many people can't understand when they visit the Promised Land, they're looking for something that sort of looks like Switzerland, like a postcard. They say, “Is this the land of milk and honey? All I see is desolation. All I see is rocks and stones and dusty hills.” Oh, there are pockets of fruitfulness here and there—and we'll talk a little bit about that too, because certainly the desert is beginning to blossom as a rose—but so many people can't understand it when they first see this state. They can't understand that it's a land that is sick, a land that has been judged, and a land that is suffering the judgment of Almighty God. And God said that He would do that. But not only would He make the land a desolation, but He was going to draw out a sword after the Jew.

I want you to look in verse 36 of the same chapter, if you would: *“And upon them that are left alive of you I will send a faintness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies;”—*that is, when the Jew is scattered—*“and the sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them...”*—you read *The Hiding Place* by Corrie Ten Boom, and you'll know what I'm talking about here when it says—*“and the sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them; and they shall flee, as fleeing from a sword; and they shall fall when none pursueth. And they shall fall one upon another, as it were before a sword, when none pursueth: and ye shall have no power to stand before your enemies. And ye shall perish among the*

heathen, and the land of your enemies shall eat you up.” And go ahead, and let’s just read verse 39: “And they that are left of you shall pine away in their iniquity in your enemies’ lands; and also in the iniquities of their fathers shall they pine away with them.” (Leviticus 26:36–39) And you just study the history of Israel, and you’ll see how this scripture has been so literally fulfilled; how the Jew has suffered under Pharaoh and under Nebuchadnezzar, and under Alexander the Great, and under Nero, under the Turks, and under the Crusaders, and under Hitler, and under so many today: persecution, persecution, persecution—trembling like a leaf in a storm.

C. **Regathering**

And so the second chapter is retribution. First of all, rebellion. Then, retribution. And then, regathering—that’s the third chapter: regathering. Look at Isaiah chapter 11, if you will, for a moment, verses 11 and 12. And I realize we’re just giving you snatches of verses, but I’m trying to give you, really, the whole thing in a nutshell, and I may not be up to do it tonight. We’re going to give it a try. Isaiah chapter 11—here’s the next chapter in the history of Israel, beginning in verse 11. And God says, *“And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.”* (Isaiah 11:11–12)

God said He’s going to regather His ancient people, the same people that He scattered; in the last days God is going to bring them back. And if you did not hear the message I preached on “God’s Miracle Nation, the Jews,” I want you to go get that message and listen to it, and you’re going to see that one of the greatest miracles of our time, and the most significant event of our day, was not putting a man on the moon, but it was the reestablishment of the nation Israel. We showed you how the reestablishment of the nation Israel was a sociological miracle, a linguistic miracle, an agricultural miracle, a political miracle, a military miracle—it was just a miracle from A to Z. And when the Israeli won the ’67 war, we showed you—and I believe we can prove from the Bible—that God was not neutral in that war, that God is fulfilling the prophecy when He brought these ancient people back just exactly as He said He would do.

D. **Regeneration**

And so the third chapter we’ll just call regathering. First of all, there’s rebellion. Then, there’s retribution. Then, there’s regathering. But there’s one more chapter in the history of Israel, and it’s getting ready to be written right now, and we’ll call that regeneration, because there’s coming a day in which the nation Israel will come back to the Lord. And

I wish that I could tell you that it would happen simply and easily, but it will not. And it is through much tribulation and anguish that God's ancient people are going to come back to Him and be regenerated, because, you see, Israel rejected the true Christ; she turned her back on her Messiah. And the Bible prophesied that, before Israel is regenerated, she will have to reap the consequences of turning her back on her Messiah, and she is really going to turn to a false messiah who is the Antichrist.

And you might be interested in looking in John chapter 5 and verse 43. Here's a significant prophecy that Jesus made to the Jews—John chapter 5, verse 43. Jesus said, *"I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive."* (John 5:43) There is coming one who will come in his own name: the Antichrist. He will be the epitome of pride and haughtiness, but the Israeli will believe him to be the true messiah. Jesus prophesied it, and it will definitely come to pass.

Now, what is this Antichrist going to be like? Well, let me give you, first of all, his description. He is going to be an incarnation of Satan himself. Now the Bible calls him the beast. But when we think of a beast, don't think of someone hideous; don't think of someone repulsive. The Bible doesn't call him a beast to describe his appearance, but to describe his character—not his appearance. The Bible tells us that his appearance will be handsome. He'll be very suave. He'll be very persuasive. He will be a great orator. He will at first be admired. He will be one that people want to worship. He will be one that people will fear and bow down before. But he is going to present himself to Israel as their benefactor and as their friend.

And the Bible tells us, in Daniel chapter 9 and verse 27, that this one is going to make a covenant with Israel for seven years. (Daniel 9:27) And they're going to have a seven-year treaty, and they're going to say, "At last, at last, we have peace. The peace treaty that we've wanted for years and years, and the security that we've wanted, now at last we have." And I believe at that time they're going to begin to rebuild the temple, and I believe this Antichrist will even help them to rebuild the temple. Exactly how the temple will start to be rebuilt, and exactly when it will be rebuilt, you don't know, and I don't know, for the Bible doesn't say.

But the Bible does teach, if we take Bible prophecy literally, that the temple is going to be rebuilt in Israel, and when it is rebuilt, then a very strange thing is going to happen. This false messiah is going to move his headquarters from Western Europe and move his headquarters right into Palestine, right into Jerusalem, right into the holy city, right into the temple, right into the Holy of Holies, and he's going to sit there and say, "Now this is my headquarters," and he is going to proclaim that he is now God. You say, "That's ridiculous that a man should claim to be God." No, it's not; it's not ridiculous. It's ridiculous, of course, that a man should claim to be God; but it's not ridiculous that a

man will claim to be God, because we live in a generation today where we've wanted to humanize God and deify man. But whether you think it will happen or not, you just simply need to read the Bible and believe it.

Second Thessalonians chapter 2, verse 4, speaks of the Antichrist who will come. The Bible here calls him the son of perdition, "*who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped;*"—he opposes everything that's called God: not only Jehovah God, but Allah God, or any other kind of God; anything that's worshipped, he will say to all of the peoples of the world, "There's only one thing, one person, one object of worship—and it is me." And the Bible says—"so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." (2 Thessalonians 2:4)

You see, it has always been Satan's desire to be worshipped. You remember that when Satan was tempting the Lord Jesus he said to the Lord Jesus, "I'll give you all the kingdoms of the world if you'll"—do what?—"fall down and worship me." Now, notice Jesus didn't say, "Satan, you can't give me the kingdoms of the world, because they don't belong to you." Jesus didn't say that, because now, temporarily, the kingdoms of this world do belong to Satan—they do belong to Satan. Adam turned them over to Satan. And the Bible speaks of Satan as "the god of this age" (2 Corinthians 4:4)—and he is. And Jesus didn't say, "It's not yours to give," but Jesus said, "I will not worship you. I will not do it. I will not bow down to worship you. For it is written, 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and Him only shalt thou serve.'" (Matthew 4:8–10; Luke 4:5–8) But, you see, it has always been Satan's burning, unholy ambition to be worshipped.

In Isaiah chapter 14, Satan said, "*I will be like the most High.*" (Isaiah 14:14) Now there's coming a man that, when Satan says to him, "If you will become my slave, my servant, I will give you all the kingdoms of this world," that man will say, "I will." And when he does, Satan will turn the kingdoms of this world over to him; and at that time one man will rule all the kingdoms of this world. And Satan, through that man, will receive all of the worship of this world. That man is going to be Israel's false messiah. He is the Antichrist.

You see, God has His Christ; Satan has his Antichrist. Christ is the Man of Sorrows; the Antichrist is the man of sin. Christ is the Son of God, and the Antichrist is the son of perdition. Christ is the seed of the woman; the Antichrist is the seed of the serpent. Christ is the lamb; the Antichrist is the beast. Christ is Israel's true Messiah; the Antichrist is Israel's false messiah. And he will turn himself over to Satan; he will literally be possessed of the devil just as God possessed the body of the Lord Jesus Christ. Literally, God was in Christ; Satan will be in the Antichrist. He will be Satan incarnate, a devil of a man; not just simply a demon-possessed man, but a devil-filled man. Satan will bodily enter this man, and he will be known as the Antichrist.

You know, so many people can't understand. They think that somehow this is a form

of superstition, because they say, “No one is going to have that much power over all of the world.” You see, people just underestimate the power of the devil. They underestimate the power of the devil. It’s not just that some man is going to come along, and he’s going to be so cunning and so wise, or so smart or so charming—that’s not it. It is that the devil in him will be doing all of this.

If you want to jot down a couple of scriptures, two or three to study on this point, I suggest you look at 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 and verse 9, for there the Bible speaks of the Antichrist and says this of this Antichrist: “*Whose coming is after the working of Satan*”—now I want you to listen to this next phrase—“*with all power and signs and lying wonders.*” (2 Thessalonians 2:9) He will make you believe, if you’re here during this time—and I hope you won’t be—but he will make you believe that white is black, that up is down; and he would make you betray your own mother. He will come—listen—“*after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders.*” He will perform such miracles that you’ll say, “Surely, God is with that man”—“Surely, God is with that man.”

Another scripture that you might be interested in looking at is in Revelation chapter 13, verse 2. The Bible speaks of the beast there, and it says, “*And the dragon gave him his power.*” (Revelation 13:2) Now the dragon is the devil, who gives to the beast his power. Or Revelation chapter 13 and verse 7: “*And power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.*” (Revelation 13:7) You see, the Antichrist is going to so deceive the Israeli that they will believe that he is the true messiah. I believe that he’s waiting in the wings right now. And I believe the Antichrist is going to have the most powerful tools for mind control known to man: the television and the computer. And with these two tools, the computer for virtual world control, and the television for virtual mass communication by means of satellite communication, he will have the world at his fingertips. And his mind will be set on fire of hell; his power will come from the devil himself.

And so at that time when the Antichrist moves into the temple of God, he’s going to say to the Israeli, “If you want to worship God, well, you’re looking at him. I am God.” And when that happens, they are going to realize for the first time their tragic mistake. Because I’ll tell you this much about any Jew: he’s not going to worship any two-legged man who is not God, when he sees the situation as it is. And they’re going to say, “You’re not God”—“You’re not God.” And he’ll say, “Well, I’ll show you how much god I am. I’ll show you what I can do with you.” And then Satan’s ancient hatred for the Jew is going to be revived, and he is going to endeavor, then, to obliterate the nation of Israel. He will have the nations at his control, and he will call his United Nations commander-in-chief, and he’ll say, “I want you to bring to me a contingent from every nation on earth, and bring them right here, and have them bivouacked right here in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, right here in the Valley of Jezreel, right here in the Armageddon Valley. I

want you to bring a representative of every nation: everybody's going to get in on this. We'll get rid of these pesky Jews once and for all. We will wipe them out." And Israel is going to be surrounded by the nations of this world.

You say, "Well, Brother Rogers, is that really going to happen?" Well, if you believe your Bible, I think that you'll admit that is going to happen. Turn, if you will, for just a moment to the book of Zechariah, and let's see what's going to happen, if you will. Well, before we turn to Zechariah, let me just give you another few scriptures to look at before we see what happens. Look in Revelation chapter 16, verse 16. The Bible here speaks of the nations of this world, and it says, "*And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.*" (Revelation 16:16) Look in Joel chapter 3, verse 2, that scripture that we referred to a while back: "*I will also gather all nations, and bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat.*" (Joel 3:2) That's exactly the same place, ladies and gentlemen. Now, look, if you will—and you might want to jot this one down and look it up later, because time is getting away—Zephaniah 3, verse 8: "*For my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger.*" (Zephaniah 3:8) God says, "I have determined that I'm going to do this."

Now you may not think it's feasible. You may not think it's going to happen. But I'll guarantee it's going to happen. You'll never make me believe that all of these scriptures have been fulfilled so literally, and the rest of them are not going to be fulfilled. God is going to do exactly what He says He's going to do. One day Israel's false messiah will come. And Israel will believe him for a while. Then he will betray them; he will come against them. He will have virtual control of the world. And all of these nations are going to be gathered there in the Valley of Jehoshaphat. Not all the peoples of the nations—of course not—but the nations themselves, their contingents, their representatives, are going to be there.

And then, what will happen? Go back with me to Zechariah for just a moment, and we will look at these couple of verses and we'll be finished. And I just wish that I had more time, but I want to look in Zechariah chapter 12 and verse 2: "*Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem.*" Judah is the southern part of the nation. Jerusalem is the capital city. And God has said, "*I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling.*" That is, it's going to be something very troublesome. And look in verse 3: "*And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people:*"—notice "*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 12:2–3) God says that there's coming a time when they're going to surround Jerusalem. It's going to look mighty dark, but something very glorious is going to happen.

Turn to chapter 14 of Zechariah and verses 2 and 3. And I wish, again, that I had more time, but notice what God says in verse 2: *“For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity,”*—that is, they’re going to be captured—*“and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city.”* It’s going to look very dark. It’s going to look like the last days have come for Israel. And then, put a big star by verse 3: *“Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. 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, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.”* (Zechariah 14:3–4) And then, the last part of verse 5: *“And the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee.”* (Zechariah 14:5)

This is the Second Coming of Jesus. And when Jesus comes, at this particular time the scales are going to fall from the eyes of the Israeli. They will see Jesus. They will recognize Jesus as the true Messiah. They will call upon Him. They will be saved, but it will be through great tribulation that they will be saved. Look in Zechariah 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, I praise the Lord for that: that they’re going to call upon the Lord. The Bible says, “They shall look upon me whom they pierced.” And they’re going to call upon the Lord Jesus, and they’re going to be saved.

Conclusion

Let’s bow our heads together in prayer. Father, we thank you for this Bible study tonight, and we’re just so grateful, Lord, that we don’t have to be in darkness and in doubt, but that we can know the things that are going to come to pass. We realize, Lord, that there are many details we don’t understand. But, Father, we believe that we do understand that you’re not finished with your ancient people. We believe, Lord, that you’ve given this land to Abraham and his descendants. And we pray, Lord, that you will soon in your own way bring peace to Jerusalem, and then peace to the world. And, Heavenly Father, we pray also that you would bless our Arab friends. We love them, Lord. We pray, Heavenly Father, that in your own way you would meet their needs. We know, Lord, you love Ishmael, and you love his descendants. And we pray, Lord, not only for peace for the Israelis; we pray for peace for the Arabs, and for the Gentiles, and for all the peoples of this world, that they might find their peace in the Lord Jesus Christ. For we pray in His name and for His sake. Amen.

The Promise That Changed the Word

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: May 17, 1981

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 17:1–8

“And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee.”

GENESIS 17:6

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Introduction

All right, be finding Genesis chapter 17. Just start in the first book and count seventeen forward—Genesis chapter 17—seventeen chapters, that is: “The Promise That Changed the World.” *“And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD*

*appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying, As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham...”—*God adds a Hebrew letter to the name of Abram now, the fifth letter in the Hebrew alphabet, which is an aspirate. This letter is a key part of the word for “spirit.” And the word for “spirit” in the Old Testament is the same word for “breath” or “wind.” What God is saying to Abram now—“I’m putting my Spirit upon you. You are Abraham.” There’s the *hhhhhh*—the Spirit, the breath, of God. God, in a very special way, is moving upon this man. And, incidentally, the fifth letter reminds us also that five is the number of grace—*“[your] name shall be [called] Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee. And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.”* (Genesis 17:1–8)

This is one of the most important documents ever written: far more important than the Declaration of Independence; far, far more important than the Mayflower Compact; far, far more important than the Constitution of the United States of America. If you understand what God is saying here, you will be able to understand the history of the world, for what God is saying here marks and colors all of the subsequent history that follows it. What God is saying here is an iron fist upon history, to say that certain things are going to be done. What God is saying here is His plan to bless you and to bless me and to bless the nations of the world. What God is saying here is going to help us to understand what is happening this day, this age, right now, as we read our newspapers, in the Middle East. This indeed is a blessing, a promise that has changed the world, and will give us understanding if we today will take the Word of God and let it speak to us as we study together.

Now there are several things I want you to notice.

A. The Promise

First of all, I want you to notice the promise in the first three verses. The Bible says that God is going to make a covenant, in verse 2, between God and Abraham. (Genesis 17:2) And as we can study in other places in the Bible, and can even see here, it is an unbreakable covenant. It is an unchangeable covenant. It is an immutable covenant. It is a promise that will last unconditionally. Sometimes God makes promises that are conditional promises. That is, God says, “If you’ll do this, I’ll do that; if you don’t do this, I

won't do that." But this is an unconditional covenant promise that God has made.

B. The Principle

Not only do I want you to notice the promise, but I want you to notice the principle. It is a covenant promise that is based on the principle of grace. It is not due to anything that is inherent in Abraham, not anything that Abraham has done or will do. As a matter of fact, God is doing all of the talking. Abraham is on his face, just listening, as God makes with Abraham a covenant that is based upon the principle of grace.

C. The People

I want you to notice also, not only the promise, and the principle, but the people. Notice in verse 7 He says, *"And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee."* (Genesis 17:7) Now, what seed is He talking about? He's talking about the Hebrews; He's talking about the Jewish race. Look, if you will, in verse 21 of this same chapter: *"But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year."* (Genesis 17:21) He's talking, not about Ishmael, who is the progenitor of the Arab race, but He's talking about Isaac, who is the progenitor of the Jews. The people that are concerned primarily in this covenant are the Jewish people, the descendants, the seed, of Abraham. And, also, He is talking here about Abraham's greatest son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who indeed, in the fullest sense, is the seed of Abraham.

D. The Period

And not only is He talking about a promise, a principle, a people, but He's also talking about a period—a period of time. Notice in verse 7. It shall be *"an everlasting covenant."* (Genesis 17:7) That is, it will never grow old. It will never wear out. It will never be changed. It is an everlasting—therefore, an irrevocable, unchangeable—covenant. It will last through the eons of the ages.

E. The Place

And I want you to notice one other thing. I want you to notice the place that is involved, because, not only does it involve a people, it also involves a place. Look, if you will, in verse 8: *"And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God."* (Genesis 17:8) God said, "I'm going to give this land, the Middle East"—Palestine, as some call it; the Holy Land, as others call it; Israel, as others call it—God says, "I will give it to you, Abraham, and to your seed, your descendants through Isaac, for an everlasting possession."

Now as we've seen this document—and there are many, many other things in this document—but as we've seen it, I want us to think for just a moment about what God is

up to and what God is doing through the people called Israel. You see, the eyes of the world right now are upon that tiny state of Israel. And that's the way it should be, because the Jews are the people of destiny. As the Jew goes, so goes the world. The Jew is God's yardstick, the Jew is God's blueprint, the Jew is God's measuring rod, the Jew is God's program for what He is going to do with the other nations of the world. And the Jew and the land are wrapped up together. And so, not only do we need to keep our eyes upon the people, but we need to keep our eyes upon the place of those people. What an important place is Israel, the state of Israel! I'm talking about that real estate that God calls here "*the land of Canaan*" that He gave to Abraham and to Abraham's descendants.

1. The Geographical Center

I want you to see how it is the very center of the earth. There's an interesting verse over in Ezekiel chapter 5, verse 5, where God says, "*I have set [thee] in the midst of the nations.*" (Ezekiel 5:5) You see, this little, insignificant—seemingly insignificantly—parcel of ground is the hub of three mighty continents: Africa, Asia, and Europe. It is an ancient military and economic crossroads, and it has been called by some "the navel of the earth." It is the geographical center of the earth. And in the Bible, when directions are given, directions are always given as "north of Israel" or "south of Israel." That is God's plan.

2. The Revelation Center

It is the center—the geographical center. But not only is it the geographical center; it is the revelation center. It was from this place that Moses wrote. It was from this place that the prophets spoke. It was from this place that we received the Bible.

3. The Spiritual Center

And not only is it the geographical center, and the revelation center; it is, dear friend, therefore, the spiritual center, because it was here that Jesus Christ was born. It was here that Jesus Christ lived and walked and taught. He never left this place until He left it to go to heaven. It is here that Jesus died, here that Jesus was buried, here that Jesus rose, and to the land of Canaan Jesus Christ is coming again.

4. The Prophetic Center

It is—I want to tell you—the prophetic center. You take this land of Palestine, this nation—it is the only place, the only people, where their prophecy is minutely foretold centuries before it would come to pass.

5. The Storm Center

It, dear friend, is the storm center of the entire world. And we're seeing now the nations of the world are lining up around this little nation of Israel. The clouds are gathering, and

I believe that we're seeing, even in our day, the foregleams of the battle of Armageddon, which will be fought in this place that we're preaching about today. It is the storm center of the world.

6. The Peace Center

But it's also the peace center of the world. There will be peace upon this earth. One of these days the lamb and the lion will lie down together. One of these days *"the earth [will] be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as...waters [that] cover the sea."* (Habakkuk 2:14) One of these days the desert will blossom as a rose. And one of these days Jesus will reign for a thousand years from this place, and there will be peace. That's the reason the Bible tells us to pray for the peace of Jerusalem. There will never be peace on earth until there's peace in Jerusalem, and there will never be peace in Jerusalem until Jesus Christ rules and reigns there. And so, when you're praying for the peace of Jerusalem, you're also praying for the Prince of Peace, the Lord Jesus Christ, to come again. And so, dear friend, it is the peace center of the world.

7. The Glory Center

And it will be the glory center of the world, as Jesus, the Lord, the Savior, the Messiah, will rule and reign from the throne of His father, David, as He is the true seed of Abraham, One who came from the loins of Abraham, One who came from the loins of David, and One who will sit upon the throne of His father, David, and dispense the covenant blessings of Abraham. How grateful we are for what God is doing in keeping His promise to Abraham so long ago!

As we think about our friends the Jewish people, I want us to think about four miracles that are wrapped up in these promises that God gave to Abraham so long ago. I want you to see, as we consider the nation Israel, first of all, what I call the miracle of her generation. Secondly, I want you to see what we are going to call today the miracle of her preservation. Thirdly, I want you to see what we're going to call today the miracle of her regathering, or her restoration. And then, finally, the miracle of her regeneration. Her generation, her preservation, her restoration, and her regeneration: I believe all of these things are incipient in this promise that God gave us through Abraham and God gave to Abraham so long ago.

I. The Miracle of Her Generation

First of all, I want you to think with me just a little bit about the miracle of her generation. Notice God says, in verse 5: *"Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee."* (Genesis 17:5) Now here's a man who is past the time of having children, and here's a man who is without a progeny. And yet God says that He's going to make him a father of many

nations. How is it going to come about?

Well, look in chapter 18 and verse 9. Two angels are there talking with Abram. *“And they said unto him, Where is Sarah thy wife? And he said, Behold, in the tent. And he said, I will certainly...”*—that is, the angel 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 she was eavesdropping. That’s what that means. It’s a polite way of saying it. *“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,”*—now she just giggled. It didn’t get out; it just bubbled inside. She’s thinking about this, and she says—*“After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also? And the LORD said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh...”*—God knows when you laugh, even when you laugh on the inside—*“Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old? Is any thing too hard for the LORD?”* You put a big star by that question. *“At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.”* (Genesis 18:9–14)

Now here is the miracle of the generation of this nation Israel. When the promise first came to Abraham that he was going to be the father of many nations and that he was going to have a son, he was seventy years old. And Sarah was sixty years old when the promise first came. Thirty more years wore on and slipped by, and when the son was finally born, Abraham was one hundred years old and Sarah was ninety years old. Can you imagine old Abraham on a walking stick saying, “It’s a boy”? Can you imagine? One hundred years old and he has this son. It was a miracle. Every Jew walking upon the face of the earth today is here as the result of a miracle birth. Israel is a miracle nation. God began this nation with a miracle.

And, incidentally, our Jewish friends ought not to have difficulty believing in the miracle of the virgin birth. Their entire race began with a miracle. Israel is a miracle nation. Her history began with a miracle. It continues with a miracle. It will be consummated with a miracle. You read what the Bible says about the faith of Abraham in Romans chapter 4, beginning with verse 17, when you get home, concerning this miracle birth. The Bible says he hoped against hope. (Romans 4:18) He believed in God, even when his life processes were dead, that God was able to bring life out of death. So therefore we ought not to have difficulty also believing in the resurrection of God’s dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, because it is God who gives life where there is death.

II. The Miracle of Her Preservation

All right, notice the miracle—the miracle—of her generation. But, secondly, I want you to

notice the miracle of her preservation. Look, if you will now, in Genesis chapter 17 and verse 7. For God says, *“And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant.”* (Genesis 17:7) Now, notice, there are seeds. There are going to be nations, people, generation after generation, everlastingly. What is God saying here? God is saying that the nation Israel is absolutely indestructible—absolutely indestructible. God prophesied to Abraham and to Moses and to others that Israel would be disobedient, that Israel would be dispersed, that Israel would be discredited, but that Israel would not be destroyed. The promise that God made to Abraham is an everlasting promise.

And the devil has tried to exterminate God’s ancient people so many times. But the king of Egypt could not diminish the Jew. The Red Sea could not drown the Jew. Jonah’s whale could not digest the Jew. The fiery furnace could not devour the Jew. The gallows of Haman could not hang the Jew. The nations of the world have not been able to assimilate the Jew. And the dictators of this world have not been able to annihilate the Jew. And the Arab nations will not be able to overcome the Jew. I want to tell you, dear friend, that they are God’s people by an everlasting covenant. And when other people have left their homeland and have traveled to other parts of the world, they have been assimilated. They have been merged with those other countries to such a degree that many times it is difficult to find them existing still as a people. They are blended and merged and assimilated. But after eighteen centuries of dispersion, the Jews are still Jews, having their traditions, having their laws, having their statutes, having their language. For Jesus said, *“This generation shall not pass,”*—and that word means “this race, this stock, this breed, this kind,” shall not pass—*“till all these things be fulfilled.”* (Matthew 24:34) The Jews are like a gulf stream in the midst of the ocean.

When I was a little boy, I lived in West Palm Beach, Florida, and I kept hearing people talk about the Gulf Stream in the ocean. I said, “How can there be a stream in the ocean? It’s all water.” One day my daddy took me out in a boat three miles off the shore of Palm Beach. We were going through that gorgeous aqua blue ocean water, and suddenly my father said, “Look, son!” And I looked, and there was a clean, sharp line of demarcation. And there it looked as though somebody had taken a mighty bottle of indigo ink and poured it in the ocean. And here was a river of deep purple and blue just flowing through in a northward direction, flowing through the Atlantic Ocean. And I thought to myself, “How sharp and how clear that line is! Over here is aqua water, and over here is deep purple and indigo water; and the line is so sharp.”

Why don’t the waters mix? I don’t know how God keeps them separate, but I know that the Jewish nation has been the same—correspondingly the same way. They flow through the oceans of mankind, and they keep themselves distinct and separate—the miracle of her preservation.

Now there are some people who are afraid that this kind of person will not last upon the face of the earth. But turn to Jeremiah chapter 31. I want you to see what God says in the book of Jeremiah. And, oh, you'll enjoy turning to this, so just go ahead and turn to it—Jeremiah chapter 31. Here's what you would have to do to exterminate the Jewish nation: *"Thus saith the LORD..."*—I'm reading Jeremiah 31:35—*"Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of 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,"*—that is, the sun, the moon, and the stars. "If the sun, the moon, and the stars depart from before me"—*"saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever. Thus saith the LORD; If heaven above can be measured,"*—that is, friend, "if you can ever tell me how high is up"—*"and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath,"*—"if you can ever find anything this world is resting on"—*"I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD."* (Jeremiah 31:35–37)

What is God saying? God is saying, "For you to destroy the Jews, you would first of all have to destroy the power that regulates the universe. You would have to snatch the sun, the moon, and the stars from the hand of God." You could no more destroy Israel than you could destroy the universe or measure the height of the heavens. And every Jew upon the face of the earth today is a living sermon to the testimony of the faithfulness of God to Abraham so long ago. "An everlasting covenant," God says. And I want to tell you, the same God that keeps His promise to Abraham is the same God that keeps His promises to me, for they are *yea* and *amen* in the Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 1:20)

I thank God for this nation—not only for the miracle of her generation, but the miracle of her preservation. The indestructible Jew has left his mark upon history, and he stands beside the grave of his persecutors. Did you know that the Jews are less than four-tenths of one percent of the world's population? Think of that—less than four-tenths of one percent. And yet more than twelve percent of all of the honors in science, in health, in medicine, in music, in philosophy, and in public life have been garnered by these amazing people. The Nobel Prize is one of the highest prizes that men of learning confer upon one another. In the last twenty-five years, one-third to one-fourth of the Nobel prizes have been given to these people who only represent four-tenths of one percent of the population. Why is this? I believe that God in a very special way has His hand upon these people. They are the people of destiny.

You can study history and find some amazing things. Did you know that it was a Jew that financed Christopher Columbus's voyage to find this New World? Did you know that on board that ship when Columbus set sail was a Jew and he was the first man to set foot upon these new shores? Did you know that? Did you know that a Jew,

Hiram Solomon, financed George Washington and the Revolutionary War as we fought for our independence from the British? Did you know that? You don't realize what an influence these people have had on your life. Have you ever taken aspirin when you have a headache? Bayer, a Jew, was the one who gave us aspirin. Have you ever had a vaccine for polio? Salk and Sabin were Jews. Have you had the need to take digitalis because you had a heart difficulty? Traube was a Jew. Have you gone to the dentist and let him put novocaine in your gums so as to deaden the pain? You can be very thankful then for Einhorn, a Jew. When you went to get married, you had to take a certain kind of a test, a blood test, the Wassermann Test: Wassermann, a Jew. You had an infection, and the doctor prescribed for you streptomycin. Waksman, a Jew, gave us that. Perhaps you have had difficulty and have gone to the psychiatrist and had psychoanalysis. Freud, a Jew, was the father of psychoanalysis. Perhaps you have given money to the Salvation Army to help people, or perhaps you've received help from the Salvation Army. The mother of William Booth, the Founder of the Salvation Army, was a Jewess. Perhaps you've gone to school and studied philosophy. Spinoza was a Jew. As a matter of fact, all of history revolves around the names of six Jews: Moses, Jesus, Paul, Marx, Freud, and Albert Einstein.

Now I want you to understand, when I list Jesus in those names, that I'm not trying to put Him on a plane with these others. We can speak of Alexander the Great, Napoleon the Great, Caesar the Great, but never Jesus the Great. He's Jesus the One and only. I want you to know that. But I want you to know also, dear friend, that He is a descendant of Abraham. He is a son of David. Think of the miracle of the preservation of this race.

III. The Miracle of Her Restoration

But I want you to think of another miracle: not only the miracle of their generation, not only the miracle of their preservation, but I want you to think of the miracle of their restoration. Go back to our text now here in Genesis chapter 17 for a moment and look with me in verse 8. God says, "*And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for*"—what?—"an everlasting possession; and I will be their God" (Genesis 17:8)—"an everlasting possession." I believe, dear friend, that God meant exactly that. I believe that even on the reconstituted earth—I mean, after the Millennium—it will still belong to Abraham. I believe *everlasting* means just exactly that.

And just think what we have celebrated now: thirty-three years of Israel as a nation. This is the month—May 14–15, 1948. When I was playing high school football, I didn't know what was happening. I wasn't paying much attention to the newspaper. But the Republic of Israel was formed. A nation was born in a day—a miracle. And the Bible

tells us, in Amos chapter 9, verses 14 and 15, that God is going to regather them, that God is going to plant them in their land. And then God says, “They will no more be plucked out”—“no more be plucked out.” (Amos 9:14–15) I believe they are there to stay.

IV. The Miracle of Her Regathering

You think, dear friend, of the miracle of her regathering.

A. A Military Miracle

It was a military miracle. Now, did you know that when this nation was born there were approximately 650,000 Jews living in the nation Israel; in 1948, when the powers that be—the UN and so forth—declared the statehood of Israel? Six hundred and fifty thousand! How many people in the city of Memphis? About 650,000 here in the city limits. That’s about the size of the nation. A very easy comparison. Do you know what they were surrounded with? They were surrounded by forty million Arabs—650,000—forty million Arabs, forty million hostile people who vowed and declared that they would not establish a nation there and that they would be driven into the sea. And when you consider also at this particular time that twenty-four hours before this time a Jew could be arrested for even carrying a gun, and now he must defend himself against six Arab states. They went to work. They secreted guns around. They bought ammunition wherever they could. They took boilerplate and welded it to the side of school buses to make tanks. I’ve seen some of those old tanks that they made, handmade tanks built in garages. They took hose handles, broomsticks, anything that looked like a rifle barrel, and pretended it was a gun, so as to frighten the enemy if they could not shoot him. They used firecrackers instead of bullets to make it sound like the battle was even stronger and more fierce than it was. And the Arab legion attacked, and they came with all their fierceness. And they came from Iraq, from Lebanon, from Syria, from Egypt. They attacked. I don’t have time to tell you the miracles of some of those battles, because it’s interesting history, and I have studied it. But I want to tell you some of the most amazing things took place.

In one battle 20,000 Arabs were captured by four hundred Israelis. Can you imagine that? David and Goliath all over again. And by the time the UN, the United Nations, got around to calling for an armistice, these little people, who are supposed to be exterminated, were 150 miles into Egyptian territory and taking more ground every moment. How do you explain that? The only way I know is that that fight was fixed. How do you explain the Six-Day War in 1967? Lightning fast—just like that. And Jerusalem, the capital city that we’re going to talk about in just a moment, came into the hands of the Israelis. I can’t explain it any way except as a fulfillment of prophecy.

I don’t want you to think for one little moment that God loves a Jew any more than

He loves a Gentile, or God loves a Jew any more than He loves an Arab. Don't ever misinterpret what I'm saying. God does love the Jews. I love the Jews. God loves the Gentiles. I love the Gentiles. God loves the Arabs. I love the Arabs. And we love them. I'm just talking to you about God, who is sovereign in history. And what God has said He's going to do, God is going to do. And I want to tell you all the evil machinations and Machiavellian plans of men are not going to be able to change what God has determined that He is going to do. When they came back into the land, it was a military miracle.

B. A Sociological Miracle

Not only a military miracle; it was a sociological miracle. They came back to Israel from sixty-one different countries, and they spoke different languages. They had different backgrounds. One noted sociologist said, "It will take three generations for these people to become a nation." He meant about one hundred years. Later on, this same noted sociologist came back and said, "I have to eat my words."

C. An Agricultural Miracle

Sixty percent of the rest of it is desert, and it's a very small parcel of land, and it rains only in the winter. It's very arid and very dry; and yet, with massive water projects, with horticulture, agriculture, and with irrigation, they are causing the desert to blossom as a rose. And as you ride through that land and see the orange groves and see the lush cotton, and as you see the crops—many times three crops harvested off the same field in one year—it is one of six nations in the world that raises enough food to feed itself—only six—and it is becoming the bread basket of Europe. They have taken the Jezreel Valley—it was once a malaria-filled swamp—and they have drained it, and they are farming it now, and there they are growing avocados, and there they are growing plums and peaches and strawberries and cotton and bananas. And they are producing record-breaking milk cows. Somebody called them, not Holsteins, but Goldsteins. They are producing these record-breaking dairy products and so forth. How do you explain that? I believe it is a fulfillment of prophecy.

D. A Linguistic Miracle

Not only is it a military miracle, not only is it a sociological miracle—I'm talking about the restoration now—not only is it an agricultural miracle; friend, it's a linguistic miracle. Do you know what language that they're studying over there now? Do you know what language they are speaking? Hebrew. A hundred years ago, no one spoke Hebrew except an academic person. It was not the spoken language of any people; it was a dead language. No one knows anywhere where a dead language has ever been revived. But it is there. And do you know what's happening? The little children are going to school and they are learning Hebrew in school. And then the children are coming

back and teaching the mother and the father to speak in the native tongue. And did you know the Old Testament prophet Amos could come back to Tel Aviv and walk down the streets of Tel Aviv today and speak his Old Testament Hebrew and carry on a conversation with people today? A linguistic miracle. And I believe it's what God is saying here, that God says, "I am going to give you this land as an everlasting possession."

V. The Miracle of Her Regeneration

But I want us to think about one final thing today as we think about this miracle nation and the covenant that God made with Abraham. Think not only about the miracle of her restoration, but think with me about the miracle of her regeneration. Look again in Genesis chapter 17, the last part of verse 8—and God says, "*All the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.*" (Genesis 17:8) Listen, friend. God has not given up on these people. God loves them, and many of them love Him. And God says, "*And I will be their God.*" And there's a prophecy, dear friend, that tells that in the last days there's going to be a wholesale turning of God's ancient people to faith in Jesus Christ. I believe that with all of my heart. I believe that Jesus is the Messiah of Israel.

I want you to see what's going to happen. Turn to Zechariah chapter 12 for a moment. And I really want you to turn with me to this—Zechariah chapter 12. We know that the world is going to face some dark days. We know there's coming a time on this earth that the Bible calls the Great Tribulation. But we also know that great good is going to come out of this tribulation. Notice what's going to happen. We can see it happening already. We can read our newspapers today and see it happening. Zechariah chapter 12, verses 2 and 3: "*Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem.*" (Zechariah 12:2) It seems to me that in many ways world opinion is turning because of the OPEC nations and the oil-rich nations. And some of our loyalties that we used to have seem to be ebbing away, and the nations seem to be gathering a noose around little Israel. Some people think they're paranoid. I believe you would be, too, if you were in the situation that they're in. I want to tell you, friend, America had better keep standing by Israel. God says those that bless Israel, He'll bless, and those that curse Israel, He'll curse. (Genesis 12:3)

But notice what's going to happen. He said all of the nations—all of the peoples of the earth—are going to be gathered against it. Look 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) Every man, woman, boy, girl on this earth are not going to set aside

the decrees of God. God says, in effect, “You go against me, you’re going against yourself.” As Benjamin Franklin told Thomas Paine, “When you spit against the wind, you spit in your own face.” Listen. God says all the people *“that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it.”*

But I want you to see what God is going to do. Look, if you will, in Zechariah chapter 12 and verse 9. In these dark days, see what is going to happen: *“And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.”* And then, notice this blessed promise in verse 10: *“And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace...”*—and, you know, ladies and gentlemen, that you’re saved by grace or you’re not saved at all. You understand that, don’t you? *“For by grace are ye saved.”* (Ephesians 2:8) He says—*“the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced...”*—who is speaking in this verse? The Lord is speaking; Jehovah is speaking. Jehovah God says, *“They shall look upon me whom they have pierced.”* Think about this. This is an Old Testament text. How can God be pierced? I’ll tell you how. God became flesh, and God hung on a cross. The Bible speaks of the Church, *“which [God] hath purchased with his own blood.”* (Acts 20:28) Whose blood was shed upon that cross? The blood of God. God can be pierced when God becomes a human. When God becomes the Messiah of Israel—*“they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son,”*—that is, they shall understand when the scales fall from their eyes, as they did from the eyes of the apostle Paul—*“and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.”* (Zechariah 12:9–10)

And then I want you to see a blessed verse, in Zechariah 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)

*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

“In that day, they will look upon me, their Messiah.” And they’ll call out to Him, and He’ll hear and answer. And Paul says, *“And so all Israel shall be saved.”* (Romans 11:26)

Conclusion

I thank God for this book. I thank God for these promises and these prophecies. As I

read the newspapers and I see what is happening, then I can go all the way back to the book of Genesis and see that immutable, unchangeable, irrevocable, unbreakable promise that God made to Father Abraham. What a great God we have! And what great days we're living in! I believe we're living very close to the time that Zechariah is talking about, and I believe it behooves everyone listening to us right now to give his or her heart to Jesus to be saved, to trust Him, to look upon Him. He will save you if you'll let Him.

How to Be Strong in Faith

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: February 25, 1990

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 17:15–17

“And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her.”

GENESIS 17:16

Outline

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- I. Strong Faith Releases the Grace of God
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Conclusion

Introduction

I want you to take God’s Word now and turn with me to Genesis chapter 17. We’re talking about faith. We’re in the school of faith. Today, we’re talking about how to be strong in faith. Archimedes was a philosopher and physicist, and he said, “If you will give me a lever long enough, if you will give me a fulcrum with something to rest it on, and,” he said, “if you will give me a place to stand,” he said, “I can move the earth.” And he was right. My dear friend, may I tell you, for us, that the lever is faith, the fulcrum is the Word of God, the place where we stand is in His grace, and with it not only can we move the earth, but we can move heaven as well—if we learn to be strong in faith.

Now Abraham, as we’ve said, is the brightest star in the Hebrew heaven; he is the hero to our Jewish friends. But, my dear friend, he’s more than a Hebrew and a father to the Jews; he is the father of all of those who believe. And what a lesson we’re going to learn today on how to be strong in faith, because I remind you that the Bible says, *“According to your faith be it unto you.”* (Matthew 9:29)

Now, let’s look at a wonderful story in the life of Abraham. And I begin reading here in Genesis 17, verses 15 to 17: *“And God said unto Abraham, As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be. And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations;*

kings of people shall be of her. Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?” (Genesis 17:15–17) Now, here is an old man, and God says to this old man, “You are going to father a child.”

And then, look in Genesis chapter 18 and verses 11 to 14: “Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in age; and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women.” That is, she no longer had her reproductive facilities working. *“Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also? And the LORD said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old?”* And then, my dear friend, if this verse is not underlined in your Bible, please let it be underlined: *“Is any thing too hard for the LORD?”* Oh, I love that verse: *“Is any thing too hard for the LORD? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.”* (Genesis 18:11–14)

And then, turn with me to Genesis chapter 21, and look, if you will, in verses 1 to 3. *“And the LORD visited Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did unto Sarah as he had spoken.”* Oh, I love it! *“For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him. And Abraham called the name of his son that was born unto him, whom Sarah bare to him, Isaac.”* (Genesis 21:1–3) And the name *Isaac* means “laughter.”

Boy, I love this story. Here’s Abraham, now one hundred years old, and Sarah is ninety, and they have a son. Can you see Abraham coming out of the maternity ward on his cane, Sarah, with a hoarse voice, saying, “It’s a boy”? Can you imagine that? He’s just one hundred years old, and he has a son. And it does cause you to laugh, because the whole story is not ludicrous, just joyful, of what God is able to do. They named that little boy laughter—laughter. What a wonderful thing God did to prove that there is nothing—listen—*nothing*—listen—there’s nothing too hard for the Lord. And in this wonderful story God gives us an illustration of what strong faith is.

Let me say, parenthetically, that sometimes our Jewish friends wonder at those of us who believe in the virgin birth. They said, “Why, that’s a miracle—the virgin birth!” Do you really believe that a virgin conceived and brought forth a child? Well the Hebrew Scriptures—Isaiah 7, verse 14, says it would happen—in the Hebrew Scriptures. (Isaiah 7:14) But, my dear friend, I want to tell you that every Jew that walks the face of this earth is here because of a miracle birth. And don’t forget it. It was a miracle that caused Isaac to be born, and it was a miracle that gave Abraham the Jewish race to come out of his loins.

Well, turn with me from the Old Testament to the New Testament. Let’s see what the Apostle Paul has to say about all of this. I mean, you see, dear friend, what happened

back yonder has so much to say to us today, because what God said to Abraham is not just simply what God was saying, and what God was doing, but in many ways is what God is saying and what God is doing. So, look with me in Romans 4 and verse 16. Now here is the Apostle Paul, and he's telling us something about the faith of Abraham. And he's saying here in Romans 4, verses 16 to 18, *"Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all,"*—that's you and me, dear friend: all of us—*"(as it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations.)"*—not just the Jews—*"before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead,"*—the word *quickeneth* means he "gives life to" the dead—*"and calleth those things which be not as though they were."* And then it speaks of Abraham, *"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."* (Romans 4:16–18)

Now, notice Romans 4, verses 19 and 20: *"And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet 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 4:19–20)

Now the Bible says that Abraham did not stagger at the promise of God, but he was strong in faith. I want to talk to you today about how to have a strong faith. And we're going to look at this Romans passage here, Romans 4, and there are four wonderful, wonderful truths I want you to learn. I hope you'll not miss them. I want you to get these four things about a strong faith emblazoned in your heart, etched upon your consciousness. I want them to reverberate through your soul, because, my dear friend, I want for you what I want for me: a strong faith. Now I want you to be very clear and to see that what happened to Abraham happened as an example to you.

Look, if you will, in Romans 4, verses 21 and 22: *"And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness"* (Romans 4:21–22)—that is, to Abraham for righteousness. But now Romans 4, verses 23 to 25—put a star by it: *"Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."* (Romans 4:23–25)

Now what he's saying, dear friend, is this: If we believe as Abraham believed, we will receive as Abraham received. What a great encouragement—because Abraham was not perfect; he failed in many ways, but God remembered him not for his faults, but for his faith. Isn't that an encouragement? In the New Testament you don't read about the faults of Abraham, just the faith of Abraham. Now all of those of us who are so imperfect, there's one thing we need therefore all the more to do—and that is to love

God and believe God.

All right, four things about strong faith.

I. Strong Faith Releases the Grace of God

Number one: Strong faith releases the grace of God. Have you got it? It releases the grace of God. Look, if you will, in Romans 4, verse 16: *“Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace...”*—without faith, you’ll never know grace—*“Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure.”* (Romans 4:16) Oh, Paul is so logical!

You see, what is grace? Grace is “God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense.” Grace is God giving us and showing us His great wonderful love. There’s nothing we can do to deserve it, to earn it.

*Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to the cross I cling.*

—AUGUSTUS M. TOPLADY

Grace is the unmerited love and favor of God that is just given to us. Now, dear friend, how can a man receive that? Only by faith! If you begin to work for it, if you begin to pay for it, it’s no longer grace—it’s no longer grace. You see, and if by grace, it’s no longer works, otherwise work is no more work; and, if by work, no more grace, otherwise grace is no more grace. This is what the Bible says. You can’t mix grace and works, so the only way that grace can be grace is through faith—the only way that grace can be grace.

Now, my dear friend, may I tell you this: that unbelief—unbelief—holds grace prisoner; unbelief imprisons grace. If you’re an unbeliever, grace will never work in your heart and in your life. You see, the Bible says it’s by faith that it might be by grace. Do you remember reading about the Lord Jesus Christ when He was in His hometown of Nazareth? And the Bible says, when He was there, He *“did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.”* Now the Lord Jesus was *“full of grace and truth.”* (John 1:14) The Lord Jesus wanted to bless them. But Matthew 13, verse 58, says, *“He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.”* (Matthew 13:58)

Now, my dear friend, God is full of grace. His grace is amazing grace. It’s overflowing to you. But the only way that you’re going to be able to release that grace, the only way that you’re going to un-imprison or set that grace free, is by faith. Faith is the key to that enables you to get to God’s grace. Just fast-forward to Romans chapter 5, verse 2. Look at it: *“By whom also we have access by faith into this grace.”* (Romans 5:2) The only way that you’re going to get into this grace is by faith. Faith is the key; it just opens the door and gets you in there where grace is, or gets grace out here where you are. You see, listen, friend. It is so important that you know the grace of God. It is

faith, however, that releases the grace of God. Look at how Paul argues here in Romans 4, verse 16: *“Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure.”* (Romans 4:16) How would you like to know—I mean, absolutely know—that you’re saved; I mean, that the promise might be sure, but it has to be by faith. That’s the only way that you can ever be sure.

Suppose salvation was by good works. Then you’d never know whether you’ve done enough. You say to me, “Adrian, are you saved?” I’d have to say, “Well now, if it’s of works, I’d have to say, ‘Well, I think I am. I hope I am. I’m doing the best I can. I’ve done some nice things. I’ve prayed, I’ve worked, and I have given. But, on the other hand, I did lose my temper the other day. And, on the other hand, I haven’t been praying quite as much as I think I ought to. I haven’t been all that bad, however. Well, I hope I’m saved.’” Do you know anybody like that? The world’s full of them. “You see, you can never know.” “Praise God, I know I’m saved, unless...” My dear friend, it’s by faith, that the promise might be sure to all of us. You see, if it were of works, nobody could be sure; nobody would ever be able to say, “I know I’ve done enough.” All you could say is, “I hope I’m saved.”

Now, my dear friend, let me tell you about strong faith. Listen to me. It releases the grace of God—it releases the grace of God. Unbelief holds grace a prisoner, but it is by grace that the promise might be sure. And grace makes it available by faith. Faith makes grace available.

II. Strong Faith Relies on the Guarantees of God

Now the second thing I want you to notice about this strong faith: not only does strong faith release the grace of God, but strong faith relies on the guarantees of God—it relies on the guarantees of God. Look again in verse 16: *“Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure.”* (Romans 4:16) Then, verse 17: *“As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations.”* (Romans 4:17) We have a sure promise, a written guarantee.

Now, my dear friend, listen. Strong faith always relies on God’s guarantees. It does not rely on you—what you wish or what you want—but what God has said. You see, all faith is rooted in the knowledge of God’s will and God’s promises. Without this there can be no faith. Now the reason that many people don’t pray in faith is that they’re only guessing at the will of God. Wouldn’t you say that’s true? You see, the Bible says, *“But without faith it is impossible to please him.”* (Hebrews 11:6) But the Bible says, *“If we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.”* (1 John 5:14)

Now many of us just simply don’t know the will of God. Now, if you don’t know the will of God, you will never ever be able to pray with faith. If you’re only guessing at the will of God, you cannot possibly pray with faith.

Now, let me tell you something else. Some of you don't even try to know the will of God. Some of us get the idea that prayer and faith are in some way a bending of God's will to fit our will. We're superimposing our will onto the will of God. Now, my dear friend, faith is not man's way of getting man's will done on earth; it is God's way of getting God's will done in heaven and on earth. Now so, faith—let me tell you that again—it's not man's way of getting man's will done in heaven, but God's way of getting God's will done on earth. So much of our praying is either guessing at the will of God or trying to force our will upon God's will.

Now, let me tell you something, friends. God has never promised that, if you have enough faith, you can have what you want. God has never promised, if you have enough faith, you can have what you want. What a mess we'd make if that were true! You would suddenly become God. And you'd take over the universe, and you'd make a mess of it. To the contrary, the Bible says—Romans 10, verse 17—*“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”* (Romans 10:17) Faith, my friend, is not a positive feeling. Faith is not following a hunch. Faith is not hoping for the best. Faith is not a feeling of optimism. Faith is getting from God. Strong faith relies upon the guarantees of God. God must speak, and God has given us a written guarantee. God has given us His Word. In verse 16, the promise is sure; in verse 17, the promises are written.

Now the only way you can have faith, therefore, is to hear God. Now Romans 10, verse 14, asks this question: *“How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?”* (Romans 10:14) The New American Standard gives it this way, though—and correctly: “How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard?” You see, faith is not hearing about God. Faith is hearing God. The prerequisite for faith is literally hearing God.

Now you can read the Bible and not hear God. Did you know that? Unsaved people can read the Bible, and God doesn't speak to them. Saved people, out of fellowship with God, can read the Bible, and God does speak to them. Dear friend, this book is the Word of God, beyond any shadow of any doubt. But it doesn't become the Word of God to you until you hear God. You get a word from the Word, a *rhema* from the *logos*. And the Bible says, *“How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?”* You say, “Pastor, that's very important then. I've got to learn to hear God if I want faith.” That's exactly right. How much time do you spend alone with God? How much time do you spend on your face before God? How much time do you spend getting quiet before God? You rush all around here and there and never are quiet before God and never attuned to God, no wonder you never hear God! And if you never hear God, no wonder you're not strong in faith!

III. Strong Faith Recognizes the Greatness of God

Faith releases the grace of God. Faith relies on the guarantees of God. God has got to give you a guarantee. God has got to give you a word. Now, my dear friend, the third thing I want you to notice about faith, and strong faith, is that strong faith recognizes the greatness of God. Look, if you will now, in verse 17: *“(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God,”*—now, underscore this—*“who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. 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 yet the deadness of Sarah’s womb.”* (Genesis 4:17–19)

Now, my dear friend, I said that true faith is rooted in a promise, but not only in the promise, but the One who promised. You cannot really trust a promise unless you know who made that promise. You see, you have to go beyond the promise to the man who, or the one who, makes the promise. A few weeks ago, a man made a promise to me—a very solemn promise—but he didn’t keep that promise. He told me he would do something, and he promised me he would do it, but I knew when he promised that the chances were slim to none that he would do it. You see, you cannot really trust a promise unless you know who made that promise. You have to go beyond the promise to the one who makes the promise. Because I knew that man’s character. And I didn’t expect him to do it. Now I had a promise, I had a word, but the man behind the word was no good.

And so, my dear friend, if you are to have faith, not only must you have the Word of God and a word *from* God, but you must also understand the character of the God who gives this Word.

Listen. You cannot trust the promises of somebody you do not know and believe. In Psalms 9, verse 10: *“And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee.”* (Psalms 9:10) You’ve got to know the name of God. And in the Bible the name stands for the character of God. Everything in the Christian life and in strong faith depends upon adequate understanding of who God is. Now, if your faith is weak, get to know God—get to know God. That was the ambition of the apostle Paul: *“Oh, that I may know Him.”* (Philippians 3:10)

Did you know that’s it’s really not a compliment to a man to call that man a strong man of faith? Now I want to have strong faith. But that’s not a compliment to me to say that I have strong faith. You say, *“Well, Adrian, you have strong faith. You’re wonderful.”*

No, no! Let me illustrate. I was telling the businessmen the other day at a luncheon about my wife Joyce that I love and trust. Now, when I’m gone, someone might say, “Well, Adrian, while you’re gone, who watches Joyce? Who superintends her so that

you can trust her while you're away? I mean, how do you know that she's not going to spend all of your money? Or, how do you know that she's not going to have a boyfriend while you're gone?" I say, "Well, I just don't worry about it." "You don't worry about it at all?" "Not at all." "Not even a little bit?" "Not even a teensy weensy little bit. I just don't worry about it at all." You say, "Well, what a wonderful man of faith you are!" I say, "Oh, no, what a wonderful wife I have! What a wonderful wife I have!"

You're not bragging on me when you well know how trustworthy she is. No, my dear friend, you are bragging on her. You see, your faith is no better than the object of your faith. And to call you a great person of faith simply means that you've got somebody great that you put your faith in.

Now what I'm trying to say is that Abraham—listen—he had faith, number one, that released the grace of God; he had faith, number two, that relied on the guarantee of God; and, number three, he had a faith that recognized the greatness of God.

A. **There Is No Problem God Cannot Solve**

Now, notice how great he saw God being. Notice what it is in Romans 4, verse 17: "*Before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead,*"—do you see it?—"*and calleth those things which be not as though they were.*" (Romans 4:17) Now, what does all of this mean? Well, it just simply means, "Dear God, you're the kind of a God—you're the God of resurrection; you quicken the dead. And you're the God of creation; you bring something out of nothing."

Now Sarah's womb is dead. And you say, "A great nation is going to come out of me." And there is no nation. "So, God, you're the God of resurrection, and you're the God of creation." Now what the Bible is saying here and what I want to impress upon your heart is that you have to see something of the character of God, the greatness of God, and that increases your faith. And, dear friend, that's one of the great reasons for Bible study and getting to know the character of God. You see, Abraham was faced there with two impossibilities that day. His first impossibility was this: that he could have a child. He couldn't; he couldn't have a child. I mean, that's impossible. He was one hundred years old. Sarah was ninety years old. It was just impossible. He was faced with that impossibility. But then he was faced with another impossibility: that God might lie. So there he is saying, "I've got two impossibilities. One is a human impossibility, and the other is a divine impossibility." So, what does he do? He just says, "Well, I'm just going to have to cross out the human impossibility," amen? "I'm just going to have to understand that God cannot lie." That is the divine impossibility. "I'm going to cross that out and say it is a possibility: '*With God all things are possible.*'" (Matthew 19:26) Spurgeon said, "Look at yourself, and doubts will increase. Look at Jesus, and they will disappear."

Now, remember back there in Genesis 18, verse 14, when Abraham was laughing

and said, “How’s this going to be, Lord?” and the angel said—Genesis 18, verse 14—“*Is any thing too hard for the LORD?*” (Genesis 18:14) Look up here. You answer the question: “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” Just shake your head. Listen, my dear friend. Nothing is too hard for the Lord.

Jeremiah answered that question in Jeremiah 32, verse 17: “*Ah Lord GOD! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee*” (Jeremiah 32:17)—nothing too hard for God. My dear friend, there is no promise in this Bible too hard for God to fulfill. There are over 30,000 promises in the Word of God, and all of them are *yea* and *amen* in the Lord Jesus Christ. Titus 1, verse 2, talks of “*God, that cannot lie.*” (Titus 1:2) If there’s no promise too hard for God to keep, there’s no prayer too hard for God to answer. In Jeremiah 33, verse 3, He says, “*Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.*” (Jeremiah 33:3) My dear friend, there is nothing, absolutely nothing, too difficult for God. There’s no prayer that God cannot answer. *The only thing that lies outside the reach of prayer is that which lies outside the will of God.*

I tell you there’s no problem that God cannot solve. You say, “Adrian, you have problems?” Only when I’m awake or asleep. We all have problems. There’s not a person who lives that doesn’t have problems. God wants us to have problems. Andreae Crouch said,

*If I’d never had a problem,
I wouldn’t know God could solve them...
I thank Him for the storms He brought me through.*

—ANDRAE CROUCH

Now He may not solve the problem the way you think He ought to solve it. “*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) But, my dear friend, there’s no problem He can’t solve.

B. There Is No Person God Cannot Save

I want to tell you something else. There’s no person He can’t save. There is not a person He cannot save. Anybody who will come to Him in repentance and faith, He will save. So, “*Ah Lord God, is there anything too hard for thee? There’s nothing too hard for the Lord.*” (Jeremiah 32:17; Genesis 18:14)

IV. Strong Faith Reveals the Glory of God

All right now, let me go on to the final point in this thing of strong faith. I hope you’re

catching what the Bible says about Abraham. First of all, he says that strong faith releases God's grace. Secondly, he says that strong faith relies on God's guarantee, the sure promise. And then he says, thirdly, that strong faith recognizes God's greatness. God is a God who raises the dead and makes something out of nothing. That's the kind of a God we're praying to. There's nothing too hard for God. Now, here's the final thing about Abraham's faith: not only does it do that, but strong faith also reveals the glory of God. It reveals the glory of God.

Look, if you will now, in Romans 4, verse 20. And the Bible says that, *"He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God."* (Romans 4:20) He was strong in faith, giving glory to God. How would you like to glorify God? May I tell you, dear friend, that the greatest way that you can glorify God is to believe Him—no greater way to glorify God than to believe Him. People do all kinds of things to glorify God. They build buildings like this to glorify God. They give their money to glorify God. They read their Bibles to glorify God. They pray to glorify God. Sometimes people disfigure themselves, thinking that would glorify God. They go on pilgrimages and make all kinds of sacrifices. But, my dear friend, if you want to please God and glorify God, believe Him—believe Him. Strong faith reveals the glory of God.

Now, suppose you were talking about me. Suppose a couple of you were off somewhere in a restaurant and you were talking about Adrian. And someone would say, "Well, you know, he's does this, and he does this, and he does this. All of these things are fine about Adrian, but there's one thing about Adrian. You can't believe him." Now, friend, I don't care how many good things you have said about me, if you slip that into your conversation, if you say, "In spite of all of those things, you just can't believe him," you have just cut the taproot of my character.

Now, dear friend, the Bible says, *"He that believeth not God hath made him a liar."* (1 John 5:10) You can sit in a church like this, and you can sing "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty" and say, "God is great and God is good and God is glorious," and all of these things. But, my dear friend, if you don't believe God, you've made Him a liar. Listen. There is nothing that reveals the glory of God more than your faith. The Bible says that faith honors God—faith honors God. *"Without faith it is impossible to please [God]."* (Hebrews 11:6) And, my dear friend, when you with all of your heart believe God, that gives God such glory. And since faith honors God, God honors faith. Look at it again: *"He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God."* (Romans 4:20)

Now, when you are strong in faith, you give glory to God. Now faith supports praise, and praise supports faith. When you give glory to God, even before it happens, that helps it to happen. You see, if you're having difficulty with faith, begin to praise God. Ron Dunn put it this way. He said, "Faith makes praise shout. And when faith hears the

shout of praise, it in turn grows stronger and bolder.”

Conclusion

Now, friend, all of these things are marks of a strong faith. I’m finished now with the message. But let me make it very clear now. I hope I can sum it up to you. Listen to me now. God said to Abraham, “Abraham, I’m going to give you a son.” Abraham was one hundred years old. Sarah was ninety. It was almost humanly ridiculous, so much so that Abraham laughed, and yet he turned and he believed God. How did he do it? Well, first of all, he said, “I know, God, you want to do it by your sheer grace. And so by faith I’m going to release grace.”

Faith releases grace. It relies on God’s Word. It doesn’t look for anything else. It just simply takes the Word of God and gets a word from God. And, thirdly, my dear friend, that faith that relies on God relies on God because it knows God’s character. It just simply is aware of who God is and what God can do. And, therefore, it just glorifies God. It just simply says, “God, I want to give you the praise. I’m going to give you the glory. I’m not going to stagger in unbelief.”

Now, dear friend, if you’ll do that, God will make you a person of strong faith.

Is Anything Too Hard for the Lord?

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: January 3, 1993

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 18:13–14

“Is any thing too hard for the Lord? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.”

GENESIS 18:14

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Introduction

Take your Bibles, please, and turn to the book of Genesis chapter 18, and in a moment we’re going to look at one of the best verses in all of the Bible. It’s a question verse, but it’s a great, great verse, one that I think that all of us ought to have etched upon our consciousness: how God has told Abraham that in his old age he’s going to father a son. Sarah had passed the age where it was possible for her to have a child, humanly. Her womb was dried up, and Abraham was past the time when physically he could father a child. But God came to Abraham and said, “Abraham, I’m going to give you a son, and you’re going to be the father of many nations. Sarah was back there in the tent

eavesdropping. And when God said that to Abraham, Sarah just laughed. Begin reading here 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?”* Now here is the verse that is our text tonight: *“Is any thing too hard for the LORD?”* (Genesis 18:13–14) And that question is the title of our message tonight: “Is Anything Too Hard for the Lord?”

I spoke to you earlier about revival, and many of you, when I talked about revival, just gave a sympathetic smile, because you really don't think it's possible. You really think that's just preacher talk, that's just rhetoric. You do not believe that we can have an earth-shaking, mountain-moving, devil-defying change in America. I do believe it, and I do believe that we can, because of this verse and the implications of this verse: *“Is any thing too hard for the LORD?”* People asking, “Well, if it's not too hard for God, why doesn't God do something? Has the situation gotten beyond Him? Is the matter too difficult for God?” Well, stay tuned, and we're going to find out. We're going to have an unorthodox message tonight: it will have two points; not three—two points.

I. The Majesty of God's Limitless Power

Point number one: the majesty of God's limitless power. Now I want you to get that into your mind: the majesty of God's limitless power. God asked Abraham, *“Is there any thing too hard for the LORD?”* (Genesis 18:14) Of course, if you don't know the answer, let's let Jeremiah give us the answer. Jeremiah chapter 32 and verse 17—here's what Jeremiah said in answer to that question: *“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) Boy, I love that! *“Is there any thing too hard for the LORD?”* *“There is nothing too hard for thee.”* Do you know what Jeremiah did? Jeremiah just used a little logic. He said, “God, you made everything. Now, if you made everything, you can certainly control it all.”

Some people have difficulty with miracles. Friend, *if you can get past Genesis 1:1, you'll never have any difficulty with miracles.* *“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”* (Genesis 1:1) You get past the first verse in the Bible, if you say, “I believe that one,” then you have to answer the rest of it and just simply say, “There is nothing too hard for the Lord.”

Now, put it down big, plain, and straight: If God has not worked in your life, if God has not worked mightily in your situation, it is not because He is unable.

A. There Is No Promise Too Hard for God to Fulfill

I want you to think with me, number one: There is no promise too hard for God to fulfill—none. Do you know how many promises there are in the Word of God? I've not counted them all, but somebody else has said there are over 30,000 promises in the Bible, and every one of them is *yea* and *amen* in the Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians

1:20)

Now I'm saying, dear friend, there is no promise too hard for God to fulfill. Put these verses down—I love them—Numbers chapter 23 and verse 19. I want you to think of a promise of God, and then I want you to listen to this: *“God is not a man, that he should lie...”*—now some man may lie to you. God never will—*“God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent...”*—that is, He's not a man that will tell a lie, nor is He a man that will change His mind—*“God is not a man, that he should lie; neither [is he] the son of man, that he should repent:”*—the word *repent* means that he will say one thing and say, “Well, I'm sorry. I have changed my mind.” And then he goes on to say this—*“hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?”* (Numbers 23:19)

What does that verse tell us? It tells us, dear friend, if God says He will do it, you can bank on it. God cannot lie. We find the same thing in Titus chapter 1 and verse 2, which says, *“In the hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began.”* (Titus 1:2) It is absolutely, totally, irrevocably impossible for God to tell a lie. There's nothing too hard for God. You say, “Well then, can God tell a lie?” Of course not! It's not that it's too hard for Him to tell a lie; it is that it is absolutely, totally contrary to His nature. God will not tell a lie.

I heard a long time ago about a dear Christian lady who loved God with all of her heart, and she'd been talking about the Lord and giving a testimony about the Lord and how sweet it was to trust the Lord, how wonderful it was to stand on His promises and all of this. And someone, just taunting her, said, “Well, Grandmother, suppose after you die you find out that you're not saved after all; you find out that God did not keep His word to you and that you are lost and that you will slip into hell. Suppose after you die, you lose your soul.” She said, “If I lose my soul, God will lose more than I lose.” She said, “How is that?” She said, “I might lose my soul, but God would lose His honor.”

God cannot lie. *“Is there any thing too hard for the LORD?”* My dear friend, there is no promise that God cannot keep. If it's in this book, and if God has promised it, you can bank on it.

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

Second, not only is there no promise that God cannot keep; there is no prayer too hard for God to answer—not one! Not one! *“Is there any thing too hard for the LORD?”* Jeremiah 33:3, as we heard in our Christmas play—a wonderful verse: *“Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.”* (Jeremiah 33:3) There's no prayer that's too hard for God. Jesus Christ said, in Matthew 21 and verse 22, *“And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive”* (Matthew 21:22)—all things! Anything that you can believe God for, you can have. There is no prayer too hard for God to answer. Almighty God is not limited by

circumstances.

*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

What a mighty God we serve! I said this morning in our message, *there is nothing—nothing—that lies beyond the reach of prayer, except that which lies outside the will of God.* There is no prayer too hard for God to answer.

C. There Is No Problem Too Big for God to Solve

Thirdly, there is no problem too big for God to solve—not a one! Some time ago, we preached from Psalm 37. I love Psalm 37, verses 3 to 5: *“Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the LORD: and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.”* (Psalms 37:3–5) No problem, no problem, no problem, no problem too big for God to solve!

You say, “Adrian, do you ever have any problems?” Only when I’m asleep or awake. Sure I have problems, and you have problems. But I want to say, friend, that God is the God that answers by fire, by power, by grace, by love. Reushey just sang that song, “The Blood Will Never Lose Its Power.” I love that song written by Andrae Crouch. Andrae Crouch wrote another song, and in that song he said,

*If I’d never had a problem,
I wouldn’t know God could solve them...
I thank Him for the storms He brought me through.*

—ANDRAE CROUCH

When God solves your problem, He may not solve it in the way that you think that He ought to solve it. Sometimes God’s ways are mysterious, and the solution may be different than you think, because Isaiah chapter 55, verses 8 and 9, says, *“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) Angel Martinez has said, you know, that God works differently than we work.

1. God Works on a Different Thought Level

For example, God works on a different thought level than we work on. We say, “Well, God, you ought to do it this way.” But God says, “My thoughts are not your thoughts.” God just works on a different thought level. Sometimes we think, “You know, if I were God, this is what I would do.”

A little boy was sitting under an oak tree one time, and as he looked up at that mighty oak tree he saw just the little acorns on that oak tree. Then he looked down on the ground and he saw a watermelon vine and a great big watermelon on a watermelon vine. He said, “Now, you know, that doesn’t make sense. God didn’t do this right. He put the little acorn on the big oak tree, and He put the watermelon on the little vine. The watermelons ought to be on the oak tree and the acorns on the vine.” About that time, the acorn hit him on the head. He said, “I’m glad it wasn’t a watermelon.”

2. God Works on a Different Time Level

Now God doesn’t work according to what we do, according to what we think. God works on a different thought level. And God works on a different time level. You see, we live in time, and God lives in eternity. And sometimes we’re very antsy, and we say, “Lord, I want you to solve my problem, and I want you to solve it now.” But with God, as I told you some time ago, with God, timing is far more important than time. And God will do what He wants when He wants. And He’ll never be ahead of time, and He’ll never be late. But there’s no problem God cannot solve.

3. God Works on a Different Technique Level

And I want to tell you, not only does God work on a different thought level, and a different time level, but God works on a different technique level. Many times we try to tell God exactly how to solve the problem, and God does it sometimes 180 degrees different than we would do it.

When the apostle Paul, who was at that time named Saul, was persecuting the church, and he was having Christians arrested, and he was hauling them off to jail, and many of them were killed, I imagine the early church was praying, “God, do something about this man Saul. He’s decimating the church. Oh, God, strike him dead.” But God didn’t strike him dead. God struck him alive. I mean, God saved him. He became the mighty apostle.

When we want God to do something, we think, “God, why don’t you just kill the devil?” God doesn’t kill the devil. He puts His Son on the cross—differently than what we would think.

When those children of Israel were out there in the wilderness, and they were being bitten by poisonous serpents, they might have prayed, “God, get rid of all these snakes.” But God didn’t get rid of the snakes. He lifted up a brazen serpent upon a pole and said, “Look and live.” (Numbers 21:8)

You see, what God did was to raise up a solution in the midst of all of that pollution. And we say, “Oh, God! Oh, God, do something about these politicians! God, do something about Hollywood! Oh, God, do something about the liquor business! Oh, God, do something about the pornography business!” You know, maybe God just wants to do

something completely, entirely different than you and I think He wants to do.

I have an idea that God wants to do something with us. I have an idea that that's where God wants to move.

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

You see, there's no problem too big for God to solve. There's no prayer too hard for God to answer. There's no promise too hard for God to keep. "Lord God, is there anything too hard for thee?" I'll tell you something else: There's no person too hard for God to save—not a one! Not a one! Anybody who wants to be saved can be saved. I don't care what they have done and who they are. Isaiah chapter 1 and verse 18 says, *"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) Though they be blood red, they can be snow white.

Do you ever look at some people and say they're just beyond redemption? Be very careful by saying that. I used to pastor a church down in Fort Pierce, Florida, a little church when I got out of seminary. I was called to that church, Parkview Baptist Church, a wonderful church. Joyce and I spent six wonderful years there at that church. They were some of the dearest people I've ever known on earth. I used to have a little radio program down there, a daily program called "Daybreak." And I would go many times to the station at 6:45 and preach for fifteen minutes, or sometimes I would do it by tape. But right after the "Daybreak" program, I had a group of men that I would meet with for prayer, met every morning for prayer at about 7:15. We prayed until about 8:00, just had wonderful fellowship after the radio program, after "Daybreak."

That little group of men got together, and they said, "We need to have revival in our city. We need to have revival in our church." One man said, "You know, I was reading in a book that the way to have revival in the city is to get the meanest, most wicked man in the city saved, and that will touch the city." And I said, "Well, that sounds like a wonderful thing to do." And I said, "Well, how do you get the meanest man saved?" They said, "Well, you begin to pray for him and pray for him, and then you witness to him." I said, "Well, that sounds like a good plan to me. But," I said, "we have a problem. Who is the meanest man in our city?"

Well, we had an election. Different people made nominations. We had a lot of good candidates, but finally we settled on a man that everybody had determined was the meanest man in the city, the man most unlikely to be saved and was the meanest man. And this man was a notorious man. He was a barroom brawler. He was a drunkard. He was a moonshiner. He was a pistol fighter. He was a man living in an immoral relationship. He was absolutely, totally fearless. On one occasion, he had done such things as stolen a hog out of the back of the game warden's truck. At this particular time, he had a gunshot wound, because a woman shot him and the bullet had lodged in

his hip. And the reason the woman shot him was she was jealous. This man had been spending too much time with his own wife. This woman shot him because he was paying attention to his own wife. Well, I think you get the picture. That's the kind of a man he was.

And so we prayed for him. We met and we prayed for him morning after morning after morning after morning; we saturated this man in prayer. And finally they said, "Well, it's time to go talk to him." And they said, "Who will talk to him?" And they all said, "The pastor needs to go." And so I made up my mind I would go and talk to this man. Now, remember, he had won the election. He was absolutely the meanest man in town.

So I went by his house where he lived, and I knocked on the door. His wife came to the door, and I said, "I am so-and-so. I'm a Baptist preacher, and I've come to see this man." "Oh," she said, "no, you don't want to see him." I said, "Well, no, I really want to see him. Is he here?" She said, "Well, he's here, but," said, "they're in the back room, and," said, "they are drinking and fighting and gambling." She said, "You don't want to go back there." I got to thinking about it and said, "You know, I really don't. I'll see you later." So I just left. And, yeah, it was an intimidating thing. I mean, that was the man's own wife. She said, "You don't want to go back there; you really don't."

So I got to thinking about it. "Am I afraid? Am I chicken?" And, you now, "Do I really not trust the Lord?" So I went back to our men, and we began to pray some more, and we prayed and prayed and prayed some more. I went back to the man's house and said, "This time I want to see him." I walked in, looked him straight in the eye, and I said, "Sir, I'm Adrian Rogers. I've been praying for you. I want you to be saved. May I tell you how you can become a child of God and be saved?" He said, "Yes sir, you sure can." And I presented Jesus Christ to him, and I said, "Would you like to be saved?" "Oh," he said, "yes sir." I said, "Would you pray this prayer after me?" And he said, "Yes sir." And I led him in the sinner's prayer, and he just fell off in my hand like a ripe apple, just gave his heart to Christ like a little boy would trust Christ as his personal Savior.

I've never been able to forget that. That was the meanest man in town, the man everybody was afraid of. Everybody was saying, "Well, that's the man who's bound to be going straight to hell. Hey, there's no hope for that man." But he had been softened by prayer, by prayer, by prayer. There is no man—no man, no woman, no boy, no girl—too hard for God to save if that person will yield his or her heart to the Lord Jesus Christ. And so what I've talked to you about is the majesty—the majesty—of God's limitless power.

II. The Mystery of Man's Limiting Power

Now, here's the second point: The mystery of man's limiting power—because if there's nothing too hard for God, and if God can do anything, if God can keep every promise, if God can hear every prayer, if God can solve every problem, if God can save every

person, then why doesn't it happen? Why are we not seeing these things done? Because men limit God. You say, "Can a man limit God?" It's a mystery, but He can.

Put this verse down—Psalms 78 and verse 41: "*Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel.*" (Psalms 78:41) And the word *limited* here actually means they "horizoned" Him. They just simply said, "He can go this far and no further." They limited the Holy One of Israel. It's a mysterious verse; it's a strange verse. This is the Creator being limited by the creature, the God of glory limited by a puny man.

And I'm going to give you an illustration of this. When the Lord Jesus Christ was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, they came into the Garden of Gethsemane to carry Jesus away to be tried and then to be crucified. And here's what the Bible says, in 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, listen to this verse—"and when they had bound him, they led him away" (Matthew 27:1–2)—"*when they had bound him, they led him away.*" Now here is Jesus. They come into the Garden of Gethsemane—Jesus is praying, and they come in and they put chains on Him, they put ropes on Him, they put fetters on Him, they put handcuffs on Him, they put something on Him; they bind Jesus.

Now, how is that possible? When Simon Peter saw what was happening, Simon Peter drew out the sword. He was going to defend the Lord, and Jesus said, "Simon, put your sword away." (Matthew 26:51–52; John 18:10–11) He said, "I could call twelve legions of angels." (Matthew 26:53) Now, how many angels are in a legion? Some people say 12,000. So that would be 144,000 angels He could call. I read in the Bible where one angel slew 185,000 Assyrians in one night. That's just one. If one angel could kill 185,000 Assyrians, what would 144,000 angels do? If my arithmetic is correct, that would be twenty-six billion, six hundred and fifty million, that that many angels could take care of. Jesus is saying, "Hey, look! This is not because I am helpless. I am not being bound because I don't have any choice about the matter."

Jesus allowed Himself to be bound. Jesus could have spoken all of them into oblivion. As a matter of fact, just to illustrate that, Jesus said, "Who are you looking for?" and they all fell on the ground like dead men. (John 18:4–6) And then Jesus stood up and allowed Himself to be fettered. He allowed Himself to be bound. He allowed Himself to be chained. He allowed Himself to be tied. He allowed Himself to be limited. It's the mystery of man's limiting power. I wonder, have you ever limited the Lord? Have you ever chained Deity? Have you ever fettered Jesus? Have you?

Now, get the scene. Here's the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, the Lord whose hands bless and heal and help and minister. If there are any hands that ought not to be tied, those are the hands; any hands that ought not to be chained, those are the hands. And yet those were the hands that they chained. Now, if there were some sick among

those soldiers, His hands could have healed them. If there were some who were hurting, His hands could have soothed them. If there were those who were in sin, those hands could have cleansed. And yet those were the hands that they themselves bound and chained.

I want to list tonight five kinds of chains with which human beings—those in this congregation and those outside this congregation—bind Deity: how we chain God’s hands. There is the majesty of God’s limitless power. “There is nothing too hard for the Lord.” And yet there is the mystery of man’s limiting power, where they limited the Holy One of Israel, and they bound the Christ of creation.

A. **Unwillingness**

Chain number one is unwillingness. God will not force Himself upon you. Put this verse down—Matthew 23, verse 37. Jesus is riding into the city of Jerusalem. He’s riding upon a donkey. And as He rides into the city of Jerusalem, they’re throwing palm branches before Him. But Jesus knows that it’s all just a religious charade, and great salty tears course down the cheeks of the Lord Jesus. And this is what Jesus said to Jerusalem so long ago: *“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, and ye would not!”* (Matthew 23:37) “I would have; I was willing, but you weren’t willing.” Christ said, “I would have blessed you. I wanted to bless you. I would gather you in my arms like a chicken gathers her little chicks under her wings, but you would not. You were stubborn. There was rebellion. I wanted to bless.”

I’m speaking to some tonight, and God wants to give you peace, God wants to give you comfort, God wants to give you hope, God wants to give you security, God wants to give you salvation; but you must be willing. It is not that God cannot. There is nothing too hard for God. But God will allow you to bind Him and chain Him. Unwillingness is a chain. Jesus said, “I would, but ye would not.”

I was witnessing one day on the street. I just happened to see two girls coming down the street, and I stopped and said, “May I talk with you for a while?” They said, “Well, all right.” And I said, “I want to tell you how to be saved.” And the girls were very respectful. They stopped, and they listened, and I told them how to be saved. And I turned to one of the girls, and I said, “Would you like to pray and ask Christ into your heart?” And as I remember, she said, “Yes, I would.” And so I prayed, and I led her to receive Christ as her personal Savior. Then I turned to the other girl, and I said, “Would you like to receive Christ as your personal Savior?” She said, “I need to be saved.” I said, “Wonderful.” I said, “Would you pray this prayer after me?” She said, “No, I can’t do it right now.” “But,” I said, “the Bible says, *‘Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.’* Do you really want to be saved?” She said, “Yes, I do.” I

said, "Well, wonderful. I want you to pray this prayer after me." And she said, "Oh, no, I can't make a commitment today; I just can't do it." And I said, "But you say you want to be saved. Do you believe what I told you is true?" She said, "Yes." I said, "Do you believe Christ died for you?" "Yes." "Do you believe if you trusted Christ that He would save you?" "Yes." "But," I said, "don't you realize that if you refuse to trust Him, you're not just simply refusing to trust Him; you're denying Him, you're rejecting Him?" "Oh," she said, "I would never deny Him. I would never reject Him." I said, "Well, Jesus said, in Matthew 12, verse 30, 'He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathers not with me scatters abroad.'" I said, "Now either you're for Him or you're against Him. Either you trust Him or you do not trust Him. Either you confess Him or you deny Him. Either you crown Him or you crucify Him." "Oh," she said, "I would never crucify Him. I would never deny Him." I said, "Then, will you pray and ask Him into your heart?" She said, "I'm sorry. I just can't do that right now."

I said, "All right." I said, "I've got to go." I said, "At least, will you shake hands with me?" She said, "Sure." I said, "Well, wonderful." I said, "If you'll take Christ in salvation, give me your right hand." I said, "If you'll take the devil and hell, give me your left hand." She put her hands behind her back. I said, "You said you'd shake hands." I said, "If you'll take Christ and salvation, give me this hand. If you'll take the devil and hell, give me that hand." I think for the first time she realized that God is not going to force Himself upon you or her or anybody else. "He that is not with me is against me." "He that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." You cannot be neutral about the Lord Jesus Christ. And Jesus said, "I would bless you." I'd like to say that girl got saved, but she didn't. "I would have blessed you, but you would not."

There are some of you, my friends, that God wants to bless tonight. And God, I believe, in the form of the Lord Jesus Christ, is looking down on this service and feeling toward you as He felt toward the city of Jerusalem. "Oh, if you only knew the things that belong to you." "I would, but ye would not."

B. Unconcern

There's another chain. Not only the chain of unwillingness, but there's another chain. It's the chain of unconcern. It's not that some are unwilling; they're just completely indifferent. It's an indifference that's heartbreaking. Let me illustrate what I'm talking about. In Revelation chapters 2 and 3, our Lord tells about the church and the age of the church from Pentecost right on through the end of time, and the last church mentioned is the church of Laodicea, which is a lukewarm church. And in Revelation chapter 3, verse 20, this is what Jesus says to that church in Laodicea, the lukewarm church: "*Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me,*" (Revelation 3:20) Now Jesus, standing, knocking at the door, He's the Lord of glory; He made everything.

Is there any door that He cannot blow down? Is there any lock that He cannot open? Is there anything too hard for Him? Is there any kind of a door that can keep the Lord out?

Yes and no. No, there is nothing too hard for Him. And yet Jesus said, “I’m on the outside, you’re on the inside, and you must open the door.” Now, notice what it says: “If you hear my voice...” So many are so concerned, so busy, about other things that they never even hear the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ. They fail to hear Him. I preach. I look at you like you look at me. I see you in the congregation when you are whispering back and forth when I’m preaching. I looked this morning when I was preaching, a young man, two young men, during the invitation were carrying on on the back row, right up there—a big conversation; never looked to me, never heard a word I said, carrying on—a big conversation. Sat on the back row, I guess, just because they wanted to talk. That’s heartbreaking to a preacher. It’s heartbreaking to know that we’re in the house of God tearing out our heart, pleading for souls—people just carrying on a conversation. I don’t know why they come. Maybe Mom and Dad made them come. I don’t know. But, dear friend, the Lord says, “I want to bless you. I am standing, knocking at your heart’s door. I sent a man of God with the Word of God to speak to your heart. But you must open the door. *“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him.”* It’s not, my dear friend, that He cannot; it is that He will not, if you’re unconcerned and will not open the door. Unconcern is a rope, a chain, a fetter, a handcuff that binds the hands of Almighty God.

C. **Unreasonableness**

Third chain: unwillingness, unconcern; the third one is unreasonableness—unreasonableness. Isaiah chapter 1 and verse 18—I’ve already quoted it. *“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) God cannot work in some lives, because of their unreasonableness, because of their prejudices, because of their preconceived ideas.

It’s amazing to me how many people will not give up their own ideas for God’s truth. And they bring silly arguments; they bring unreasonable things, things like this: “Well, if I became a Christian, there would be so much for me to give up, too much for me to give up.” That’s unreasonable. Who wouldn’t give up dirt for diamonds? “Too much to give up.” Ha! The only thing God asks you to give up is that which will hurt you, will harm you, damn you, pull you down. *“The LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.”* (Psalms 84:11) *If it will make you healthy, happy, holy, wholesome, God says, “Help yourself.”* God is a good God. But such obtuseness, such unreasonableness—people will not listen. Somehow there seems to be a veil of darkness, and that unreasonableness is a

fetter, a handcuff, that chains the Almighty.

D. **Uncleanness**

Fourth chain: uncleanness—uncleanness. Sin in the life keeps God from blessing you and working with you. Let me give you a classic verse that proves that—Isaiah 59 and verse 1: *“Behold, the LORD’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save...”*—is there anything too hard for God? No. God is not palsied. God’s hand is not withered—*“Behold, the LORD’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear:”*—God is not deaf—*“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) It’s not that He cannot hear. “Ah, Lord God, is there anything too hard for thee? There is nothing too hard for thee.” (Genesis 18:14; Jeremiah 32:17) And yet sin in the life—unconfessed, unrepented-of sin in the life—has kept you from the good things that God wants to give you. You only hurt yourself. You only limit the Lord.

All of us have heard the story of the beautiful, exquisite vase, the heirloom, and the little child who stuck her hand down in that vase and could not withdraw it. It was a beautiful vase; they hated to break it. They lubricated the hand. They put oil and soap and everything to try to get her to withdraw her hand. She couldn’t do it. They said, “Pull harder. But be careful; don’t break the vase.” Finally she said, “But I just can’t get it out.” They said, “Well, make sure that your fingers are real straight.” “Oh,” she said, “I can’t do that. I would drop my penny.” She had a penny in her little fist, and she thought that, if she opened up her hand, she would drop the penny, and that’s the reason she couldn’t get her hand out of the vase.

We think that’s so silly. Some of you are doing the same thing. God wants to bless, but you say, “I just can’t let go.” You can’t let go of that? You can’t let go of that? You had rather take the hands that want to heal and bless and comfort and save, you want to take the hands of the Almighty, where there is nothing too hard for Him to do, yet you by your uncleanness want to cling to that sin? *“Behold, the LORD’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear, but your [sins] have separated between you and your God.”*

E. **Unbelief**

Let me mention the last of these five chains. This, perhaps, is the most devastating of all. The mystery of man’s limiting power: not only uncleanness, but unbelief, more than anything else, limits the Almighty. All sin is terrible, but this sin is devastating. Jesus went back to his hometown, Nazareth, and the Bible tells us, in Matthew chapter 13 and verse 58, *“And he did not many mighty works there...”*—because He couldn’t do them? Because there was something too hard for Him there in Nazareth? No—*“he did not many mighty works there because of their*

unbelief.” (Matthew 13:58) That’s the mystery of man’s limiting power. This is the Lord Jesus who can raise the dead. This is the Lord Jesus who gives sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf, and loosens dumb tongues. This is the Lord Jesus who makes the lame to leap. This is the Lord Jesus who turns water into wine. And yet there in his own hometown He “did not many mighty works because of their unbelief.”

God wants to work miracles in your life, if you will believe. And faith is the channel through which the risen Lord pours His life into you. But you will tie his hands by unbelief. Faith is the key that causes the shackles to fall from the hands of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

I’ve finished the message. I pray God that you’ll see two things. First of all, I pray that you will see the might and power of His hands. I pray that you will see there’s nothing too hard for God. There’s no promise too hard for Him to keep, no prayer too hard for Him to answer, no problem too difficult for Him to solve. I hope you’ll see that. And I want you to see those hands tonight, those loving hands, reaching out to you. And I want you to ask yourself this question: “Am I chaining those hands? Am I fettering the Lord Jesus Christ? I know He will allow me to do it. He allowed them to bind Him and carry Him away to Calvary. Am I limiting the Holy One of Israel by my unwillingness, my unconcern, my uncleanness, my unreasonableness, my unbelief? Am I my own worst enemy? Am I doing that? The hands that want to bless me so much?” It’s worth thinking about, isn’t it?

Is There Anything Too Hard for God?

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: October 11, 1987

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 18:14

“Is any thing too hard for the LORD?”
GENESIS 18:14

Outline

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Introduction

I want to ask you a question this morning, and it is a big question because it comes from a big person: it comes from Almighty God. It is the title of our message this morning. The question is from God to Abraham; it is also from God to you this morning. I want you to listen to the question. It is found in Genesis chapter 18 and verse 14—Genesis chapter 18 and verse 14. Turn to it and look at it. God had told Abraham that as an old man—his powers of generation were dry and dead and withered—that he was going to have a child. And Abraham and Sarah, who were both past the age of bearing children, began to wonder about this and question the Lord. And here is what the Lord said to Abraham: *“Is any thing too hard for the LORD?”* (Genesis 18:14). That’s a good question, isn’t it? *“Is any thing too hard for the LORD?”*

Well, I’m going to let Jeremiah answer that question. Jeremiah 32, verse 17—you might put it out in the margin. Here’s what Jeremiah said: *“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). *“Is there any thing too hard for the LORD?” “There is nothing too hard for thee.”*

You know, sometimes we wonder, “Why doesn’t God do something?” Don’t you wonder that? “Why doesn’t God do something?” You look at all of the filth, the crime, the stench, the perversion, the rebellion, the war, the hatred, the strife, the crime, the rape, the pillage, the arson, the unbelief, the blasphemy; you say, “Where is God? Why didn’t God do something? Doesn’t God know about it?” Well, yes, God knows everything. “Doesn’t God care?” Yes, God is love. “Well then, why doesn’t God do something? Maybe God is not able.” Oh no, there’s nothing too hard for the Lord.

Well, dear friend, that brings a real question then: Why is God silent? Why doesn’t God act? Why doesn’t God move? What is God waiting on? Well, is there anything too hard for God? I want to try and answer that this morning in a two-point message.

I. The Majesty of God’s Limitless Power

First of all, I want you to think of what I’m going to call the majesty of God’s limitless power—the majesty of God’s limitless power. He is the sovereign God. He can do anything that He well wishes to do. There is nothing too hard for God. I want you to think of that.

A. There Is No Promise That God Cannot Keep

For example, there is no promise that God cannot keep. Now God has made in the Bible some 30,000 promises, and every one of them He will keep—every one of them. All 30,000 of these promises—30,000 plus—He will keep: they are *yea* and *Amen* in the Lord Jesus (2 Corinthians 1:20). Why? Because God made these promises, and He cannot lie. Numbers chapter 23, verse 19: *“God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?”* (Numbers 23:19). Oh, dear friends, we live in a day when man’s word means little, whether it’s a treaty between nations, a business contract, or a marriage contract—sometimes it’s just a scrap of paper. But I want to tell you, when God speaks, He’ll make it good.

God cannot lie. The Bible speaks—in Titus chapter 1 and verse 2, it speaks in this word: *“In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began”* (Titus 1:2). Do you know why I know that I’m going to heaven? God can’t lie! God can’t lie! God has promised me eternal life before the world began.

I heard about an old lady that used to brag about her assurance, and her salvation, and how she knew that she knew that she knew that she was going to heaven, because she’d repented of her sin and received the Lord Jesus Christ. She was on her deathbed,

and she was still praising God for that blessed assurance that she had in the Lord Jesus, and somebody said to her, “Well, suppose you never really make it to heaven; suppose you find out that God did not keep His Word, that you have lost your soul.” She said, “If I lose my soul, God will lose more.” And the person said, “What would God lose?” And she said, “God would lose His honor.” And that’s true.

Listen, folks. If the person who leans on Jesus ever loses his soul, God loses His honor. *“In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began.”*

B. There Is No Prayer That God Cannot Answer

There is no promise—no promise—that God cannot keep. I want to tell you, dear friend, that not only that, but if you think about it, there’s no prayer that God cannot answer—no prayer. I mean, there’s nothing too hard for the Lord. God says, in Jeremiah 33, verse 3, *“Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not”* (Jeremiah 33:3). Listen, folks. In prayer, believing, you will receive. Matthew 21, verse 22: *“And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive”* (Matthew 21:22). There are no limits—no limits. Dear friend, you can pray for a mountain to be cast into the sea, and it will be done, according to this scripture (Matthew 21:21; Mark 11:23). *“And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.”* There is no prayer that God cannot answer; no, not one.

*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

God is a God that answers prayer. *“Is there any thing too hard for the LORD?” “There is nothing too hard for thee.”*

C. There Is No Problem That God Cannot Solve

I want to say, dear friend, there is no problem that God cannot solve. Do you have problems today? God is the solution for your problems. God is the solution for my problems. You say, “Adrian, do you have problems?” Only when I’m awake or when I’m asleep.

Listen, folks. We all have problems, but there is no problem too big for God. The Bible says, *“Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the LORD: and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass”* (Psalm 37:3–5).

Well, you say, “When is He going to do it? Why hasn’t He solved my problem?” Well, dear friend, there are several things I want you to understand. First of all, God does not work necessarily the way you think He ought to work. He says, in Isaiah 55, verse 8, *“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts”* (Isaiah 55:8–9). God does not work on the same thought level that we work on. We think we have it all figured out how God ought to do it, how God ought to solve our problems; we would like to instruct the Lord.

I imagine when those fiery serpents were biting those people out there in the wilderness there were people praying, “Oh, God! Oh, God! Kill the snakes! Kill the snakes!” But God didn’t do that. He had a different way and a better way. He put a brazen serpent on a pole and said, “Everyone that looks will be healed.” They thought God ought to do one thing. God did another, but God solved the problem.

Today we’re asking God, “Oh, God, why don’t you eradicate sin? Oh, God, why don’t you kill all of these snakes? God, why don’t you kill the devil? Why don’t you do something?” God lifts His Son up upon a cross and says, “Believe in Him; receive Him.” You see, God may not do it just the way you think He ought to do it, but there’s no problem that God cannot solve. Sometimes we say, “Oh, if I were God, I would do this; if I were God, I would do that.” You’d better be careful when you do that. God’s ways are not your ways. His thoughts are not your thoughts.

I heard about a farm boy one time who was critiquing the way the Lord made creation. He said, “If I were God, I would have done it differently.” He said, “For example, there’s a great big oak tree, and it’s got little acorns on it. And here’s a little weak vine, and it has watermelons on it. That seems backward to me: you ought to have the big watermelon on the big oak tree.” About that time an acorn hit him on the head, and he said, “I’m glad it wasn’t a watermelon.”

D. There Is No Person That God Cannot Save

Now, friend, let me tell you, God knows what He’s doing; God knows what He’s about. I am telling you, friend, there is no promise that God cannot keep. There is no prayer that God cannot hear. I want to tell you, there is no problem that God cannot solve. I want to tell you, there is no person that God cannot save. God will save anybody. *“For the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved”* (Romans 10:12–13). Friend, you cannot be such a vile sinner that the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cannot cleanse you and save you.

I remember back in Fort Pierce, Florida, one time I met with a group of men every morning for prayer. And we would meet and pray, and we decided one time that we would do something that we heard would be a thing to do, and that would be to find the

meanest man in the community and pray for him to get saved. And so we talked about it, we caucused a little bit, and then we held an election. There was a man who won without a runoff. As a matter of fact, he got all of the votes. We decided this particular man was the meanest man in our community. And he was a rounder. He was a drunkard. He was a moonshiner. He was a gambler. He was a thief. He was a womanizer. He was a gunfighter. As a matter of fact, at this particular time he had a gun slug in him that a jealous woman had put in him. This woman had shot him because he was spending too much time with his own wife; and she was jealous that this man was spending so much time with his wife, and so she shot him. And he had so much brass he had stolen a hog out of the back of the game warden's truck. That's the kind of a guy he was. And we began to pray for this man, and prayed for him and prayed for him. And I cannot tell you the whole story, because time prohibits it.

I want to tell you, when I finally went to talk to that man about that Lord Jesus Christ, almost with fear and trembling, because I had heard so many terror tales about this man, when I told him about the Lord God, and after he'd been soaked and saturated in prayer, folks, it was like picking a ripe apple: he just fell off in my hands. I don't believe I've had a sweeter or an easier time leading a man to Jesus Christ. And God showed me one more time, folks, there's no person that God cannot save—no person God cannot save.

Listen. No prayer God cannot hear, no problem God can't solve, and no promise God can't keep. "Ah Lord God! Is there anything too hard for thee?" "*With God all things are possible*" (Matthew 19:26). All right, if that is so—and it is so—that God is a God of might and a God of miracle, then that brings us to another question: Why do we have so many problems? If there is no prayer that God cannot answer, why are my prayers not answered? If there is no problem that God cannot solve, why are my problems not solved? If there is no person that God cannot save, why are not my friends and neighbors saved? Folks, why does it seem like the promises of God are not kept in my heart and in my life?

II. The Mystery of Man's Limiting Power

Well, that brings me to the second thing I want to talk to you about. First of all, I want to talk to you about the majesty of God's limitless power. Now, secondly, I want you to think with me about what I'm going to call the mystery of man's limiting power—the mystery of man's limiting power. Did you know that puny man can limit God? Did you know that sinful man can stultify and harness the work of sovereign God? You say, "Adrian, that sounds like blasphemy to me." Well, it would be to me, too, if I did not know the Scripture. But I want you to look in the Scripture with me, and I want you to look at a very interesting passage of Scripture in Psalms chapter 78 and verse 41. It

speaks of God's ancient people there in the wilderness, and God is trying to lead them out of the land of bondage through the wilderness into a land that flows with milk and honey. Oh, God wanted to bless them; God wanted to pour out upon them lavish blessings, but God remonstrates with them; and this is what God said to them: "*Yea, they turned back and tempted God,*"—now, listen to this next phrase—"*and limited the Holy One of Israel*" (Psalm 78:41). That's an amazing thing. They "*limited the Holy One of Israel.*" "Is there any thing too hard for God?" "*Ah Lord GOD...there is nothing too hard for thee.*" And yet they limited the Holy One of Israel.

To *limit* means, "to set boundaries; to hinder." You say, "How could that be?"

Well, let me give you an illustration—perhaps you can understand. In Matthew chapter 27 and verses 1 and 2 is the story of how the Lord Jesus Christ was taken in the Garden of Gethsemane by the chief priests, the scribes, the rulers, and the soldiers, how the Lord Jesus was taken there to be judged. And in Matthew chapter 27 and verse 2, it says this: that they bound Jesus; they put fetters on Him. I don't know whether they used chains, ropes, or handcuffs. I don't know what they did, but some way they took those holy hands, the hands of the Lord Jesus, and they tied Him up; they bound Him.

Now, you think about it. He was the One who created the universe. Without Him was not anything made that was made. Universes dripped from His fingertips; worlds came from His words. He spoke, and it was so; He spoke, and it stood fast. "*All things were made by him,*"—and for Him—"*and without him was not any thing made that was made*" (John 1:3). He was the One who said, "*All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth*" (Matthew 28:18). He was the One who scooped out the seas, and heaped up the mountains, and flung out the sun, the moon, and the stars. He's the One who regulates the universe, for the Bible says, "*By him all things consist*" (Colossians 1:17). And they tied Him up, they bound Him, and He allowed them to do so.

Now, don't think that He could not have stopped them if He'd wanted to. He said, "*No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself*" (John 10:18). If you'll go back to the twenty-sixth chapter of the Book of Matthew, when you go home and read it, you'll find out that when they came to the Garden of Gethsemane to take Jesus, Simon Peter drew out his sword, and he was going to defend Jesus. Do you remember? He cut that man's ear off. He didn't mean to cut his ear off; he meant to cut his head off, but he cut that man's ear off. And Jesus said, "Look, Simon. Put your sword back. You don't have to defend me." He said, "If I wanted to, I could call twelve legions of angels" (Matthew 26:51–53).

We sing, "He could have called ten thousand angels." Actually, one angel, if you'll read back in the Bible—one angel—killed 185,000 Assyrians in one night—one angel! Now, what did 144,000 do? Run that out on a calculator. That's thirteen billion, 750 million people: twelve legions of angels. There weren't that many people around in the

Garden of Gethsemane that night. The Lord said, “Look, Peter. You don’t have to protect me. You don’t have to protect me. I am allowing these people to bind me; I am allowing them to carry me away.” Our Lord allowed it; our Lord allowed Himself to be limited.

There’s nothing too hard for God. Why doesn’t God work? I’ll tell you why God doesn’t work: because we have handcuffed the Lord. We have fettered God. We have bound the hands that want to bless. Those hands that they tied were hands that were healing hands, and blessing hands, and giving hands, and loving hands, and soothing hands. Those were hands that were to bless them were the very hands that they bound.

Now, listen. Today I want to help you. I want to help you to take the bonds from the hands of Jesus to free Him to work. There’s nothing He cannot do, but it is absolutely important today that you learn how to unfetter the Lord. Let me tell you some things that will bind the hands of the Lord Jesus in your life, and in your home, and in your family, and in your business.

A. Unwillingness

For example, unwillingness will bind the hands of Jesus. Let me give you a verse. In Matthew chapter 23 and verse 37, Jesus, with those hands outstretched, is weeping great, salty tears for the city of Jerusalem, and here’s what Jesus says: *“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, listen to this—*“and ye would not”* (Matthew 23:37). “I would have, but you weren’t willing. I wanted to bless you. It’s not because I’m limited. I could have blessed you. I could have gathered you. I could have fed you like a mother hen feeds her chickens. I could have protected you like a mother hen protects her biddies. I could have cared for you, and warmed you, and done all of the things that need to be done. I would have, but you would not.”

Now, dear friend, they limited the Lord by their unwillingness. God wants to bless you today. God wants to pour out love, grace, peace, happiness, joy, fulfillment, purpose, forgiveness. God wants to give you all of this today, but, dear friend, He will never force it on you. “I would,” He said, “but ye would not.” And our Lord, with His hands bound by your unwillingness, will weep over you today just as He wept over Jerusalem so long ago.

I was walking down the street, I saw a young lady a while back, and she was with another girl, and I stopped to witness. And I just struck up a conversation, and I began to tell them about the Lord Jesus. One girl was very much under conviction. I could tell she was very much under conviction, so I shared how to be saved and how to know the Lord Jesus. And then I asked this young lady—oh, she started to weep; I mean, she

was under deep conviction—I said to her, “Would you like today to give your heart to Jesus? Would you like to be saved?” “Well,” she said, “I really want to be saved.” I said, “Do you believe that Christ died for you?” “Yes sir.” “Do you believe He has saved you if you trust Him?” “Yes sir.” I said, “Very well, then. Will you right now let me pray with you and help you to receive Christ?” She said, “Oh, I can’t do it now.” I said, “Why not?” She said, “I just can’t.” She said, “It’s just I can’t make that decision now.” I said, “But now is the accepted time.” And you know I’m not an arm twister, but I could tell this girl was under such deep conviction, and God had given me the opportunity to share the gospel with her. I began to press a little bit. She said, “No, I’m not going to say yes today.” I said, “Well, don’t you realize if you don’t say yes you’ll be saying *no*?” She said, “Well, I don’t want to say *no*.” I said, “Well then, you must say yes.” She said, “Well, I can’t do that either. I just don’t want to do anything right now.”

I said, “Very well.” I said, “Are you mad at me?” She said, “Oh, no, I’m not mad at you.” I said, “Well then, would you shake hands with me before we go?” She said, “Certainly.” I said, “Wonderful.” I said, “If you will decide for Christ and eternal life and heaven, I want you to shake my right hand. But,” I said, “if you’ll decide for the devil and hell, and refuse Jesus, I want you to shake my left hand.” She put her hands behind her back. She said, “No.” I said, “You said you’d shake hands with me, didn’t you?” She said, “Yes.” I said, “All right, if you’ll take Christ, give me your right hand; if you take the devil and hell, give me your left hand.” She said, “I can’t do that; I’m not going to take either one.” Then I told her what I’m going to tell you, dear friend: that Jesus Christ said, “*He that is not with me is against me.*” You can’t just deny Christ without honoring the devil. “*He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad*” (Matthew 12:30). There is no way that you can be neutral.

She left refusing to shake my hand. But, dear friend, in heaven, whether she knew it or not, she had refused, repudiated the Lord God of heaven. Not to be for Him is to be against Him. It is unwillingness, just sheer unwillingness, that keeps God from blessing some people.

B. Unconcern

I tell you what ties the hands of the Lord Jesus: not only willingness, but also unconcern, will tie the hands of the Lord Jesus. Over there in Revelation chapter 3, verse 20, here’s what our Lord says—He’s speaking to the church at Laodicea: “*Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me*” (Revelation 3:20). The most intimate fellowship is it dinner. Is Jesus Christ real to you? I mean, is He real to you?

Last night, Bob and I went out to dinner. We took wives, didn’t we, Bob? Boy, I mean, we’re the last of the big spenders. We had what? Nachos, yeah. Look. We went

out to dinner, and we sat there, and we had a wonderful time just talking, sharing in the Lord the things of God. What a wonderful meal!

Some of the most intimate times of fellowship in the Bible are where our Lord met with His disciples over breaking of bread. And what our Lord says to this church at Laodicea: “Look, you say you’re *‘rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable’* (Revelation 3:17). *‘I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth’* (Revelation 3:15–16).”

Here was a church so lukewarm, so unconcerned, and so lackadaisical that it was actually nauseous to God. God says, “You make me want to regurgitate.” That’s what He said. You read it. “I’ll spew you out of my mouth; I’ll vomit you up.” And yet, to that same church our Lord is standing there knocking at the door. “*Behold,*”—He’s talking to Laodicea, an unconcerned church—“*I stand at the door, and knock.*”

Now, dear friend, why didn’t He walk right on in? Because they limited Him by their unconcern, by their lukewarmness. He’s out there in the rain, the cold, the snow, the ice, the heat, whatever it is; standing there patiently knocking, wanting to come in. Can He come in? Yes. Could He have broken that door down? Absolutely! Will He? No. He allows Himself to be limited. You limit the Holy One of Israel.

Holman Hunt painted that painting—I think all of us have seen that painting of Christ at the door. Do you remember? There’s that old door, and the vines have grown over the door; the big hinges are on the door. Christ is there with a lantern in His hand, and He’s knocking on the door. Someone looked at that painting and said, “The artist overlooked something. There’s no doorknob on the door.” “Oh,” he said, “I didn’t overlook that. The door is only opened from the inside. Our Lord will never break into your life.”

Listen, folks. Do you want God in your life? You’ve got to open the door. If you don’t, you limit the Holy One of Israel.

C. Unreasonableness

Let me tell you how else you can limit the Holy One of Israel. You can limit Him by, not only unwillingness, or even unconcern, but you can limit the Lord by unreasonableness. So many of us limit God by our unreasonableness. You know, He says this to sin-laden people—He says, in Isaiah chapter 1 and verse 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*” (Isaiah 1:18).

Now that’s an amazing thing, that the Lord of glory would say, “Hey, folks, be reasonable.” He says the same thing there in Romans chapter 12: “*I beseech you...*”—God is praying to us; it’s almost as though our Lord is on His knees praying to us—“*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" (Romans 12:1). Why would the Lord ask them to do that? Because He won't force them to. Oh, He could, but He will not. He allows Himself to be bound. He allows Himself to be limited by unreasonableness. You'd be amazed by how many people in this auditorium, and in the world, and hopefully who are listening by television, who will listen later by tape, many of you by your own unreasonableness have actually fettered Jesus, have bound the hands of the Lord Jesus. He wants to forgive, but you are so unreasonable. People have such silly ideas for not getting saved.

I have an evangelist friend. He asked a man—he said, "Would you come tonight and hear me preach?" The man said, "No." He said, "Why not?" He said, "I don't go to church anymore." He said, "Why not?" He said, "When I was a child, my mother made me go to church. She forced that on me. I made up my mind, when I got to be a man, I wouldn't go." My evangelist friend just smiled and said, "Okay now, tell me the real reason you won't come." He said, "What do you mean 'the real reason'? Do you think I'm lying?" He said, "No, I don't think you're lying; I know you're lying." He said, "I said it with a grin on my face." But he said, "I know you're lying." He said, "How do you know I'm lying?" He said, "I'll tell you how." He said, "I want to ask you a question. When you were a little boy, did your mama make you take baths? When you were a little boy, did your mama make you go to school? When you were a little boy, did your mama make you pick up your clothes and comb your hair? Do you still take baths? Do you still study? Do you still comb your hair? Of course you do!" He said, "That's not your reason. You've got some other reason." The man just hung his head, and he said: "Now, preacher, you're talking too much. I've got to go get ready for church tonight." And he came that night, and he got saved.

Now, friend, let me tell you something. An excuse is just the skin of a reason stuffed with a lie—that's all it is. *"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD."* There are people who say, "Well, I don't want to be a Christian because of the hypocrites in the church." That's unreasonable, and you know it.

There are hypocrites in every realm of life. One of the twelve disciples was a hypocrite. The other eleven didn't quit because of him. We bought some eggs a while back. One of them was a hypocrite. Some money is counterfeit. I was reading over here in Jackson, Tennessee, just this past week they uncovered a counterfeit ring. Do you know what I did when I read about that? I said, "That's the last thing I'm ever going to have to do with money." Joyce and I went and got all of the money we had in the bank, we carried it to the house, put it in the fireplace, and burned it. I mean, man, we're finished with money. I mean, that counterfeit, that turned me off.

Some of you are going to go to hell over the PTL thing, and everything else, just

because you're unreasonable. Dear friend, you're just unreasonable; you know good and well that that doesn't make sense. Some doctors may be quacks, some shysters may be lawyers, some preachers may be hypocrites, some Christians may not live it; but I'll tell you, you'll find no flaw in the Lord Jesus Christ. *"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). But God says to unreasonable people, "I'm sorry. I'd want to bless you, but you have fettered me; you've handcuffed me; you've kept me from blessing you."

D. Uncleanness

I'll tell you something else that will keep our Lord from blessing; I'll tell you something else that will fetter the Lord and handcuff the Lord: and it's uncleanness—uncleanness. Listen to this verse—Isaiah 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). You see, dear friend, it is not that God cannot save; it is not that God cannot hear; but uncleanness—uncleanness—unconfessed or unrepented of sin just ties the hands of Jesus. There's no sin that He cannot forgive, but He will not forgive any sin that you will not relinquish, that you will not confess, that you'll not turn from.

I read about a little girl who put her hand down in a very expensive vase—very expensive. It was so expensive I suppose we'd call it a vase. And she put her hand down in that vase, an heirloom, and couldn't get it out. They did all of *Eloise's hints*. They put the lubricant there; they did everything they could do to get the hand out, and they couldn't extract it. She was caught. She was trapped. Finally, they took the extreme measure and broke the vase. And there was her little fist clenched up. They said, "Honey, have you had your fist like that the whole time?" She said, "Uh huh." They said, "Why didn't you open your hand?" She said, "I'd drop my penny." She had reached in there and put her hands around a penny that she'd found in that vase and would not drop her penny to let her hand get out.

I wonder if some of you are not just clinging to something like that. God wants to bless you, and there's some sin in your life, and you just won't let go. And you do everything else, but you just won't let go; you're just holding it. You say, "God, why don't you answer my prayer? Oh, God, there's nothing too hard for you. Oh, God, you can do anything." Yes, He can, but you've limited the Holy One of Israel. *"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."*

E. Unbelief

Let me just mention the last thing, because time has gone. Let me tell you one more way that you need to free our Lord to work in your life. Let me tell you one more thing that can limit our Lord. Not only uncleanness, but here is the mother sin, the father sin, the sin out of which all of these other sins grow: it is unbelief. Nothing—nothing—limits our Lord like unbelief. In Matthew chapter 13 and verse 58, the Bible says this of our Lord and His own hometown where He was raised, where He grew up, in the city of Nazareth—the Bible says, *“And he did not many mighty works there”*—why? Do you know?—*“because of their unbelief”* (Matthew 13:58).

Now, can Jesus do anything? Yes, *“All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth”* (Matthew 28:18). *“With God all things are possible”* (Matthew 19:26). *“Ah Lord GOD...there is nothing too hard for thee”* (Jeremiah 32:17). He could do no mighty works there because of their unbelief. Is that a contradiction? Not at all! They limited—they limited—and they limited the Holy One of Israel.

Conclusion

Friend, I want to tell you that faith is the channel through which the risen Lord pours His life into the soul. And when you block that channel of unbelief, you limit the Lord. My, how God wants to bless! God will work miracles in your life if you get the sin out of your life. Don't limit the Lord by your unbelief. Jesus right now is reaching down His hands of grace and mercy to you. Don't tie them up by your unreasonableness! Don't tie them up by your unwillingness! Don't tie them up by your unconcern! Don't tie them up by your uncleanness! And don't tie them up by your unbelief! These are the hands that want to bless you. Don't bind those hands! Let Him bless! Let Him bless! Those are the hands, dear friend, that need to be set free in your life. *“Is there any thing too hard for the LORD?”* (Genesis 18:14). *“Ah Lord...there's nothing too hard for thee.”*

Is There Anything Too Hard for the Lord?

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: July 23, 2000

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 18:14

“Is any thing too hard for the LORD? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.”

GENESIS 18:14

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Introduction

What a mighty God we serve! Would you turn to the Book of Genesis chapter 18 and verse 14. Our text tonight is in the form of a question—Genesis 18 and verse 14. And here’s the question: *“Is any thing too hard for the LORD?”* (Genesis 18:14). “Is there...”—now, listen to it—“Is there anything too hard for the Lord?”

I. The Miracle of God’s Limitless Power

Now, you know, when we look at the world situation, we say, “Why doesn’t God do something? Where is God?” When we see the problems in our own lives, families, bodies, finances, we sometimes ask, “Where is God? Why doesn’t God do something?”

Is the situation beyond Him? Is it too difficult for Him? Is it too hard for the Lord?" And it doesn't work out the way we think that it ought to, and we may get discouraged. And so the angel asked Abraham a question: "Is there anything too hard for the Lord?"

Jeremiah, in the same Bible, answered the question. Put in your margin Jeremiah chapter 32 and verse 17. Here's what Jeremiah said: "*Ah Lord GOD! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thou great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee*" (Jeremiah 32:17). Is there anything too hard for the Lord? There is nothing, no nothing, absolutely nothing, too hard for God!

You see, what Jeremiah said is what all of us ought to say: "Lord, you made the heaven, you made the earth, by your outstretched arm, and you made the galaxies, our galaxy, a billion light years from side to side, and billions of galaxies; you made them all." That's the reason I've often said *you won't have any difficulty with miracles if you can get past Genesis 1:1: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth"* (Genesis 1:1). No, there's nothing too hard for God.

A. There Is No Promise Too Hard for God to Fulfill

Now I want you to think about that. If God does not do what you think He ought to do, put it down big, plain, and straight: it is not because God is unable to do it. There is no promise in the Bible that is too hard for God to fulfill. I don't know whether this is true or not, because I've not counted them; but I've read that there are at least 30,000 promises in the Word of God. May I tell you that God is able to keep every one of those promises: not a promise that He's made that is too hard for Him to fulfill. They are all *yea* and *Amen* in Christ (2 Corinthians 1:20).

Let me give you a couple more verses talking about God's fulfillment of promises. Numbers 23, verse 19—I love this verse: "*God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent:*"—now God's not going to deceive you, and God is not going to have to change His mind—"*hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?*" (Numbers 23:19). God's not a deceiver, and God is not a vacillator. If God says He will do it, He will do it. This is what Paul told Titus, in Titus chapter 1 and verse 2: "*In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began*" (Titus 1:2). God cannot lie. There is no promise that God cannot keep.

An old woman, a lady that loved God and walked with Him for many years, had been talking about how sweet it is and how wonderful it is to know the Lord Jesus Christ and just to trust His precious Word, and somebody asked her, "Well, you're standing on the promises, but suppose God had told a lie; suppose this eternal life that He has promised to you is a lie." She said, "Then, I'd lose my soul, but God would lose more: God would lose His honor." God cannot lie.

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

And so there's nothing too hard for the Lord. There's no promise God cannot keep. Amen? Not a one! Number two. There is no prayer too hard for God to answer—none! This same Jeremiah who said, “Ah Lord God, nothing is too hard for thee,” he says by divine inspiration—God is speaking to Jeremiah, in Jeremiah 33:3, and He says this—*“Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.”* It doesn't mean that you never heard of them before. It means mighty things that you can't conceive—great things, mighty things. *“Call unto me, and I will answer thee.”*

God is not limited in His answer to prayer. Matthew chapter 21, verse 22—Jesus said, *“And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive”* (Matthew 21:22). There is no prayer too hard for God to answer. Almighty God is not limited by circumstances. Somebody wrote these words:

*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

I was reading something recently. It comes from a missionary in Brazil. I want to share it with you. I was blessed when I read it. This missionary, Hope MacDonald, said this: “Now Jackie is a beautiful girl of seventeen years. She has shining black hair and sparkling brown eyes. A delightful glow sets her apart from other beautiful young girls. I first met her when I was speaking at the Annual Daffodil Luncheon. She was one of the Daffodil Princesses. Dressed in a long yellow gown, she looked every bit as lovely as the spring flower she represented. Three years ago, Jackie faced a painful tragedy. Doctors had discovered a tumor on her cheekbone, the kind of tumor usually found only on a long bone such as an arm or leg. It had spread its deadly tentacles throughout the entire cheek region of her attractive face. Surgery offered the only hope to save Jackie's life. The doctors explained carefully to her and her parents exactly what the operation would include. They would be making an incision along the nose area and down through the upper lip. All of her teeth on the left side of her face would have to be removed, as well as the cheekbone, the nose bone, and the jawbone.

Needless to say, an operation of this immensity performed on the face of a lovely fourteen-year-old girl was a grim prospect. Many tears were shed. With deep sorrow, Jackie packed her suitcase and set out for the hospital. Several days before surgery, lying in her hospital bed, she thought about what it would mean to go through life so terribly scarred, if indeed she even lived through the operation. She was frightened. She desperately wanted to live. She wanted to experience all that life held for her. As she

tossed on her pillow in lonely fear that night, she began to pray. With tears of anxious apprehension, she asked God to help her.

About two o'clock in the morning, Jackie was awakened. She didn't know what woke her up. She only knew that she was awake and alert. She saw a growing light at the foot of her bed and the silver form of an angel appeared. The presence was very powerful, yet totally loving. An aura of stillness filled Jackie like the warmth of a summer day. She felt enfolded by the presence, and a sense of incredible wonder touched every part of her body. A voice filled with sunshine said, 'Do not be afraid, Jackie. You're going to be all right.' And then the angel was gone, leaving behind a radiance of pure loveliness.

The following day, Jackie was taken to the x-ray room for preoperative x-rays. To the utter astonishment of the doctors, every trace of the tumor and its deadly tentacles was gone. That was three years ago. Now here she was, this beautiful Daffodil Princess, sitting next to me at the table, her lovely face unmarred, and she remains very much aware of God's miraculous touch upon her life."

Now when I read that story to you, did your mind begin to say, "Yes, but..." or "How do we know?" or, "How can we be sure?" or was your first thought, "What a mighty God we serve"? Why should it be thought strange to you that God can move supernaturally, miraculously, to heal instantaneously in something that the doctors with all of their medical art cannot explain?

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

I'm telling you, there's no promise that God cannot keep. There is no prayer too hard for God to answer. There is no problem too hard for God to solve. I love Psalm 37. I read it often. I recommend it in my counseling—Psalm 37, verses 3 through 5: "*Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the LORD: and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the LORD: trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass*" (Psalm 37:3–5).

Do you have a problem? Do you have problems? Generally, they come in bunches. "Adrian, do you have problems?" Just when I'm awake or asleep. I like what Andrae Crouch said:

*If I'd never had a problem,
I wouldn't know God could solve them...
I thank Him for the storms He brought me through.*

—ANDRAE CROUCH

Now there's no problem too hard for God to solve. Now the answer may be different. You may ask God to do it one way, and God may do it another way. Another scripture that I love is Isaiah 55, verses 8 and 9. God says, "*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...—by the way, how high is that? Think about it. Infinity—“*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). God is God. So many times we bring our problems to Him and ask Him to do a particular thing. He doesn’t do it the way we think we ought.

Angel Martinez, who’s now in heaven, talking about this verse of Scripture—he’s an evangelist, preached a crusade here at Bellevue many years ago; some of you were here—he said, “God works on a different level than we work on.”

1. God Works on a Different Thought Level

God works on a different thought level than we do. “*My thoughts are not your thoughts.*”

When I thought about that, I thought of the man who tried to instruct God. He was sitting under an oak tree in a watermelon patch. And he looked up there and saw the little acorn on the oak tree. And then he looked out and saw the huge watermelon on a little vine. He said, “Now that’s backwards: the little acorn on the huge oak tree and the big watermelon on the little vine. If I were God, I would have put the watermelon on the tree.” About that time an acorn fell and hit him on the head. He said, “I’m glad it’s not a watermelon.”

2. God Works on a Different Time Level

Now God does things differently than we do. God works on a different thought level. God works on a different time level. Sometimes we want God to do it and to do it now, but the Bible says, “*Therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you*” (Isaiah 30:18). We are creatures of time. God lives in eternity.

3. God Works on a Different Technique Level

And God works in a different technique level. We think, “How, God, should you do it?” When the children of Israel were out in the wilderness being bitten by poisonous snakes, they said, “God, take away the snakes; eradicate the snakes.” But God didn’t do that. God said to Moses, “Take a brazen serpent and put it on a pole; and when anybody looks at that serpent, they’ll be healed” (Numbers 21:8). That was God’s technique. Sometimes we say, “Why doesn’t God kill the devil?” God doesn’t kill the devil. He puts His Son on the cross—puts His Son on the cross. God works on a different thought level, a different time level, a different technique level. But put it down again big and plain: there is no problem too hard for God to solve.

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

Now again, there is no person too hard for God to save. God can save any person, no matter how deep in sin he is. Don’t think that somebody is beyond the pale of God’s forgiveness. Isaiah 1, verse 18, says, “*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). You may be listening to me through the radio in an automobile, and you say, "I've done too much; I've gone too far; God cannot save me." Yes, He can. Yes, He will—if you'll call upon Him and ask Him to save you.

I've shared with you on another occasion one time in Fort Pierce, Florida I had a group of men that I met with every morning. I had a radio program called "Daybreak." I did that program live most of the time at 6:45 in the morning—sometimes by tape when I'd be out of town. And after the radio program we'd meet together at church to pray with some of the men. We wanted God to move in Fort Pierce, Florida, in a revival. And one of the men said, "I found that I read somewhere the way to have revival in the particular city is to get the meanest person in the city saved." So we said, "Well, let's begin to pray for the meanest person in the city." So we had an election and determined who this man was. And he qualified. He was a moonshiner, a brawler, a gambler, a fist-fighter, a gunfighter. As a matter of fact, at this particular time, he had a bullet in his hip that a jealous woman had put in his hip because this particular man was spending too much time with his own wife. And this is the kind of a man this man was. And we began to pray for him, soak him in prayer. Finally, when I went by to see this man, reputed to be the meanest man in the city, I talked to him about Jesus, and like a little child he gave his heart to Christ and was saved. There's no one too hard for God to save.

II. The Mystery of Man's Limiting Power

Now I've said all that as we talked about the miracle of God's limitless power—the miracle of God's limitless power. "Ah Lord God, is there anything too hard for thee? Nothing is too hard for thee. You made the heavens. You made the earth by your outstretched hand" (Jeremiah 32:17). But now, after we look at the miracle of God's limitless power, let's look a little bit at the mystery of man's limiting power. Can man limit God? God can do anything. Can man therefore limit God? Why is it that we don't see God do more? Has God failed? Is God weak? Is God unloving? Is God unkind? Is God unmerciful? Is God unwise? No. There's a mystery, and the mystery is that the Almighty God allows man to limit Him.

Now before you rise up, before you accuse me of taking away the sovereignty of God, I want to say God is totally, wholly, 100 percent, completely sovereign. He is the Almighty. There's nothing too hard for Him. But put in your margin Psalm 78 and verse 41, talking about the children of Israel in the wilderness: "*They turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel*" (Psalm 78:41). And I told you a few weeks or months ago—I cannot remember which—the word *limit* means, "to put a circle around." It means, literally, "to horizon." They said, "This is all God can do, and He can't do any more than this. We can't see any further than the horizon, and therefore we can't see

any further than our own eyes enable us to see.” It’s a mysterious verse, a strange verse, that the Creator, who made the heaven and the earth by His outstretched hand, can be limited, the Lord of Glory can be limited by puny man.

Let me illustrate it, because an illustration is worth a thousand words. Jesus was in Gethsemane praying, and here’s what happened. Matthew 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, listen to this—*“and when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate”* (Matthew 27:1–2). They bound Him. They put tethers on Him. They put chains on Him. They put ropes on Him. Whatever they put on Him, they bound Him.

Now there’s only one way that they could have bound the Lord of glory, and that was for Him to allow it, is that not right? I love it. They come in. When we mention to Jim, often in the Passion Play they’re coming in here to take Jesus—I see old Malchus sitting out there in a green shirt right now—they’re coming in here to take Jesus, and Jesus is praying, and He says, “Who are you looking for?” And they say, “Jesus of Nazareth. Are you Jesus?” He says, “I am.” They fall like dead men—like cardboard—at the very sound of His voice. He could have decimated them, but He allows them to bind Him. Now old Peter, he’s going to defend Him. Peter draws out his sword to defend Jesus. Matthew 26, verse 52—after Peter had endeavored to defend Jesus and cut the ear off of Malchus, the servant of the high priest, Jesus said, “Peter, put up your sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?” (Matthew 26:52–53).

I was reading in my quiet time this week where one angel killed 185,000 Assyrians. That’s one angel: 185,000 Assyrians. All right, take twelve legions of angels, 144,000 angels, and multiply that by 185,000, and you get thirteen billion, 750 million, in killing power: twelve legions of angels. There were not that many in the Garden of Gethsemane! More than thirteen billion! He said, “If I wanted to, the angels are leaning over the battlements of heaven, saying, ‘Jesus, just give the word.’” But they bind Him. They handcuff Him. They lead Him away.

These were the hands that opened blind eyes. These were the hands that had straightened crooked limbs. These were hands that broke and blessed a little boy’s lunch and fed the multitudes. And they bound those hands. And He allowed them to do it. They’re limiting the Holy One of Israel: hands that wanted to bless, hands that wanted to heal.

Now that brings a question. Therefore, what are some of the fetters that we use to bind Jesus with today? How can He be bound? We’ve said that there’s nothing too hard for Him. There’s no promise too hard for Him to keep. There’s no prayer too hard for Him to answer. There’s no problem too hard for Him to solve. There’s no person too

hard for Him to save. And yet, sometimes, He's limited.

The Almighty is bound. His hands are bound. Yes, He allows it. But He does allow it. How do we fetter Him? How may you be binding the hands that want to bless you? That's the whole thing. Let's apply it to ourselves.

A. Unwillingness

Do you know one thing that ties the hand of Jesus is a spirit of unwillingness—unwillingness? Put in your margin Matthew chapter 23, verse 37. Jesus is entering into Jerusalem on the day that we call Palm Sunday. He's riding on a lowly donkey, about to enter into the Eastern Gate. And the crowds are there, and they're cheering Him, and throwing palm branches in front of Him, and singing "Hosanna, Hosanna." But Jesus there stops on the bow of Olivet, and He begins to weep great salty tears, and He says, in Matthew 23, verse 37, "*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, listen to this—"*and ye would not!*" (Matthew 23:37). "I would, but you weren't willing. How often would I have done it? I would, but ye would not."

There are some theologians who tell us there's something called irresistible grace, that, when God moves, there's nothing man can do about. Oh, no! If that is true, I submit to you this is a great big charade for Jesus to be weeping and saying, "O Jerusalem, I would, but ye would not." Unwillingness. Jesus stood ready, but because of their stubbornness and rebellion, they did not receive the blessing. Jesus wants to give you peace, but you must be willing. Jesus wants to give you comfort, but you must be willing. Jesus wants to give you hope, but you must be willing. Jesus wants to give you salvation, but you must be willing.

B. Unconcern

Now, let me tell you another way that you can bind the hands of Jesus: not only by unwillingness, but by unconcern. You know, there are some people who don't stubbornly refuse the Lord; they just bind His hand by an attitude of unconcern and indifference. That is heartbreaking.

Let me give you an illustration of what I'm talking about. In the Book of the Revelation chapter 3 and verse 20, there's a church, the church at Laodicea, and it is described there in the Book of the Revelation. And Jesus says to this church, in Revelation chapter 3, verse 20, "*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 here's the idea that here's a church so cold, so lukewarm. Jesus is standing there knocking, wanting to come in, but on the inside they don't open the door; this church so concerned with its own affairs. "*Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and*

have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Revelation 3:17). Jesus says to that church, *"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock."*

Most of us have seen the picture that Holman Hunt has painted of Jesus standing at a door. He has a lamp in His hand. There's a door there. You can see the ivy that's grown over the door because it's been there. Jesus, evidently, has been there for a long time. He's holding the lamp, and He's knocking. Somebody looked at that beautiful painting—you've seen it yourself—and they said, "But look at the door. It has no knob on the door. There's no latch on the door." Holman Hunt said, "I painted it that way. The latch is on the inside." Jesus is not a housebreaker. Jesus will not force His way into your life. Jesus said, *"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door..."*

I wonder if Jesus is knocking at your heart's door tonight, but maybe you're sitting in church tonight, passing notes to your boyfriend, or cooking up some business deal, or letting your mind go to where you're going to eat supper tonight after church, and Jesus is there knocking at your heart's door, wanting to come in: unconcern.

C. Unreasonableness

I'll tell you another thing that can bind the hands of Jesus. Now there's the miracle of His limitless power, but there is the mystery of man's limiting power. A third thing that can do it is unreasonableness—unreasonableness. You know, the Lord cannot work in the lives of many people today, because they are unreasonable, they are prejudiced; they have preconceived ideas, and they will not give up their silly ideas for the truth of God even. And you come in a service like this and listen; and when a man opens the Word of God and begins to preach the Word of God, you begin to get your reasons and parade the Word of God before the judgment bar of your reason. You say, "Well, I believe that's true. I don't agree with this." God says to you, in Isaiah chapter 1 and verse 18, *"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD"* (Isaiah 1:18). Unreasonableness has kept some from coming to the Lord. They will not let God speak to them. God will reveal Himself to you if you'll lay your unreasonableness in the dust and listen to Him.

D. Uncleaness

What else will bind the hands of Jesus? What else will limit the Holy One of Israel? Uncleaness—uncleaness. You see, it is not that God cannot work in our lives, but the Bible says, in Isaiah, our sins have withholden His good things from us. Isaiah chapter 59, verses 1 and 2: *"Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither is his ear heavy, that it cannot hear:"*—why doesn't God do something? Is God limited? Is there something too hard for God? Is God's hand palsied? Is God deaf?

Doesn't God know? No—*“Behold, the LORD’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither is his ear heavy, that it cannot hear.”*—but listen to this; listen to it— *“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).

We limit God by our sins. God’s mighty hand can save. God’s ear can hear the prayer. But our sins have witholden good things from us. That’s what the Bible says. And by our uncleanness we bind the hands of Jesus; we limit the Holy One of Israel.

There was a rich young ruler. He came to Jesus. He wanted eternal life. But Jesus knew that this man had a god in his life, and that god was the god of mammon, the god of money. And Jesus knew that this man could not be saved except he repent of this inordinate god in his life. So Jesus said to him—He doesn’t say this to everybody unless everybody has money as an idol, but He says this to this man—“Sell what you have, give it to the poor, and come and follow me.” This man went away sorrowful (Matthew 19:21–22; Mark 10:21–22; Luke 18:22–23). He limited God. He limited Jesus. He bound the hands of Jesus. He fettered Jesus by his unclean, inordinate love of material things.

It was not that Jesus would not have saved him. Jesus would have saved him. Jesus wanted to save him. Jesus was not playing games with this man. This was not a charade. But here was a man who had a choice, and he chose his riches, and he went away sorrowful. Riches was his god, because Jesus said, “Behold, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter into heaven!” (Mark 10:23–24; Luke 18:24). Whatever a man trusts in, that’s his god. And this man was trusting his money; therefore, he could not trust Almighty God.

I read many years ago that in the South Sea Islands one of the ways that they trapped monkeys is to take a coconut, hollow out the top of the coconut, strap the coconut to a palm tree, and put a handful of rice in the hollowed-out coconut. An inquisitive monkey will come along, look into the hollow coconut, put his hand in there, find the rice, double up his little fist to hold the rice, and when his captors come, the monkey will squeal and scream and beg and cry, but he won’t let go of the rice. All he’d have to do is just open his little paw and pull it out; but he’s got hold of that rice, and he will not let it go.

There are people just like that in this world. I mean, they get hold of their sin, like the rich young ruler: and all the rich young ruler had was a handful of rice. I mean, that’s all that he had. I mean, where is he now? Where’s his money now? What difference does it make now? But he limited the Holy One of Israel. He fettered the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

E. Unbelief

One last thing I want to mention about man’s limiting power—and that is unbelief—

unbelief. A spirit of unbelief limits God. All sin is terrible, but the sin of unbelief is devastating. Jesus has been doing miracles. He returns to His own hometown. And I want you to listen to this passage, Matthew chapter 13 and verse 58. The Bible says of Jesus in Nazareth, *“He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief”* (Matthew 13:58). Question: Was He able to do mighty works? Friend, He can do anything. He could raise the dead, and He did, but *“He did not many mighty works there.”* Why? *“Because of their unbelief.”*

Faith is the channel to which the risen Lord pours the rivers of His love. That’s the reason some people are not saved. It’s not that they cannot be saved. God will save anyone who will come to Him, for the Bible says, *“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved”* (Romans 10:13). But unbelief ties the hands of Jesus Christ. Faith is the key that unlocks the door to all of His treasures.

Conclusion

Now, see what I’ve said tonight from the Word of God: “Is there anything too hard for the Lord?” “Lord God, thou hast made the heavens and the earth by thy power and thine outstretched hand. There’s no promise too hard for you to keep. There’s no prayer too hard for you to answer. There’s no problem too hard for you to solve. There’s no person too hard for you to save. You can do anything.” But they limited the Holy One of Israel. That’s what the Psalmist said.

Jesus allowed those healing, helping hands to be bound. How do we bind God in our life? By our unwillingness. By our unconcern. By our unreasonableness. By our uncleanness. By our unbelief. We bind hands that want to bless. And we’re very foolish for doing it. God is a God of might and a God of miracles.

The Most Important People on Earth

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: March 25, 1990

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 18:16–22; 19:24–29

“Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?”

GENESIS 18:18

Outline

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Introduction

Take your Bibles and open to Genesis chapter 18, and I begin reading in verse 16: *“And the men...”*—when it says, *“the men,”* it’s talking about two angels from heaven who are visiting Abraham. And it says—*“And the men rose up from thence, and looked toward Sodom: and Abraham went with them to bring them on the way. And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him. And the LORD said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know. And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before the LORD.”* (Genesis 18:16–22)

I want to speak to you today on this subject: “The Most Important People on Earth.” Who are the most important people on earth?

I heard of two men talking about how to know whether you’re important or not. One

said, “Well, you’re important if you are invited to a White House conference with the President in the Oval Office.” Another one said, “Well, that’s importance, but real importance is if you’re in the Oval Office, and that emergency telephone rings, and he doesn’t answer it because he’s so busy talking to you; then you’re important.” The other one said, “No, that’s not importance. I’ll tell you what importance is: when you’re in the Oval Office, you’re talking with the President, that emergency phone rings, he picks it up and says, ‘It’s for you!’ ” Now that, dear friend, is importance.

Well, I want to tell you, dear friend, that there are some people more important than that man. And many of them are unrecognized, unnoticed, unappreciated, and unpraised. There are Christians, not mere Christians; they are Christians who learned the ministry of intercession. I say it after having thought about it. The most important people on earth are those who know how to pray intercessory prayer—not just any kind of prayer, but intercessory prayer.

Now in Abraham’s day there was the problem of sodomy. There was the problem of Sodom and Gomorrah. And the way the people were living was a stench in the nostrils of Almighty God. And God’s holy wrath burned against the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah. And God was ready to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, but there was a man named Abraham who stood in the breach. He began to pray; he began to intercede. Our Scripture says, “*Abraham stood yet before the LORD,*” and he held back the hand of God’s judgment until Lot and his family were delivered from Sodom. (Genesis 18:22)

You say, “What does that have to do with us?” Dear friend, I’ll tell you what it has to do with us. We are living in the days of Sodom all over again. Listen to this scripture and write it down—Luke 17, beginning in verse 26: “*And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man.*” That is, as it was in Noah’s time, it’s going to be when Jesus Christ comes again. “*They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.*” And then, listen to this: “*Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot...*”—now the days of Lot are the days that we’re talking about right here in this Old Testament picture. Lot lived in Sodom—“*as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.*” (Luke 17:26–30)

God was going to destroy them, but Abram said, “Oh, God, no! Please, God, give them time! Give them space!” And God did. Abram was an interceder. Did you know that God is amazed? Do you know what amazes God? Do you know what the sin is that amazes God? Let me give it to you. Isaiah 59 and verse 16—it speaks of God, and it says, “*And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor:*

therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him.” (Isaiah 59:16) God says, “Why don’t they pray?” God is amazed. God wonders that there is no intercessor. Do you know what’s wrong with us? We think we can do it without intercession. We have tried to substitute intellect for intercession, and organizing for agonizing. But unless we have some intercessors, this generation is gone. “As it was in the days of Lot, so shall it be also in the day of the Son of man.” (Luke 17:28, 30)

Now Abraham was interested in his loved ones, his family. He was interested in Lot, Lot’s wife, Lot’s children, Lot’s sons-in-law. He was interested in them. Are you interested in your children? Are you interested, like I am, in your grandchildren? Do you want us to have a chance to get a golden harvest before judgment does ultimately come? Then we must learn to intercede.

Having said that, let me give you five things about intercession; five things that we’ll learn right here in this passage about intercession. Now, don’t just let this be academic to you. My dear friend, you have loved ones who will die and go to hell if you don’t learn how to intercede. I tell you, we have a city and a nation that is going to hell in a hand basket if we don’t learn how to intercede.

So now, you listen. Everybody has some that you ought to intercede for. Samuel said, “*God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you*”—1 Samuel 12 and verse 23. (1 Samuel 12:23)

I. Intercession Roots in an Intimate Relationship with God

Number one: Intercession roots in an intimate relationship with God. Have you got it? Intercession roots in an intimate relationship with God. Now, look here, if you will, in our text, verses 17 and 18: “*And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.*” (Genesis 17:17–19)

Now, when God says here, in verse 19, “I know him, I know him, I know Abraham,” that speaks of an intimate relationship; the phrase *to know* speaks of intimate friendship. Did you know that Abraham was called in the Bible “*the Friend of God*”? (James 2:23) I found three verses that speak of Abraham as a friend of God. In 2 Chronicles chapter 20 and verse 7, the Bible says, “*Art not thou our God, who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever?*” (2 Chronicles 20:7)—God’s friend forever. Isaiah 41:8 says, “*the seed of Abraham my friend.*” (Isaiah 41:8) James 2:23 says, “*He was called*

the Friend of God." (James 2:23) Abraham and God were friends. And that's the reason Abraham could pray the prayer of intercession. You cannot be an intercessor unless you have an intimate relationship with God.

Now I want you to do something. I want you to contrast Abraham and Lot. Both Abraham and Lot have gone to heaven. The Bible says that Abraham was a righteous man. The Bible also says that Lot was a righteous man. But what had Lot done? Abraham's nephew, Lot, had moved into Sodom. He had become a politician in Sodom. He'd made a lot of money in Sodom. He was sitting in the gate. That means he was one of the elders of the city of Sodom, because the gate was the place where they transacted business. He even called the wicked Sodomites "brethren" when they were coming and trying to assault the angels. He said, "Don't do so wickedly, brethren." (Genesis 19:7) Here was a man of God, but he was a worldly man of God. He had become a friend of the world. And the Bible says, in the book of James, that, "*Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.*" (James 4:4)

Now you have two men. One, Abraham, is a friend of God. The other man, Lot, is a friend of the world. Now, if you were God, whose prayers would you answer? The Bible teaches that the man who is the friend of the world is at warfare with God. Now, my dear friend, you listen to me. Abraham was not in Sodom. Abraham was outside of Sodom, praying for Sodom. Lot was in Sodom, powerless to pray. God hears the prayers of his friends. And God said, "Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I am about to do?" (Genesis 18:17) Abraham, outside of Sodom, knew more about Sodom than Lot inside of Sodom. Do you understand that? Abraham, outside of Sodom, knew more about Sodom and what was going to happen to Sodom than Lot inside of Sodom.

A man asked me one time, he was interviewing me—he said, "What are you reading, Mr. Rogers?" I said, "I read books, journals, newspapers—read the Bible a lot." He said, "You ever read *Playboy* magazine?" I said, "No." He said, "Oh, come on now." I said, "No." "Oh," he said, "you've read one, haven't you?" I said, "No." He said, "Not one?" I said, "No, not one." "Oh," he said, "how do you know what's going on? Are you a preacher? How do you know you know how to preach to people? How do you know what's going on in the world?" I said, "Mister, I don't have to eat swill to preach about hogs."

Listen. Abraham, on the outside of Sodom, knew more about what was going on there than Lot on the inside. Lot was a friend of the world. Abraham a friend of God.

Now, my dear friend, it is those who have that intimate relationship with God to whom God will speak. And look at the verse. I want you to underline it here. He says, in the Word of God, verse 17, "*And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do...?*" (Genesis 18:17) Now, you listen to me, friend. God does not have favorites, but God does have intimates. Now God is not a respecter of persons. But you

can become a friend if you want to become a friend of God. And then God is going to show you things that He will not show anyone else. What is God saying? *“As it was...so shall it be.”* (Luke 17:26) There was an intercessor in that day so long ago. And may God give us intercessors in the day in which we live.

What is an intercessor? What does it mean to intercede? Intercession is not only prayer; it is prayer, but it is a special kind of prayer. The Bible says, in 1 Timothy 2:1, *“I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men.”* (1 Timothy 2:1) Notice that God separates prayer, intercession, and giving of thanks. Intercession is a special kind of prayer.

Now, what is intercessory prayer? Intercessory prayer is prayer that holds back the judgment of God. Intercessory prayer is prayer that stands before God, lifts up its hands, and says, “Oh, God, have mercy! Hold back judgment! Please, God!” Abraham stood before the Lord. The Bible calls it, “standing in the gap.” Put down this verse—Ezekiel 22, verse 30: *“And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none.”* (Ezekiel 22:30) First, God said, “Had there been a man who would have stood in the gap, somebody who would have made up the hedge, I would not have destroyed the land. But I could not find anybody to intercede, and I destroyed the land.”

Intercessors are those who stand in the gap. Let me give you an illustration of that. Do you remember reading in the Bible where Moses went up on the mountain and got the Ten Commandments? And when he came down from the mountain, he looked out there, and the people had made a golden calf, and they were drunk, and they were committing fornication and idolatry. And Moses broke the tablets of stone, and God’s wrath was burning against this people. And God said to Moses, “Moses, get out of my way. I’m going to destroy them.” But Moses didn’t get out of God’s way. Put this verse down—Psalm 106, verse 23: *“Therefore he said that he would destroy them, had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach, to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy them.”* (Psalms 106:23)

Let me put it in a New Testament perspective. In John 15:14–15, Jesus said, “You are my friends.” Now, remember, Abraham was a friend of God. Jesus said, *“Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.”* (John 15:14–15) Now, you see, dear friend, to intercede, you must have that inside knowledge. What Jesus hears from the Father He makes known to His children, to His brothers, and to those He calls His friends. That’s inside information.

Let me give you two other verses. Psalm 25:14: *“The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant.”* (Psalms 25:14) Let me give

another one—Amos chapter 3:7: *“Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.”* (Amos 3:7) You see, dear friend, a friend of God knows things about God that no one else can know. Jesus said, “The servant doesn’t know what his master does, but I call you friend.” Abraham was a friend of God. God said, *“And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?”* (Genesis 18:17) And the reason that Abraham was willing and able to intercede for Sodom and Gomorrah, and his nephew Lot, is that he knew what God was up to. My dear friend, the most important people on earth are not in the White House, and they’re not in the Pentagon, and they’re not on Wall Street, and they’re not in Hollywood; they’re saints of God who have gotten a message from God and who know how to intercede. They are the most important people on earth. Intercession—listen to me—intercession roots in an intimate relationship with God.

Now, when you are with the Lord like that, then you begin to obey the Lord. Look, if you will, in verse 19. God says, *“For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD.”* (Genesis 18:19) Now, my dear friend, the way that you show that you’re a friend of God is to obey Him. You see, Jesus said—John 15, verse 14—*“Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you”* (John 15:14)—*“whatsoever I command you.”* Abraham could not call himself a friend of God and not obey God. The reason so many of us don’t get our prayers answered, even when we intercede, is found in 1 John 3:22: *“And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.”* (1 John 3:22) God said, concerning Abraham, “I know him; he’s going to command his children to keep my Word. He’s going to follow my way. Abraham and I are friends.” He is a friend of God. He has an inside track; he is a man that I can trust, a man to whom I will reveal my will.

II. Intercession Rests in the Impeccable Righteousness of God

All right, all that I’ve been saying is this. First of all, intercession roots in an intimate relationship with God. Do you have that kind of relationship? Number two: Intercession not only roots in an intimate relationship with God, but it rests in the impeccable righteousness of God—it rests in the impeccable righteousness of God. Look, if you will, in verse 23: *“And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?”* (Genesis 18:23) Now God is saying, “Abraham, I’m going to go down here and see if what I’ve heard about Sodom is correct. And if what I hear about Sodom is correct, I’m going to destroy this city.” And then Abraham begins to reason with the Lord, and he begins to remonstrate with the Lord. He has a sanctified argument with the Lord. He stands before the Lord and he says, “God, that’s not like you.”

Intercession rests in the impeccable righteousness of God. Abraham knew

something of the character of God. He begins to reason with God. Did you know that God wants us to reason with Him? To argue with God this way does not mean arrogance. It does not mean impertinence. It just simply means, “God, I want to hold you to your character. I want to hold you to your Word.” Hebrews 13, verses 5 and 6, say this: *“Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said,”*—underscore that phrase—*“I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.”* (Hebrews 13:5–6)

Now, put those two phrases together: *“he hath said”*...*“so that we may boldly say.”* When God says something, we can boldly say it. God wants me to boldly say what He has said. God wants me to take His Word and stand before Him with His Word. God wants me to remind Him of what He has said in His Word. He already knows it, but God wants me to get audacious. God wants me to take the Word of God, stand before the Lord, and say, “Lord, this is what you’re like. I’m standing upon your character, and resting, Lord, upon your character.”

Let me give you a verse that causes me to tremble, but yet it’s in the Word of God—Isaiah 45:11: *“Thus saith the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons,”*—and then, listen to this—*“and concerning the work of my hands command ye me.”* (Isaiah 45:11) God says, “Listen. You take my Word and command me with it.” That doesn’t mean that we’re telling God what to do; it just simply means that we’re standing on what God has promised that He would do.

III. Intercession Results in an Incessant Resolve Before God

Now, here’s a third thing about intercession. Not only does intercession root in an intimate relationship with God, and not only does it rest in the impeccable righteousness of God, but it results in an incessant resolve before God—an incessant resolve. Look in verse 22, and the Bible says, the last part of that verse, *“But Abraham stood yet before the LORD.”* (Genesis 18:22) I mean, he’s just standing there. It’s as if God says, “Get out of my way, Abraham! I am going to destroy that city and everything in it.” Abraham says, “No, Lord, that’s not like you. Lord, you cannot destroy the righteous with the wicked.” And it is an incessant resolve. He will not take no for an answer.

If you read this passage, he prays six times about the matter. Look, if you will, in verse 23: *“And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee...”*—Abraham is saying, “You can’t do it”—*“that be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked.”* (Genesis

18:23–25) Well, who does Abraham think he is? *“That we may boldly say...”* (Hebrews 13:6) He just simply says, “God, I’m reminding you; I am resting on your impeccable righteousness. And, Lord, this is not like you.” But humbly he backs up, and he goes on to say, “Be it far from you, Lord. Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?” And God says, “Yes, if there are fifty righteous, I’ll spare the city.” Then, Abraham gets to thinking, “There are probably not fifty righteous.” So go down to verse 28: *“Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous: wilt thou destroy all the city for lack of five? And, he said, If I find there forty and five, I will not destroy it.”* (Genesis 18:28) Abraham’s working the Lord down. He says, “Well, there may not be forty-five.” So he says, in verse 29, *“And he spake unto him yet again, and said, Peradventure there shall be forty found there. And he said, I will not do it for forty’s sake.”* (Genesis 18:29) Then, look in verse 30: *“And he said unto him, Oh let not the LORD be angry, and I will speak: Peradventure there shall thirty be found there. And he said, I will not do it, if I find thirty there.”* (Genesis 18:30) And he said, “I will not do it for thirty’s sake.” And then, Abraham just keeps on going. In verse 31, he says, “Well, what about twenty?” And God says, “I won’t destroy it for twenty.” (Genesis 18:31) Then in 32, Abraham knows he’s pushing the Lord quite a bit, and he says, *“Oh let not the LORD be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there. And, he said, I will not destroy it for ten’s sake.”* (Genesis 18:32)

Now Abraham comes back to the Lord. How long did this take? It didn’t take me long to read it. This may have taken hours. This may have taken days. It may have taken weeks, months. I don’t know how long this dialogue went on between Abraham and God. Maybe Abraham thought he had fifty there and checked out and found out there weren’t fifty there and comes back to God again. But what I’m trying to say is this—listen—about intercession: it has an incessant resolve before God.

Now in the New Testament, our Lord has taught us something that we call “importunate prayer” or “importuning prayer.” Look in Luke 11:8. In Luke chapter 11 and verse 8, there’s a story of a man who needs some bread to feed a guest with. And he goes to the next-door neighbor to try to borrow this bread, and the next-door neighbor is asleep, and he won’t get up and loan him any bread. And the man keeps knocking at the door. He keeps rattling the doorknob. He keeps shouting and saying, “I’ve got to have some bread for this friend.” Now the unwilling neighbor is in bed, and he says, “Listen. If I get up, I’m going to wake up the children and everything else. I’m not going to do it.” He says, “Look. I’ve got to have some bread. I’ve got a friend here.” And finally the man gets up. And this is what Jesus said, in Luke 11, verse 8: *“I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.”* (Luke 11:8)

Now, what is this verse saying? Is Jesus saying, “God is like an unwilling friend?”

Oh, no! He's saying that God is like a father. And Jesus is not comparing God with this unwilling friend, but He's contrasting God with this unwilling friend. But, nonetheless, He says that we are to keep coming back and back and back. What is importunity? It is, dear friend, shameless persistence. Abraham just keeps coming back and coming back and coming back.

In Luke 18, verse 1, Jesus gave another parable. And the Bible says, *"And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint."* (Luke 18:1) I have beat heaven's door down for over a year now, something that's on my heart, but, dear friend, we need to pray, and not stop praying. We cannot quit. We cannot back up; we cannot let up. Jesus said, *"Men ought always to pray, and not to faint."* This is importuning. It takes intercession. It takes perseverance. It takes determination. It takes intensity. Oh, friend, we need to do like Jacob of old, and wrestle with God, and say, "Oh, God, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." (Genesis 32:26)

IV. Intercession Reveals an Intense Reverence for God

Now I want to say something else. Intercession does result in an incessant resolve before God. But listen. Next and fourthly, intercession reveals an intense reverence for God. Now some of you have the idea that you argue with God, and you plead with God, you stand before God and say, "God, I'm not going to let you do this." Oh, my dear friend, I'm not talking about arrogance. I said that Abraham was a friend of God, but intimacy was not irreverence. Communion is not familiarity. Abraham is awestruck with the presence of God. Look, if you will, in verse 27, if you will here. The Bible says, *"And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the LORD, which am but dust and ashes."* (Genesis 18:27) He said, "How can dust and ashes talk to Almighty God?" Look, if you will, in verse 30: *"And he said unto him, Oh let not the LORD be angry, and I will speak: Peradventure there shall thirty be found there. And he said, I will not do it, if I find thirty there."* (Genesis 18:30) Do you see this reverence for God? Look, if you will, in verse 32: *"And he said, Oh let not the LORD be angry, and I will speak yet but this once."* (Genesis 18:32)

You see, here is an intense reverence for God. Don't you ever speak of God as "the man upstairs." Don't you ever speak of God in flippant terms. Don't ever think because God has said, *"Concerning the work of my hands command ye me,"* (Isaiah 45:11) don't ever think because God says, *"Come now and let us reason together, saith the LORD,"* (Isaiah 45:1) that you, dear friend, are on a level with God. You are a worm, and He's Almighty God. And yet, "He has said...that we may boldly say." The intercessor is on his face before God. Abraham says, "I am but dust, I am but ashes, but yet I come."

Let me give you a verse that blessed my heart last week—Isaiah 66, verse 2: *"For all*

those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.” (Isaiah 66:2) Do you tremble at the Word of God? Oh, that we stand at the Word of God—we stand on it. How we ought to tremble at the Word of God!

V. Intercession Receives an Inevitable Reward from God

The last thing I want to say about intercession, my dear friend: I have said, first of all, that it roots in an intimate relationship with God; I’ve said that it rests in the impeccable righteousness of God; I’ve said that it results in an incessant resolve before God; I said that it reveals an intense reverence for God; but, my dear friend, it receives an inevitable reward from God—it receives an inevitable reward from God. Go now to Genesis 19, verse 24: *“Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven; and he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities.”* (Genesis 19:24–25) But the Bible says that He remembered Lot because of Abraham. And He took Lot out of the city, delivered Lot because of the prayer of Abraham and that prayer alone. Had it not been for the prayer of Abraham, Lot would have not been delivered.

Conclusion

Now, my dear friend, God’s judgment fell on Sodom, and God left Sodom with its smoking ruins as an example for this generation. But because there was a man, Abraham, who stood in the gap, because there was a man, Abraham, who prayed and would not let up, Lot was delivered. I think about those that I’m praying for, and I’m wondering, “Can I stand in the gap? Do I have what it takes? Will I listen to God and stand before God?”

I was reading early this morning about a college president. This college president learned that he had but a half an hour to live. They said, “You’re going to die in a half an hour.” He says, “If that is true, take me out of my bed, and put me on my knees, and let me spend my last half hour calling on God for the salvation of the world.” And this college president died on his knees.

Oh, my dear friend, you’re not wasting time. The most valuable time you’ll spend is time that you spend on your knees for souls. When you intercede, you’re never more like Jesus who ever lives to make intercession for us. (Hebrews 7:25) He *“made intercession,”* the Bible says, *“for the transgressors.”* (Isaiah 53:12) When He died, He prayed, *“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”* (Luke 23:34)

The Sin of Sodom

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: May 3, 1981

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 18:16–23

“And the Lord said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous.”

GENESIS 18:20

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Introduction

Now, take your Bibles and turn with me to Genesis chapter 18 as we think about “The Sin of Sodom”—“The Sin of Sodom.” Genesis chapter 18, and I want us to take up our reading in verse 16. Abraham has had two angels to come and visit him, and they give him some mighty revelations, and after this we begin reading here in Genesis 18:16 this episode: *“The men rose up from thence, and looked toward Sodom: and Abraham went with them to bring them on the way. And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him. And the LORD said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah*

is great, and because their sin is very grievous; I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it...and if not, I will know. And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before the LORD. And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?” (Genesis 18:16–23) “The Sin of Sodom.”

Sodom is mentioned six times in the Old Testament, four times in the New Testament. And when Sodom is mentioned, it is always mentioned with a sense of foreboding and fear, because it was an exceedingly wicked city, and God destroyed Sodom with fire and brimstone. And Peter tells us, in 2 Peter chapter 2 and verse 6, that God “[turned] the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes [and] condemned them with an overthrow.” And then the Bible says that—“[He left] them [for an example to all] that after should live ungodly.” (2 Peter 2:6) Now, pay attention. The smoking ruins of Sodom, the devastation of Sodom, the judgment of Sodom, is God’s classic example of how He feels about the sin of Sodom. The Bible tells us, without any equivocation, clearly and plainly, beyond the shadow of any doubt or peradventure, that what happened to Sodom should be an example to us. You see, God doesn’t change. “*I am the LORD, I change not,*” (Malachi 3:6) He said. And so, given the same set of circumstances, what God did before, God will do again. Let me say that again. God does not change. Therefore, given the same set of circumstances, what God did before, God will do again. And, indeed, God shall do it again, for the Bible says, “As it was in the days of Lot, it’s going to be in the day of the coming of the Son of man.” (Luke 17:26–30) We’re going to see what happened to Sodom so long ago and see what is going to happen to our world very shortly, as we study this morning.

There are three things, as we study this passage of Scripture, that I want you to see with me. First of all, I want you to see the perversion of Sodom. And then, secondly, I want you to see the prayer of the saint, as Abraham prayed for Sodom, because, just as Sodom needed intercession, America needs intercession. And one of the great lessons on intercession we have here as we study Abraham’s intercessory prayer for Sodom. But not only do I want you to see the perversion of Sodom, and the prayer of the saint, but one other thing I want you to see this morning is the prophecy of the Second Coming. “For as it was in the days of Lot, so shall it be in the day of the coming of the Son of man.” And if God the Holy Spirit enables us to get those three lessons across today, I will be most grateful. So let’s study together in the Word of God.

I. The Perversion of Sodom

And, first of all, let’s think a little bit about the perversity and the perversion of the city of Sodom. Notice verse 20: “*And the LORD said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous.*” (Genesis 18:20) Now, what

was the sin of Sodom? What was it that these people were doing that caused God to obliterate them? Let's turn to the book of Ezekiel for a moment—Ezekiel chapter 16. Just put your bookmark there in Genesis chapter 18 and turn with me to the prophet Ezekiel. And here we're going to find very clearly what the sin of Sodom was. Ezekiel chapter 16, beginning in verse 49. Do you have it? Ezekiel 16, verse 49: *“Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom...”*—now Ezekiel's going to tell us what this sin was that God hated so much—*“Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me: therefore I took them away as I saw good.”* (Ezekiel 16:49–50) Now, here are the sins of Sodom.

A. **Pride**

And the very first sin is pride. And I tell you, dear friend, there's a sin that God hates more than sexual perversion—and it's pride. And many of you who will never become sexual perverts are eaten up with pride, and it's the very first thing that God listed of the sins that He hates. As a matter of fact, in the book of Proverbs, the Bible says, *“These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him:”*—and number one is—*“a proud look.”* (Proverbs 6:16–17) God hates the sin of pride. The Bible says, *“God resisteth the proud.”* (James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5)

Now, friend, it's not only that God fails to help us when we're proud, but it actually stands in our way. All of heaven is set against the proud man. Do you know that there are some of you here today who will not get saved because you'll not admit your need? You won't want to come down forward in the church service, because your pride says, *“Don't admit that you have any need. Don't go down there in front of all of those people to receive Jesus Christ as your personal Savior.”* Jesus reserved His harshest words for the Pharisees, who were eaten up with their pride, and He said, *“Because you say you have no sin, your sin remaineth.”* (John 9:41)

Oh, how terrible we are! We come to church Sunday after Sunday, sit there proud, haughty, unbroken before Almighty God. And God hates pride. Had there been no pride, there would have been no devil. And Sodom is a testimony as to how God hates the sin of pride. Most Americans stick out their chest in the face of God and strut to hell.

Gluttony

But not only was there the sin of pride; there was the sin of gluttony. Here the Bible calls it *“fulness of bread”*—*“fulness of bread.”* (Ezekiel 16:49) Now that's just God's way of saying they were sensate. They were materialistic. They were thinking not about the things of the Spirit but the things of the flesh. They were living to gratify the flesh. They were living lives of gluttonous excess: pampering the flesh, forgetting the Spirit; caring for the body, neglecting the soul; materialistic.

B. **Idleness**

But not only was there this gluttony, there was also idleness. They had become lazy. Work had become a thing of the past. They had been cursed with blessings, and there had been so many things that had happened to them that their prosperity had become their curse. The Bible says there was “*an abundance of idleness.*” (Ezekiel 16:49) The Bible says that “*six days thou shalt...work.*” (Exodus 23:12; Exodus 34:21) And even when you get retired from your business, that does not mean that you’re to quit working. That means you’re to come down here to Bellevue and work all the harder. Let me tell you something, friend. God intends for you to work till you turn up your toes and die. You are to serve the Lord. You’re not just to sit around in a rocking chair. I tell you, there’s something for everyone to do. And the worst thing that could happen to a nation is when people get the idea they’re not supposed to work anymore. Listen. God wants us to be productive. There’s something for everyone to do, and we’re to find it. But here was a city that became idle.

Edith Hamilton said of the Athenians, when the Athenians wanted not to give to the state but for the state to give to them, when the freedom they wished most was the freedom from responsibility, the Athenians ceased to be free and would never be free again. America is filled with people who want to be free, but free from responsibility. And when we get that kind of freedom, we lose every other kind of freedom, and we will become enslaved and eventually condemned.

C. **Selfishness**

Pride, gluttony, irresponsibility, and selfishness. The Bible says here, “*She [strengtheneth not] the hand of the poor and the needy.*” (Ezekiel 16:49) I tell you, in this city, and in every city, there are people who desperately need our help. There are poor people in this city who do not even have enough to eat, and they don’t have a decent place to live and a place to eat and clothes to wear. And we as God’s people ought to be looking for people that we can help—I mean, not just when they come to us; we ought to be searching them out. You want to be blessed, Mr. Businessman? Find somebody that you can help, and help them. It’s time we stop depending upon the government and welfare to take care of these people, and it’s time we started saying, “God has blessed us, and because God has blessed us, we’re going to bless them.” Do good to those kinds of people, and God will bless you. Fail to do good to them, and you become like Sodom of old. There was this selfishness.

D. **Immorality**

And then it was capped off, however, by immorality. Look at verse 50: “*And they were haughty, and committed abomination.*” (Ezekiel 16:50) Now, what was the abomination they committed? Well, the abomination they committed was sexual perversion, and God

calls that *“abomination.”* You may wish to jot down on your notes Leviticus chapter 20 and verse 13—Leviticus chapter 20 and verse 13. And the Bible says, *“If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination.”* (Leviticus 20:13) Do you see it? *“If a man...lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed abomination.”* This is what Ezekiel is talking about when he says, *“They were haughty, and committed abomination.”* Not only did they commit abomination; they came out of their closets to do it. They were proud of it, and they were haughty. They could not blush, and God says here in Leviticus chapter 20, verse 13, *“They shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them.”* (Leviticus 20:13) Now I remind you this was in the Old Testament, under a theocracy. We do not go by that law today, because the death penalty is not commanded today for that sin. But I want to tell you, it brings spiritual death.

I want you to turn here to the book of Romans chapter 1, and I want you to see what God said in New Testament times. In Romans chapter 1, I want you to begin reading, if you will, in verse 24—Romans chapter 1, verse 24. The Bible says, *“Wherefore God also gave them up...”*—now certain people God just seems to give up—*“Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections...”*—you see, some people have the idea that, if we don’t get right with God, then He’s going to judge us. Friend, I want to tell you that sexual perversion itself is the judgment of God already. When God gives a nation up, God takes His hands off of a people, then these things are a part of the judgment of God—*“For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use of that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. 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 1:24–28) And then, verse 32: *“Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.”* (Romans 1:32) We actually now today have entertained ourselves by watching sexual perversion in movies and films and so forth. And God have mercy upon our nation! This was the sin of ancient Sodom, and it is the sin of America.

And notice, first, pride; then, pollution; and then, perversion. When a nation is proud and will not take God’s way, then that nation is wrapped up in sin. But when sin is never satisfied, therefore it turns to perversion. You see, why does the sinner sin? Because he

wants a kick; he wants a thrill. But, you see, sin never lives up to its promises. The *“bread of deceit is sweet...but afterwards [a man’s] mouth shall be filled with gravel.”* (Proverbs 20:17) So here is a man, he lives in a wide-open society, and perhaps there is heterosexual but immoral sex, and he practices that heterosexual but immoral sex, and that doesn’t satisfy. So he says, “Maybe it’s somewhere else. It’s in this thing and in that thing”—always seeking, always searching, never satisfied, thinking, “Perhaps this kick, that thrill, this thing.” In a wide-open society that begins with pride and turns to pollution, it ultimately turns to perversion. And this is what has happened in America. This is what is happening in the world. And God says that He left Sodom as *“an [example] unto those that after should live ungodly.”* (2 Peter 2:6) And let me tell you something. There’s nothing that will ruin a nation quicker than the sins of Sodom.

Isaiah lamented, and his lament was this: that Jerusalem is ruined. Now, let’s turn to Isaiah chapter 3 for a moment. I want to show you what ruined Jerusalem and what can ruin America. Isaiah chapter 3, one of the most poignant passages in all of the Bible; it will be worth your turning to mark it—Isaiah chapter 3—and let’s look in verse 8. Here Isaiah, with salty tears, doubtless, is lamenting the fall of Jerusalem. And Isaiah says, in Isaiah chapter 3, verse 8, *“For Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen: because their tongue and their doings are against the LORD, to provoke the eyes of his glory.”* Now, notice especially verse 9: *“The shew of their countenance doth witness against them; and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not.”* (Isaiah 3:8–9) Not only have they taken the sin of Sodom, but they had become proud of it. *“They declare their sin as Sodom, [and] they hide it not.”* *Sin that used to slink down the back alleys now struts down the main street.* And this is what the prophets said about Jerusalem: “Jerusalem is ruined, because they declare their sin as Sodom, and they hide it not.”

And then he goes on to mention another terrible thing that ruined Jerusalem. Look in verse 12: *“As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them.”* (Isaiah 3:12) Mark it down. When you have a society that is made up of depraved men, disobedient children, and domineering women, that society is on its last legs. That’s what God said ruined Jerusalem. Look at it again. He says, *“Women rule over them.”* He said, “This is the end.” Now, if you’re one of these super-feminists, don’t come up here after the service and argue with me, because I don’t have time. Just go argue with Isaiah: he’s got all eternity. And you deal with him. But this is what God said ruined their civilization so long ago.

Here was a city, a civilization, that was arrogant in their sexual immorality. Here they were with children who had no respect for the ancients. That’s one of the reasons that we’re honoring our seniors here today. In the Bible, old age is honorable. It is not something to be looked down to; it is something to be looked up to.

II. The Prayer of the Saint

And so we see, first of all, the sin of Sodom. We see Sodom and its perversion—the perversion of Sodom. But, secondly, I want you see the prayer of the saint. Abraham began to pray when God told Abraham what He was going to do. You see, Abraham knew what God was going to do. Go back to Genesis chapter 18 and look in verse 17: *“And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do...?”* (Genesis 18:17) You see, the Bible says, *“Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.”* (Amos 3:7) Abraham was a prophet of God. I tell you, Abraham knew what was going to happen.

Now we have a lot of people today who think they know what’s going to happen, but they don’t know what’s going to happen, because they’re not friends of God. Now these people may be big shots; they may be listed in *Who’s Who*. But I’d rather know what’s what than be listed in *Who’s Who*. Abraham knew what’s what. *“And shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I’m going to do?”* And at this time Abraham wasn’t a VIP. He became an MIP—he became the “most important person”—because Abraham stepped in between God and His judgment and wicked Sodom. And Abraham became an intercessor. And he started to pray for Sodom, and he started to pray for his carnal nephew Lot. And he began to intercede.

And what a wonderful lesson we learn here about intercession! America needs intercession. We need to pray. This revival will be no greater, no better, than your prayers, my prayers, our prayers, before God. God help us to learn a lesson from Abraham! God give us some twentieth-century Abrahams who will become intercessors!

So I want you to notice what Abraham did here. We read in verse 23 and the last part of verse 22: *“And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom:”*—here are the angels of God, going to bring the judgment of God upon Sodom—*“but Abraham stood yet before the LORD.”* That is, Abraham interposes himself between these men and Sodom. *“And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?”* (Genesis 18:22–23) And Abraham started to plead. And because of the prayers and the intercession of Abraham we’re going to see that God delayed His judgment upon Sodom, and we’re also going to see that God worked in the heart and life of Lot, who did not deserve it. But there was someone who was interceding and someone who was praying for him.

And at this moment Abraham becomes a very important person. Abraham did what the councils of Sodom could not do, what the diplomats could not do, what the philosophers of Sodom could not do, what the mayor of Sodom could not do, what the armies of Sodom could not do, what the wealth of Sodom could not do, because that one man knew how to pray; that one man knew how to get hold of God, and he prayed. Lot wasn’t praying. Lot was carnal. Lot was so mixed up down in Sodom, living with

Sodom, as we preached last week, playing footsie with Sodom, living on the borderline of sin as a carnal Christian, he could not see the hand of God raised in judgment. He could not tell what time it was. And there are many of you here today living in a fool's paradise—carnal Christians. You never pray; you don't intercede. But Abraham, the friend of God, who knew what was happening, Abraham decided that he'd better pray, and he prayed. And because he prayed God moved and answered his intercessory prayer. I want you to notice the marks of his prayer.

A. **Courageous Prayer**

The very first thing I want you to notice is that it was courageous prayer. And the Bible says here in verse 22 that he *“stood yet before the LORD.”* (Genesis 18:22) What does that mean: that he *“stood yet before the LORD”*? That is, he just interposed himself between God and judgment, and he started, as it were, to argue with God. Look in verse 23: *“And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?”* (Genesis 18:23) He said, “Lord, this is not like you to do this. Why, if you were to destroy Sodom right now, why, those righteous people down there in Sodom, those who love you, they'd be destroyed also.” And he started to plead with God. And it's as though he is arguing with God.

One of the greatest men of faith who ever lived was George Müller of Bristol, England. Müller was a man who lived in another age, but he was a man who had great orphanages. Literally millions of dollars were given to the work of Christ and the care for these orphanages, and Müller did it all by faith. He's gone down in the history of the Church as one of the greatest men of faith, and Müller said that it was studying this passage that we have in our hands right now before us that increased his prayer power more than anything else, because it taught him to argue with God.

Now, wait a minute. I know what you're thinking: “Well, who can argue with God?” But I'm talking about a sanctified argument. You see, God wants us to bring His Word into this situation. And here's what Müller would do. Müller would say, “Now, God, you promised to take care of the fatherless. I'm holding you to that. Father, this is your work. And you've said that the righteous are not going to be forsaken and his seed begging bread. Lord, I'm holding you to that. And, Lord, who's going to feed these children? Lord, if you don't feed these children, your name is going to be ruined around here, because I've told everybody you're going to do it.” And he just prayed courageous prayer, covering it all.

B. **Contrite Prayer**

But not only was it courageous prayer; I want you to notice it was also contrite prayer, because some of you might think, when I'm talking about him arguing with God, I'm talking about arrogance. I'm not talking about arrogance: argument, yes; arrogance, no.

Look, if you will, in verse 27. See the humility of this man in verse 27. Abraham says—answered, *“Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the LORD, which am but dust and ashes.”* (Genesis 18:27) And, as you see, here is this man, reverential in all. Here is a man trembling before God. Oh, how we need to be broken and prostrate before God! Yes, remind God of His Word. Yes, remind God of His promises. Yes, remind God of His character. But, oh, how we need this brokenness! Ladies and gentlemen, revival is where we’re broken before God, where we come as dust before God. Revival is where the people of God get hold of God in intercession.

C. **Compassionate Prayer**

It was courageous prayer. It was contrite prayer. It was compassionate prayer. He’s praying here for others, not for himself. He’s not asking anything for himself. He’s praying for others. When was the last time you missed a night’s sleep to pray over some soul mortgaged to the devil? When was the last time you, with a broken heart, came to God and prayed for this wicked city? Oh, ladies and gentlemen, will you plead with God for revival for America? Will you plead with God for revival this week? Will you pray, “God, bless Tommy Lane as he leads that choir; God, bless that choir as they sing; God, bless my pastor as he preaches; God, move on the hearts of these that are not saved; and God, have mercy upon our sin-soaked, hell-bound city?”

D. **Confident Prayer**

Courageous prayer, yes. Contrite prayer, yes. Compassionate prayer, yes. Confident prayer—look in verse 25, if you will, the last part: *“Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”* (Genesis 18:25) Oh, Abraham had such a confidence in God that God was going to do right—no doubt whatsoever. He based his prayer on what he knew about God. Abraham knew the ways of God. He was a friend of God. And that’s the way to pray: to know God; to know the character and the righteousness of God.

E. **Conquering Prayer**

Confident prayer—and it was conquering prayer. Notice, if you will, over here in chapter 19, verse 29—chapter 19 and verse 29: *“And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in the which Lot dwelt.”* (Genesis 19:29) Not because of Lot, but because of Abraham. Lot was delivered, not because of Lot, but because of Abraham. God remembered Abraham. Here was an intercessor; here was a man who knew how to intercede.

We read in the Bible one statement where the Bible says God marveled that there was no intercessor. (Isaiah 59:16) Do you know the sin that amazes God? Do you know what amazes God? God is amazed that you don’t pray. God is amazed that I don’t pray. With all of the great mighty prayer promises, God marvels that we do not pray. The

Bible teaches that we're to pray. First Timothy chapter 2, verse 1: *"I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour."* (1 Timothy 2:1–2) And I want to tell you, ladies and gentlemen, that the future of America does not lie in Washington; it lies with the people of God who get on their knees and pray and seek God's face. Abraham did something that the Sodomite parliament could not do. He got hold of God. Do you know how to do that? Do you know how to pray? Do you know how to intercede? You can change the destiny of a nation by intercession.

One time God would have spared His ancient people Israel, but He did not spare them. And the reason He did not spare them? No one interceded. Jot this scripture down: Ezekiel chapter 22, verse 30. God says, *"And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none."* (Ezekiel 22:30) The eyes of the Lord were searching the earth: "Where is an intercessor? Where is there someone who will make up the hedge? Where is someone who will stand in the gap, like Father Abraham did?" God said, "I was looking for someone so I wouldn't have to destroy the land, and I could not find an intercessor."

The need of the hour is not eloquence, not energy, not enthusiasm, but intercession. That's the need of the hour. And I want God to make me an intercessor. After I've been studying this message, I've been praying more that I might learn the ministry of intercession. Ladies and gentlemen, the great ministry of Bellevue Baptist Church is not primarily preaching or singing, but praying and seeking the face of God. Our revival this week is going to be in direct proportion to your prayers. And I want to call this congregation to prayer, to seek the face of God; some twentieth-century Abrahams who will pray, and intercede, and say, "O God, stay your hand of mercy, and God, have mercy upon your people."

III. The Prophecy of the Second Coming

Now two things we've seen thus far: first of all, we have seen the perversion of Sodom; secondly, we have seen the prayer of the saint. Thirdly, I want you see the prophecy of the Second Coming. I want you to turn to Luke chapter 17, if you will, for just a moment—Luke chapter 17, and I want us to look in verse 26—Luke chapter 17 and verse 26: *"And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot;"*—these very days that we're studying about

here in the New Testament and the Old Testament—*“they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.”* (Luke 17:26–30)

Now, just keep that scripture in your mind: “As it was in the days of Noah, and as it was in the days of Lot, it will be when Jesus Christ comes back to this earth again.” Now, go back with me, please, to Genesis chapter 19, and I want to show you something in the light of that scripture. Genesis chapter 19—just go right back, and I want you to look in verse 22. The angels of God are ready to bring judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah, because all of the intercession in the world will not stay the hand of God when the time is right. And so here now finally, finally, judgment is about to fall. And I want you to notice here in verse 22 what happens. The angel is speaking to Lot. Now, remember that Lot is living in Sodom. He’s a Christian; he’s born again, in the Old Testament sense of the word—or in the New Testament sense of the word. The Bible tells us, in Peter, that he was a righteous man. (2 Peter 2:8) And here’s what the angel says to this carnal believer, this backslidden Christian: *“Haste thee…”*—this is chapter 19, verse 22—*“Haste thee, escape thither; for I cannot do anything till thou be come thither.”* (Genesis 19:22) Now, just put a star by that. The angel said, “Lot, hurry up! Get out, because until you’re out, I cannot do anything!” Now, remember that Jesus said, “As it was in the days of Lot, so shall it be in the day of the coming of the Son of man.” (Luke 17:26–30)

Now, what does this mean? It means, before God poured out His wrath in the flood, He put Noah in the ark. And before God poured out His wrath upon Sodom He took Lot, His believer, out of Sodom. You see, before God pours out His wrath upon this world, the saints are going to be taken out at the Rapture. You see, God’s wrath is going to be poured out upon this world. And the Tribulation is called the *“great day of [God’s] wrath.”* (Revelation 6:17) But the Bible tells us, in 1 Thessalonians chapter 1, verse 10, that we ought *“to wait for [God’s] Son from heaven…[who] delivered us from the wrath to come.”* (1 Thessalonians 1:10) Jesus delivers us from the wrath to come. And 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, verse 9, says, *“For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation”—or, deliverance—“[through] our Lord Jesus Christ.”* (1 Thessalonians 5:9) The Church, I believe, is going to be raptured at any moment.

There are some people who are teaching that the Church is going to go through the Great Tribulation. But notice the scripture—notice what Jesus said about Noah’s day. What were they doing? They were eating. They were drinking. They were marrying. They were giving in marriage. And the flood came. They didn’t know until the flood came. What were they doing in Lot’s time? They were eating. They were drinking. They were marrying. They were building. They were not in the Great

Tribulation; they were in the normal course of life. Things were going on every day in the regular basis. And then, suddenly, just like that, fire from heaven destroyed them all. But before that fire could fall, God's man had to be taken out. Noah went out into the ark. Lot went out into the mountain. But the angel said, "*I cannot do anything till [you] be come thither.*" So there is a deeper lesson here. Surely it shows the power of intercession. That is one lesson. Surely it shows God's power for the backslidden, errant child. That's another lesson. But it also makes a great illustration of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. And He's saying, "I want you to see that as it was in the days of Lot, so shall it be."

Now, pay close attention. Everybody here needs to listen to what I'm about to say. When Jesus Christ comes, therefore, it will be as it was in the days of Lot; it will be as it was in the days of Noah. And, folks, in the days of Lot and the days of Noah we see something.

First of all, let me say this: there are going to be three classes of persons living on the earth when Jesus Christ comes.

A. The Spirit-Filled Christians

Number one: There are going to be the Noah type of people. "*As it was in the days of [Noah]....*" (Luke 17:26) What was Noah like? Noah was a type, a picture, a prophecy, an illustration of a Spirit-filled Christian. The Bible says that Noah was a perfect man. Noah loved the Lord. He obeyed God. He built the ark. He lived as he ought to have lived. And when the summons said, "Noah, come thou into the ark," gladly he came into the ark. (Genesis 7:1) And when he went into the ark, he went into fullness; he went into provisions. When he came out of the ark, he came out into a full reward. He became the inheritor of the whole earth. And he went into that ark, and he took his family with him into the ark. He had an abundant entrance.

Is that what you are going to have? When Jesus comes, there are going to be some like that. There are going to be some who are going to be so glad to hear that our Lord has come. For the Lord shall say to some, "*Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many...enter thou into the joy of thy lord.*" (Matthew 25:21) He typifies that person loving Jesus, living for Jesus, serving Jesus, looking for Jesus, waiting for Jesus, longing for Jesus, loving Jesus. And he took his loved ones with him, and he went into the ark.

B. The Carnal Christians

But what about Lot? How did Lot flee to the mountain? Why, the angel had to come and argue with Lot to get him out, and to say, "Lot, hurry up!" And Lot didn't want to go. He's clinging to Sodom, and the angel is just pulling him out, as it were. And he leaves his loved ones behind, and they perish in the flames. He's up there in the mountains.

Everything that he's dreamed for and schemed for and sold his soul for, all that he's lived for—this carnal, backslidden Christian—goes up in smoke, goes up in flame. He's saved, but singed. He's a type of picture of the carnal backslider, who surely is saved. However, when Jesus comes, oh, the Bible says, *"Little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear...[you'll] not be ashamed before him at his coming."* (1 John 2:28)

Do you know what? If Jesus were to come right now, some of you would want to crawl under the pew. You've got hatred in your heart, booze in your refrigerator, God's tithe in your pocket, pornography in your magazine rack. There's no love for the Lord Jesus Christ, no zeal. You're saved, but you are a Lot. You're living in the suburbs of Sodom. You're a friend to this vile world that crucified Christ. And Lot had to be dragged out of Sodom. It wasn't a rapture; it was a rupture—just dragged out, ripped away, snatched away. How gladly Noah went into the ark and took his loved ones with him!

You say, "Brother Rogers, if I become a carnal Christian, will I go to hell?" No, but some of your loved ones will. None of us live unto ourselves, and none of us die unto ourselves. (Romans 14:8) And Lot was not able to win his loved ones and get them out of Sodom. He was taken out, for he was saved. And if Jesus comes today, you may go to heaven, Mr. Carnal Lot, but some of your loved ones are going to face the fire and the flood.

C. **The Unbelievers**

"As it was in the days of Noah and as it was in the days of Lot, so shall it be in the coming of the Son of man." There were three classes. There are those like Noah: spiritual people who love God, taken out before the flood came; carnal people: those like Lot, saved and backslidden, indifferent, taken out before the fire fell; but there's one more class of persons. These were not spiritual people or even carnal people. They were not spiritual believers or carnal believers. They were unbelievers. And upon these people the flood came in Noah's day, and upon these people the fire fell in Lot's day. And I want to tell you, my sweet precious friend, when Jesus comes and the Noahs and the Lots are taken out, then the flood and the fire will come. God will judge this world. You may not think so; you may not agree with me. But I want to tell you, I am a man of God, and I'm preaching the Word of God in the Spirit of God. And I'm telling you with all of the function and unction and emotion of my soul that God is going to judge this world. And don't say you didn't hear it—don't you say you didn't hear it. And Jesus Christ is coming. And when Jesus Christ comes, the Noahs are going to be taken to their ark, the Lots will be taken to their mountains, and the unbelieving world is going to face the flood and the fire of God's wrath.

Conclusion

Three things we've seen: the perversion of Sodom, the prayer of the saint, the picture of the Second Coming. May God burn it to our hearts!

An Old Testament Calvary

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: October 18, 1987

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 22:1–2

Sponsored by: Sponsor

“And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.”

GENESIS 22:1-2

Outline

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Conclusion

Introduction

Now I want us to begin reading here, therefore, in Genesis chapter 22, and notice what it says here in verse 1: *“And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham,”*—now you know that Abraham is the brightest star in the Hebrew heaven. He is the father of the faithful, and *“God did tempt Abraham.”* Abraham was not tempted to sin. The word *tempt* here literally means that God “tested” Abraham—*“and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest”* (Genesis 22:1–2). Now, let’s just stop right there: *“Take...thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest”* (Genesis 22:2).

I. A Special Person

Ladies and gentleman, the very first point of this message is what I want to call a special person—a special person. Isaac was a special person, because Isaac prefigured the Lord Jesus Christ. Now I don’t have time for a deep Bible study, but if

you're taking notes, let me just list three or four things for you. Did Isaac picture the Lord Jesus Christ?

A. His Birth Was Prophesied

Well, first of all, in Genesis chapter 18, beginning in verse 9, his birth was prophesied (Genesis 18:9–10). Isaac was a son of promise, as was the Lord Jesus Christ. Both births were promised and prophesied.

B. He Was Born of a Miracle

Secondly, Isaac was born of a miracle. It took a miracle for Isaac to be born. He was conceived of a miracle. He was conceived in the womb of Sarah when Sarah's womb was dried up. She had passed the time of having children, and God had to say to Abraham and Sarah, *"Is any thing too hard for the LORD?"* (Genesis 18:14)—Genesis chapter 18, verse 14, that we preached on last Sunday. He was conceived by a miracle; a son of promise, he was a son of miracle.

C. His Birthday Was Preset

His birthday was preset by God's divine plan. Genesis chapter 21, verses 1 and 2, tell us that Isaac was born at a precise set time according to the plan of Almighty God (Genesis 21:1–2). And so it was of our Lord Jesus Christ also: the Son of a miracle birth who was born in the fullness of time, according to Bible prophecy (Galatians 4:4).

D. He Was Named Before He Was Born

Isaac was named before he was born—in Genesis chapter 17 and verse 19 (Genesis 17:19). God had already selected his name. The Lord Jesus was named before He was born—Matthew chapter 1 and verse 21 (Matthew 1:21).

E. He Was His Father's Beloved Son

Both are called the father's beloved and only son. Notice in verse 2: *"And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac"* (Genesis 22:2). Isaac is a special person. Isaac, in the Old Testament, pictures, prophesies, and foretells the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, God's promised miraculous Son.

II. A Specific Place

Now there's a second thing I want you to see as we step further on to this holy ground. Not only do I want you to see what I'm going to call a special person—verse 2—but I want you to see also what I'm going to call a specific place. Look in the end of verse 2. God says, *"Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah;"*—just underscore that—*"and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains"*—not just any mountain, but one of the mountains—*"which I*

will tell thee of”(Genesis 22:2). Now He said, “Abraham, you are to offer your son Isaac as a burnt offering, but you’re to offer him on one mountain. Now I’ll show it to you, Abraham. I’ll tell you of it.” Look down in verse 3—the last part of verse 3: “*and went unto the place of which God had told him*” (Genesis 22:3).

It was a very specific place. Look, if you will, in the end of verse 4: “*Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off*” (Genesis 22:4). Underscore the phrase “*the place.*” Look, if you will, in verse 9: “*And they came to the place which God had told him*” (Genesis 22:9). Now, folks, there was a special person, and he was offered in a specific place. No happenstance here.

I want you to think with me of the vast stellar empires. Think of the billions and billions of stars in space; think of all of those galaxies—100 million universes out there in space, and all of those stars reverberating to the praise of God as they spend and dance in the velvet darkness of space, giving glory to God. For the Bible says, “*The heavens declare the glory of God*”(Psalm 19:1).

But of those 100 million galaxies, I want you to see God as He singles out a special galaxy called the Milky Way, a disc-like galaxy, revolving, as it is, around a center, that galaxy 100,000 light years from rim to rim, 600 million billion miles from one side to the other. What a galaxy! That’s our galaxy; that’s the Milky Way. God puts His eyes upon that particular galaxy. And then in that galaxy, with its billions of stars, God picks out just one star—not a very big star, a moderate-sized star. That’s our star, our sun. But God is not finished yet. Around that sun is a little handful of planets, almost cosmic dust. God doesn’t choose them all. God just chooses one: it’s called Planet Earth. And God says, “*The earth is the LORD’s, and the fulness thereof*” (Psalm 24:1).

And then God comes down to that globe spinning in space, that little speck of cosmic dust, from all of the seas and oceans and planets, and out of that place God chooses one place, one land. He calls it “His land,” “the Holy Land,” “the land of promise,” the land that He gave Abraham as an everlasting possession—one land. But God isn’t finished yet. God brings the focus down a little tighter, and in that one land God comes to one city, Jerusalem. He calls it “*the city of the great King*” (Psalm 48:2).

But God isn’t finished yet. God tightens the focus a little tighter, and He comes to one hill in that city, and He calls it “My holy hill.” Do you know what that holy hill is? Mount Moriah. The name *Moriah* means, “foreseen of the Lord.” Before God made anything, God had that one place in mind. God said to Abraham, “You go the place I tell you of. You go to the mountain I tell you of.” And he came right to that specific space. Now if you were to go there today, it wouldn’t look impressive to you. It’s certainly not big. The size has nothing to do with it.

Napoleon met Wellington at Waterloo, and Napoleon lost his empire there—that archangel of war, as he met the iron Duke of Wellington—and there, he lost his empire,

and there, Napoleon was defeated at Waterloo. And we all know of Waterloo, but friend, you wouldn't have known of Waterloo if there had not been a battle there. And before that battle it was so small it wasn't even put on the map. It is significant, not because of its size, but because of what happened.

Friend, I want to tell you, Calvary is significant, not because of its size, but because of what happened there: because of the destiny of souls. The great battle of the ages transpired there in this place where God said to Abraham, "Take your son, and there, in a place I will tell you—one of the mountains that I will tell you of—and there he will die" (Genesis 22:2).

My friend, I want you to know that Calvary has been in the heart and mind of God for a long time. Luke chapter 23 and verse 33 takes on more significance when we read of Jesus' death: "*And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him*" (Luke 23:33). Do you know where Calvary is? Mount Moriah, my friend: the same place.

There was a special person: Isaac, a miracle son, a son of promise. The father's beloved was offered in a specific place. Friend, the Lord Jesus knew that was where He would die. They tried to keep Him from going to Calvary. They said, "Lord, don't go to Jerusalem. You know what they'll do to you there." But the Bible says, "*He stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem*" (Luke 9:51). Why? Because, my dear friend, it had been pictured, it had been prophesied, it had been telescoped that this would be the place where our dear Savior would die.

III. A Solemn Purpose

Now I want you to notice not only what I call a special person, not only a specific place, but I want you to notice a solemn purpose—a solemn purpose. Look at this—verse 2: "*And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering*" (Genesis 22:2). A solemn purpose: he is to be put to death. The father's beloved son is to die by the father's hand.

Can you imagine what went through the heart and mind of Abraham? Notice verse 3: "*And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him.*" Now, notice: "*Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off.*" He's getting close now; it's getting to be a reality. And notice what happens here in verse 5: "*And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you*" (Genesis 22:3–5). What does that tell you of? It tells you that the father and the son went together where the others could not go.

Oh, my dear friend, here you have the Old Testament Gethsemane where the Lord Jesus said to those disciples, “You stay here. I’ve got to go over here. And the Father and I must commune; the Father and I must talk.” Can you imagine that Gethsemane? Can you imagine what went into the heart and mind of those two as the father and the son alone trudge up that mountain? Can you imagine how Isaac must have felt, because by now it begins to dawn on Isaac what is going to happen? Isaac sees the knife. He sees the fire. He sees the wood that will burn. He sees the rope that will hold the sacrifice. He says, “Dad, we don’t have an animal. You say we’re going up here to worship. You say we’re going up here to make a sacrifice. I don’t see any sacrifice.” Abraham says, “[*The Lord*] will provide himself a lamb” (Genesis 22:8). Isaac looks into his father’s face. It dawns on him Isaac is the sacrifice. Can you imagine what went through that young man’s mind when he knew, not only would he die, but he would die by his father’s hand?

Do you want me to tell you the hell of Calvary? Do you want me to tell you the suffering of Calvary? Who crucified Jesus? You say, “Well, the Jews did.” Listen, friend. It was the Romans who nailed Him to the tree. “Oh,” you say, “well, then the Romans did.” But they nailed Him for our sins. You say, “Well then, we did.” But wait a minute. Do you want to get real specific? Do you want me to tell you who crucified the Son of Glory? Do you want me to tell you who nailed Him to the cross? God the Father.

Boy, when I say that, it makes some folks hopping mad, but friend, you’d better read Isaiah chapter 53: “*Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief*” (Isaiah 53:10). Listen, my dear friend. You pay attention to me—pay attention to me. When Jesus Christ took our sins, Jesus Christ took God’s wrath. Do you understand that? Do you understand that? When Christ took my sins, at the same time, He took God’s wrath. And He knew that when He died upon that cross, He Himself would be the object of the wrath of God. And when Isaac walked up that hill, that hill called Calvary, so long ago, he knew he would die at his father’s hand.

And can you imagine what went through the heart of Abraham in that Gethsemane? Because, dear friend, Jesus wasn’t the only One who suffered at Gethsemane; God the Father suffered as God looked down. No father can see his son suffer without the father suffering.

When I had my first son, my pastor said to me, “Adrian, you’ll know more of Calvary’s love now.” And he was right. Before I had a son of my own, I used to think what a great love that Jesus had that He died for our sins. But after I’ve had children of my own, I think, “What a great love God had that He gave His Son—that He gave His Son!” Because which of us would not gladly die for our children? And the Bible says that “*God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself*” (2 Corinthians 5:19). And don’t get the idea that here’s an angry God who has to be appeased by blood. Here was a

God who gave Himself, and in Christ, He suffered, bled, and died. All of Abraham's hopes were wrapped up in Isaac. And that's what Abraham gave. Abraham was giving of himself when he gave his own son for a sacrifice.

Think of it, dear friend. Think of the submissive attitude of Isaac. Look, if you will, in verse 6: *"And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife;"*—now, watch it—*"and they went both of them together"* (Genesis 22:6). Look again at verse 8: *"And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together"*—*"together"* (Genesis 22:8). Now Isaac is not just a little boy. He's not a toddler. He's not a preschooler. He's a young man; he's a strapping, strong young man.

You say, "How do you know he was so strong?" Because they laid the wood on his back. He was the one who carried those heavy timbers that would be burned, just as Jesus Christ carried that cross. He was carrying those timbers. There would have had to have been enough wood on his back to consume whole a good-sized animal. Have you ever carried the firewood in? Have you? Have you gone out just to get a few logs? He's carrying that wood on his back, up a mountain. He's not child; he's a young man.

Now here is Abraham, over one hundred years of age. Here's a young, virile, strapping young man. Do you think Abraham could have put him to death unless the son was willing? Not a chance! Not a chance! He could easily overpower his father. Or, if he didn't want to do that, all he had to do was run. Do you think an old man is going to run down a young man? No one! Who else is there? There are no soldiers; there's nobody there to make him do it—the father and the son alone.

Jesus said, *"No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself"* (John 10:18). Jesus was not bound to that cross by nails; He was bound to that cross by the golden chords of love. They said, *"He saved others; himself he cannot save"* (Matthew 27:42). My dear friend, it was Himself He would not save. He willingly submitted to the will of His Father. As Jesus said in dark Gethsemane, *"Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done"* (Luke 22:42). Oh, my dear friend, think how this pictures Calvary! See Jesus carrying His cross; and then, see Isaac carry that wood. What does that wood symbolize? Friend, wood, in the Bible, is an emblem of humanity in weakness. Gold, in the Bible, is an emblem and a symbol of glory and majesty.

Jesus laid aside the gold of His glory that He might bear the wood of our wickedness. That's the symbolism that's talked of in Genesis chapter 22 that is fulfilled in John chapter 19, where it speaks of Christ burying His cross. And that cross is the emblem, the symbol, of judgment. *"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him"* (2 Corinthians 5:21). And as Abraham stacked that wood upon the back of Isaac—as he stacked it up and stacked it up—and here is Isaac bearing that load, it reminds us that God the Father

“hath laid on [Jesus] the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:6). He took our sins, the wood of wickedness, our humanity, and He bore it to Calvary.

There that day there was a cord that speaks of the binding penalty of sin, because sin binds us. There was a knife. And that knife speaks of the bleeding penalty of sin, for sin slays us. There was a fire. And that fire speaks of the burning penalty of sin, where Jesus baptized His soul in hell for us. And the Lord Jesus Christ is pictured, typified, there that day.

IV. A Sacred Promise

Friend, there was a special person there that day. There was a specific place there that day. There was a solemn purpose there that day. One last thing I want you to see.

Bless God, there was a sacred promise there that day, because what happened there that day is important to you, because it was one way that God was promising to us and to all of the seed of Abraham and the children of Adam that they can have deliverance through the Lord Jesus. Begin to read here in verse 10: *“And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.”* The test is over now. This episode is finished—this episode is finished. But now, notice God gives us another wonderful illustration: *“And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son”* (Genesis 22:10–13). Now God gives another wonderful picture of the Lord Jesus, who died for us, our substitute. We, like Isaac, should have died, but we get off the altar. And there is an innocent victim, somebody who takes our place. Here it was: *“a ram caught in a thicket by his horns.”*

I see the Son of God crowned with thorns pictured here: God’s Lamb. And so Abraham, with a grateful heart, takes that animal. He releases his own son. That animal dies as a substitute. Again, God is showing us the purpose of the cross is substitution. And now, oh, dear friend, here is the sacred promise. Look in verse 14—here’s the part that causes my heart to leap with joy: *“And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovahjireh...”*—do you know the name of Calvary? It’s the same as the name of God—*“Jehovahjireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen”*(Genesis 22:14). Now, what does *Jehovahjireh* mean? Learn something of the names of God. They’re significant. *Jehovahjireh* means, “the Lord will provide.” And what will the Lord provide? Go back to verse 8. Abraham said it by faith: *“God will provide himself a lamb”*(Genesis 22:8). And, in Genesis chapter 22, God looked down

through the corridors and tunnels of time, and God made a promise: “I’ll provide a Lamb one day; I’ll provide my own Lamb.”

“[The Lord] will provide himself a lamb” (Genesis 22:8). That is, the Lord Himself will become a Lamb; He will provide Himself as a Lamb. And when Jesus walked up to Jordan that day where John the Baptist was baptizing, John saw Him, and John said, *“Behold the Lamb”*—*“Behold the Lamb”* (John 1:29). “That’s the One.” *“[The Lord] will provide himself a lamb”* (Genesis 22:8). And then Abraham said, *“In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen”* (Genesis 22:14). And it was this same place where Jesus died. It was seen: all of this.

Conclusion

“Well,” you say, “Adrian, you may be reading into all of that.” Do you think so? Then you take this scripture, and see what it means—John 8, verse 56: *“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad”* (John 8:56). Galatians chapter 3 and verse 8 says, *“Preached before the gospel unto Abraham”* (Galatians 3:8). And God has shown us an Old Testament Calvary. Christ died for you.

The Gospel According to Abraham

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: September 2, 1984

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 22:1–2

“And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.”

GENESIS 22:2

Outline

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Introduction

I want you to take your Bibles and turn to one of my favorite chapters in all of the Bible—and that is Genesis chapter 22. I remember a day that Dr. Lee and myself fellowshiped over this chapter, and I trust I shall carry that fellowship that we had in the Word of God over this chapter with me all of the days of my life. I want to call the message tonight “The Gospel According to Abraham.” Now this morning I spoke of the faith of Abraham in the birth of Isaac. Now, tonight, I want to speak of the faith of Abraham in the sacrifice of Isaac. And I want you to see, that in the sacrifice of Isaac, Abraham gave us a preview of Calvary. So I’m going to call the message tonight “The Gospel According to Abraham.”

In Genesis chapter 22—and, by the way, it will be almost fundamentally necessary tonight that you keep your Bibles open in your hands if you really want to get the full impact of the message—Genesis chapter 22, beginning in verse 1: *“And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am...”* Now, let me just say parenthetically, but of necessity, while

we're right here, the word *tempt* here in this sense means "test." It was not a solicitation to do evil. "God tempteth no man with evil, neither can he be tempted with evil," (James 1:13) the Bible clearly says. And so, let's read it this way—"God did [test] Abraham,"—or "try Abraham"—"and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." (Genesis 22:1–2)

At 11:30 a.m., on May 29, 1953, Sir Edmund Hillary did something that no other human being had ever done. He reached the very top of Mount Everest, and there he hoisted the British flag. And indeed that was an accomplishment. He stood where no other man had stood who had ascended a mountain in that way. But I want to tell you, here in Genesis chapter 22, we see two other mountaineers who climb another mountain. That mountain not nearly so high is called Mount Moriah, and later Mount Moriah would become Mount Calvary. And I believe, as you look into this scripture tonight, you're going to see that, in a spiritual sense, that mountain was steeper, and that mountain was costlier, and it was a higher spiritual pinnacle than any other man had ever reached to this point. A higher spiritual pinnacle of submission and sacrifice we'll not find anywhere in the Bible until we come to Mount Calvary itself.

Now God came to Abraham and said, "Abraham, I'm going to give you a son." And, as we preached this morning, that son was a son of miracle, a son of promise, and a son that Abraham loved with all of his heart. Abraham loved Isaac as he loved his own self. And then God came to Abraham, and God said, "Abraham, I want you to take your son, your only son, the son that you love, and I want you to offer him as a burnt sacrifice upon Mount Moriah." As we're going to see later on in the story, it wasn't Isaac that God wanted; it was Abraham's heart that God wanted. And we're going to see that, and understand it; but God used this story to speak to us and give us a foregleam, to give us a prophecy, to give us a picture, to give us a story of Calvary, wonderful Calvary.

There are five things that I would press upon your heart as we look at this scripture tonight.

I. The Shadow of the Cross

And the very first thing I see is what I want to call the shadow of the cross. It is interesting to me to know that here in the book of Genesis, the first book in the Bible, we see a shadow of the cross.

Now there are some people who say to me, as I preach this twenty-second chapter of the book of Genesis, that I have no right to see the cross here; that perhaps I'm reading into the Scripture. But I believe, if you'll stay with me, and I believe, if you'll search the Scripture with me, I believe if you'll jot these references down, you'll come

away saying, “Indeed, the shadow of the cross is here way back in the book of Genesis.”

I believe I have New Testament proof for it also. Jesus said, in John chapter 8 and verse 56, “Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and was glad.” (John 8:56) “Abraham,” Jesus said, “rejoiced to see my day, and was glad.” That is, Abraham looked through the centuries by faith, and he had a glimpse of the glory that would come; he had a preview of Calvary. “Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and was glad.” And then, Paul, in the book of Galatians, makes it even stronger, when Paul said, in Galatians chapter 3 and verse 8, that the gospel was preached to Abraham—the gospel was preached to Abraham. (Galatians 3:8)

Now I want you to see, as we’re thinking of the shadow of the cross, how Isaac represents and pictures the Lord Jesus Christ. For example, if you were to go back here to Genesis chapter 18 and look with me in verse 9, you would see that the birth of Isaac was prophesied. Genesis 18, verse 9: *“And they 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 being old also? And the LORD said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old?”* Now, put a big star by this next verse: *“Is any thing too hard for the LORD? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.”* (Genesis 18:9–14)

Now Isaac therefore had a birth that was prophesied. And just as Isaac’s birth was prophesied, the birth of the Lord Jesus was prophesied. Not only was his birth prophesied, but the very time of his birth was prophesied, according to this passage of Scripture. And also, look, if you will, in Genesis chapter 21, while you’re in that neighborhood, and read verses 1 and 2: *“And the LORD visited Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did unto Sarah as he had spoken. For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age,”*—now, notice this—*“at the set time of which God had spoken to him.”* (Genesis 21:1–2)

Not only was his birth prophesied, but his birthday was preset. The Bible tells us also, in the New Testament, that Jesus was born in the fullness of time. And the birthday of the Lord Jesus Christ, I believe, had been preset by centuries. And I think I can show it from the Word of God.

Not only that, but Isaac received his name before he was born. Turn to Genesis chapter 17, and look, if you will, in verse 19: *“And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed...”*—now, not only did God say, “You’re going to have a child”; God

said what the sex of that child would be—*“[she] shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.”* (Genesis 17:19)

Now I want you to know also that the Lord Jesus was named before He was born. The sex of the Lord Jesus was prophesied before He was born. And in Matthew chapter 1, verse 21, the angel said, “You will bring forth a son, and you will call His name Jesus”—“you will call His name Jesus.” (Matthew 1:21)

I want you to see that Isaac was conceived by a miracle. Look, if you will, in Genesis chapter 18 and verse 14. Again, the question: *“Is any thing too hard for the LORD?”* (Genesis 18:14) That is, it was a miracle, and apart from God, it could not have been done.

What about the birth of the Lord Jesus? The birth of the Lord Jesus was a miracle. In Luke chapter 1, verse 34, Mary asked the angel—when the angel says that she’s going to be impregnated by the Holy Spirit and that the child in her will be conceived by the Holy Ghost—she asked the question that indeed she had a right to ask. She said, *“How shall this be?”* (Luke 1:34) And in Luke chapter 1, verse 37, we read, “With God all things are possible.” (Luke 1:37)

Now sometimes our Jewish friends have difficulty believing in the virgin birth. I always smile, because every Jew, you see, is here as a result of a miracle birth—every one of them! Isaac, who is the progenitor of the Jewish race through Abraham, was born of a miracle.

Now, listen. The birth of Isaac was prophesied. His birthday was preset. His name was given before he was born. He was conceived by a miracle. And he was called the only begotten of his father. Look in Genesis chapter 22 and verse 2, and the scripture that I just read to you: *“And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son...whom thou lovest”* (Genesis 22:2)—the only son of the father. What does that remind you of? It reminds me of John 3:16: *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.”* (John 3:16)

But not only that: we find that just as Jesus was raised from the dead, so was Isaac raised from the dead in a figure, in a type. I want you to go to the New Testament now, and turn to Hebrews chapter 11 for a moment, and let me show you another marvelously wonderful passage of Scripture. Hebrews chapter 11, and read with me verses 17 and following. The Bible says, *“By faith Abraham, when he was [tested],”—or “tried”—“offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called:”—now, watch verse 19—“accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead.”* (Hebrews 11:17–19)

Now you remember, this morning we said that Abraham knew God, who was able to

give life to the dead—a God who quickens the dead. That’s the reason, you’re going to see, that Abraham was willing to offer up Isaac. He said, “If I offer Isaac, I know that God has told me, on the one hand, that I’m going to have children through Isaac; I’m going to have children, great-grandchildren, and as many as the stars of the sky; I know, on the other hand, that God has told me to put him to death, so that just means one thing in my mind: that, if God told me that, I’m going to have a descendency through Isaac. And yet God told me to put Isaac to death. Then God is going to have to raise him from the dead. And so that’s what the Bible says: *“By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises”*—that is, that “you’re going to have a descendency and a great progeny”—*“offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead;”*—now, watch this—*“from whence also he received him in a figure”*—*“in a figure.”* (Hebrews 11:17–19) Now, though Isaac did not literally die, in the heart and mind of Abraham he was as good as dead; and, in a figure, in a type, in an illustration, God raised him from the dead, and Abraham received his son back from the dead.

Now, you tell me, therefore, if Isaac doesn’t picture the Lord Jesus Christ, whose birth was prophesied, whose birthday was preset, the One who was conceived and born of a miracle, the One who had a name before He was born, the One who fulfilled the covenant of God with His people, the One, as we’re going to see, who became the sacrifice on Mount Moriah, and the One who was received again from the dead. This is a shadow of the cross. It is a picture of the cross.

Now, look again, in Genesis chapter 22 and verse 2: *“And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee to the land of Moriah.”* (Genesis 22:2) Now *Moriah* is a name that has a meaning. And the meaning is “foreseen of Jehovah”—“foreseen of Jehovah.” That is, here’s something that God has foreseen; here’s something that God is looking forward to. It was not by incident, it was not by accident, that Isaac was taken to Mount Moriah. And I’ll tell you, if you were to put your hand at that moment upon the beating heart of Abraham, I believe you could measure the pulse beat of Almighty God, because here God was anticipating Calvary.

And it’s so very important that he should go to this place. Look again in verse 3: *“And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up,”*—now, watch this—*“and went unto the place of which God had told him.”* (Genesis 22:3) Notice, in verse 4: *“Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off.”* (Genesis 22:4) Notice, in verse 9: *“And they came to the place which God had told him of.”* (Genesis 22:9)

Now this place was foreseen; this place was foreordained. What happened here was

not accidental. What happened here was not incidental. What happened here was fundamental. The place where Isaac was offered was the same place where Jesus was crucified. If you go to the Holy Land, and they show you that place called Mount Calvary, I want to tell you that place called Mount Calvary also has a name, and it is Mount Moriah. It is the same place—the same place. It was in the heart and mind of God. That’s the reason Luke 23, verse 33, is so significant: *“And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him.”* (Luke 23:33) And we could read it this way: *“When they were come to the place, which is called Moriah, there they crucified Him.”* What I’m talking to you about tonight, ladies and gentlemen, is what I want to call the shadow of the cross. Jesus, from eternity past, lived in the shadow of that cross. And what you see here in the book of Genesis is but that shadow lengthening out and that shadow taking shape. And I want to tell you all of the Old Testament is but the shadow of the cross.

II. The Suffering of the Cross

Now the second thing I want you to see: not only the shadow of the cross, but I want you to see the suffering of that cross. Look in verses 4 and following. We’re in Genesis chapter 22, and I’m going to read verses 4 through 8: *“Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said to his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.”* Oh, you talk about faith. He said, *“The boy and I are going up the mountain, and the boy and I are coming back down the mountain again.”* *“And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand; and a knife; and they went both of them together. And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood:”—*that is, Isaac said to Abraham, *“Daddy, here’s the fire, and here’s the wood”—“but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.”* (Genesis 22:4–8) Just underscore that phrase: *“They went both of them together.”*

Now what happened is this: that God said to Abraham, *“Abraham, take Isaac, and take him up on this mountain to a place where I’ll show you, and there sacrifice him.”* Now until a certain time, they had an entourage with them; they had some young men who were there to help them. But there came a point, there came a place beyond which the others could not go; and so Isaac and his father go alone. I don’t know what that speaks to you about, dear friend; but that speaks to me of dark Gethsemane, where Jesus said to Peter and James and John, *“You tarry here,”* and Jesus went a little further to be with the Father alone as they talked about Calvary. Look, if you will, in

Mark chapter 14 with me, and begin reading in verse 33—Mark chapter 14 and verse 33: *“And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed,”*—that means he was deeply distressed—*“and to be very heavy;”*—very troubled—*“and he saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch.”* Isn’t that what they said to those young people: “You stay here. I and the lad will go further.” *“And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.”* (Mark 14:33–35) It speaks of dark Gethsemane.

You see, what was happening there, as father and son go up that mountain together, they’re communing on the way to the cross. Think of what went through Isaac’s mind. Isaac asks his father, “Father, I see the wood. I see the fire. Father, there’s a knife in your hand. Where’s the sacrifice?” Abraham says, “The Lord will provide a sacrifice.” Isaac can read his father’s face. Isaac is no fool. There are no more questions. In one hand is a fire; in the other hand is a knife. Can you imagine what must have been going through the heart and the mind of Isaac? Can you imagine what must have been going through the heart of Abraham as he was taking his precious son? I’ll tell you, anybody who has a child can use their imagination a little here.

I remember when our first son was born. I remember what my pastor said to me. He said, “Son, from this time on, you’ll understand the heart of God better.” He said, “Before you have children, you always think of the price that Jesus paid when He died on the cross. But after you have children, you understand more about God so loving the world that He gave His only begotten Son.”

That’s true. I remember when my son had to go to the hospital for a sickness and some surgery. It wasn’t major surgery, but it was major when they were doing it on my baby. And I remember sitting there and looking at that baby in that hospital bed. And I thought with all of my heart and soul, “Oh, I wish somehow that I could be there instead of that child. I wish that every pain that child feels I could feel.” And I would gladly do it. You know, I’d gladly die for any of my children. And I believe you would gladly die for any of your children.

How we sometimes fail to understand the great heart of God! And I believe here when we see Abraham, as he’s going up that hill, we have a picture of Father and Son in dark Gethsemane, and I believe that Abraham would say with David, as David said of Absalom: “Oh Absalom, Absalom! My son, Absalom! Would to God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, Absalom!” (2 Samuel 18:33) The suffering—the suffering—of the cross is pictured here.

III. The Submission of the Cross

Not only do you see the shadow of the cross; not only do you see the suffering of the

cross; but you see the submission of the cross. Look with me in verses 6 and following again: *“And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and he laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together.”* I’ve already asked you to underscore that. *“And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering:”—and again—“so they went both of them together.”* (Genesis 22:6–8)

Now you’re reasonable people. Isaac was a teenager at this time. I would estimate he was probably about sixteen or seventeen years of age. Abraham, if he was a hundred when Isaac was born, is now a very old man, very feeble. I want to ask you, do you believe there’s any way possible that Abraham could have sacrificed Isaac without Isaac’s submission, without Isaac willingly doing it? You see, as you study this picture, Isaac is not bound in chains; he’s not dragged up that mountain struggling and resisting. He could have outrun his daddy anytime. As a matter of fact, he could have overpowered his aged father. But here you see a picture, and a wonderful picture, not only of the suffering of the cross, but the submission of the cross. And it reminds me again of the Lord Jesus Christ going up that hill called Calvary, saying, *“Not my will, but thine, be done.”* (Luke 22:42) When Jesus Christ was on the cross, they taunted Him. They ridiculed Him. They laughed at Him. They scorned Him. And one of the scorns that they hurled in His teeth was this: *“He saved others; himself he cannot save.”* (Matthew 27:42; Mark 15:31) Friend, it wasn’t that; it was Himself He *would* not save.

I preached a sermon a long time ago on the man Jesus refused to save. That was Himself. There was only one that Jesus ever refused to save, and that was Himself. Isaac could have overpowered his father. Isaac could have outrun his father. But, oh, the submission of the cross. Isaac is saying, *“No man taketh my life from me: I lay it down of myself.”* (John 10:18) And the two of them went together.

IV. The Substitution of the Cross

I want you to notice something else. I want you to notice the substitution of the cross. Continue to read here in verse 9: *“And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.”* (Genesis 22:9–10) Now here Isaac is laid upon the wood, but he’s only laid upon the wood after the wood has been laid upon Isaac. Look back, if you will, in chapter 22, verse 6: *“And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son.”* (Genesis 22:6)

Now, why does the Bible mention this? Is this something mentioned just to fill up

space? No. Wood, in the Bible, is emblematic of humanity, of a man. If you'll note in the tabernacle, in the Ark of the Covenant, for example, the wood is overlaid with gold. That speaks of the humanity and the deity of the Lord Jesus. Gold is symbolic of the glory of God. Wood speaks of humanity. A righteous man is like a tree planted by the rivers of water. (Psalms 1:3) And so here is a picture of our humanity laid upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

And as Isaac is carrying this load of wood up the mountain, can you imagine what it would it be to carry a load of wood up a mountain? Well, turn to John chapter 19 for just a moment, if you will, and look with me in verse 17—John chapter 19 and verse 17: *“And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha: where they crucified him, and two other with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.”* (John 19:17–18) It was Jesus who carried His cross to Calvary. It was Jesus who had that wood laid upon His back until He stumbled beneath the load.

What does it picture? What is the illustration? I think it pictures the Lord Jesus Christ who laid aside the gold of His glory, and took the wood of our weakness and the wood of our wickedness, and laid it upon Himself. I believe that God is showing us here by shadow, and God is giving us a glimmer of the Lord Jesus. When the Bible says, *“All we like sheep have gone astray...and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all,”* (Isaiah 53:6) it speaks of the burden of our humanity, and the burden of our sin, and the burden of our weakness that was upon the Lord Jesus. Yes, the purpose of the cross was one of substitution. *“Him who knew no sin, God hath made to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”* (2 Corinthians 5:21)

V. The Sacrifice of the Cross

But I want you to see not only the substitution of that cross, but I want you to see the sacrifice of that cross, as we continue to read here in chapter 22, verses 9 and 10: *“And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.”* (Genesis 22:9–10) The wood, the fire, and the knife: the cords speak of the binding penalty of sin; the fire speaks of the burning penalty of sin; the knife speaks of the bleeding penalty for sin. It's all there. You see, at Calvary there was a sacrifice, because God demands a sacrifice for sin.

Now people have curled the lip, people have scorned and called God bloodthirsty; but I want to tell you, there is a binding, bleeding, burning penalty for sin. That's what we see here. That's what we see when they bound the Lord Jesus Christ, God's own Son. That's what we see when God's own Son on Calvary was laid out upon that wood

and nailed to that hellish tree. That's what we see when God raised the great knife of His fierce wrath upon the bosom of His own Son. There is a penalty for sin. Don't you think that your sin is going to be overlooked. It will not, dear friend. If God spared not His own Son, He's not going to spare you.

VI. The Significance of the Cross

Now there's one other thing I would have you to see: not only think of the sacrifice of the cross, but the significance of the cross. Look with me again in chapter 22, beginning in verse 11. Now, in verse 10, Abraham stretches forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. There is the chest of Isaac, and there is that heart beating, bound and quivering on the altar, on that wood that is going to make him a burnt sacrifice. And then verse 11: *"And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead"*—that is, in the place—"of his son." Now, watch verse 14: *"And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovahjireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen."* (Genesis 22:11–14)

Now, what is the significance of all of this? The knife did not fall upon Isaac, because one day God's wrath would fall upon Jesus. And why did God show Abraham a ram caught in the thicket—if you will, a ram with his horns locked in the branches; if you will, a ram with a crown of thorns? Why did God show that to Abraham? Because now very quickly God is going to pile type upon type, and illustration upon illustration; and God is going to give Abraham an illustration of substitution that he will never forget. Isaac is unbound. Isaac is removed from the altar. An innocent animal is slain and becomes a substitute. God has provided Himself a sacrifice.

Now, when Abraham saw that he named that place Jehovah Jireh, which means "the Lord will provide,"—that's what that name means: He is God, our provider. Jehovah Jireh is the name of that place. The name of Calvary is Jehovah Jireh. If you ever visit Calvary, you can say there is Mount Moriah, there is Calvary, there is Golgotha, and there is Jehovah Jireh, "God will provide."

What is God going to provide? What did the angel mean when he said, "God is going to provide"? Well, listen. In verse 8, Abraham said, *"God will provide himself a lamb."* (Genesis 22:8) That's one thing that God provided: a lamb. And notice what it says: *"God will provide himself a lamb,"* not, "God will provide a lamb for Himself." God is going to make Himself the provision. God will provide Himself as the lamb. *"Behold*

the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." (John 1:29) It was God manifest in the flesh.

And where is God going to provide Himself a lamb? Well, look at it again, if you will, in verse 14: *"In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen."* (Genesis 22:14) Where is it going to be seen? Who's going to be the lamb? Jesus. Where? On Mount Calvary. *"In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen."* Mount Moriah: that's where it's going to be. And when will it be done? When Jesus, the Lamb of God, comes to die upon the cross.

I wonder—I'm talking to you now about the significance of the cross. I wonder how Isaac must have felt when he saw that ram that became his substitute. I wonder if he didn't reach out and embrace that ram. I wonder if the tears did not flow down his cheeks as he thought of the reprieve that he had because one took his place and there was a substitutionary sacrifice that took his place.

Conclusion

I don't know what all of this says to you tonight, but I want to tell you what it says to me. Number one: It says to me we've got a wonderful book, the Bible, that can tell us all of this centuries before it happened, tucked away in type and illustration, and yet, when you see it, it seems to be as plain as day, and yet, for unsanctified eyes, they could read over it and never see it. How wonderful, how wonderful is the Bible!

But I tell you, how wonderful is the Savior of the Bible! It causes me to love the Lord Jesus. It causes me to think, not only did He die for me two thousand years ago, but a millennium before that it was in the heart and mind of God. Yea, Jesus was slain from the foundation of the world in the heart and mind of God. Before He swung this world into space, He anticipated Calvary.

And that causes me to love Him: to know that Calvary was no accident. I'll tell you what it means to me. As I studied this tonight, and looked at it anew and afresh, it just means to me I want to love Him more. I want to say, "Here, Lord, here's my life." I told Him that today already: "Here, Lord, I give myself to you anew and afresh. Anything I have, Lord, you can have. Lord, if you want me to die for you, I don't want to die early, but I'm willing. Lord, if you want any of my children, you can have them for service here, there, anywhere. Lord, if you want any of my possessions, they're yours. Lord, I'm not my own. I'm bought with a price.

*Love so amazing so divine
Demands my life, my soul my all.*

—ISAAC WATTS

This is the gospel according to Abraham. Hallelujah, what a Savior!

The Gospel According to Isaac

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: August 17, 1980

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 22:1–13

“And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.”

GENESIS 22:8

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Virgin Birth of Jesus
- II. The Virtuous Life of Jesus
- III. The Vicarious Death of Jesus
- IV. The Victorious Resurrection of Jesus
- V. The Visible Return of Jesus

Conclusion

Introduction

I want you to turn to Genesis chapter 22, if you will. And you will remember that we began two weeks ago a brand new series of messages called “Portraits of Christ in the Old Testament.” And I don’t know how long we’ll go in this series, because, actually, we’re just digging out of a bottomless well, and we are just inside the door of a fabulous gold mine, and nugget after nugget is here as we’re in this series of messages dealing with “Portraits of Christ in the Old Testament.”

Never make the mistake of thinking that the Old Testament is about something other than Jesus and the New Testament is about Jesus. Friend, all of the Bible is about Jesus. Somebody says, “Have you read the four Gospels?” Friend, I’ve read all sixty-six Gospels. Starting with the book of Genesis and going right on through, it’s all about the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is the theme of the Bible. Jesus is the hero of the Bible. And if you read the Bible and you don’t see Jesus, you’d better reread it, because standing somewhere in the shadows you’ll find Jesus. Jesus is there in prophecy. Jesus is there in illustration. Jesus is there in typology. Jesus is somewhere, somehow, in the Bible. Now some of these pictures are very dim indeed, and some of them are very bright and strong, but they are there, and they tell us about the Lord Jesus.

Now Jesus Himself taught this concept. This is not something that I’m forcing on the Bible. Do you remember there in Luke chapter 24 after the resurrection of the Lord

Jesus—and don't turn to it, because we're going to have plenty to turn to later on—but Jesus, after His resurrection, was walking along with two despondent disciples—and, incidentally, I'm going to preach on this passage tonight, so I don't want to say too much about it—but the Bible says to these people who did not at first recognize the Lord Jesus that “He opened to them the Scriptures,” and the Bible says that *“He [showed] them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.”* (Luke 24:27) Not all the things concerning Himself in the Scriptures, but *“in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.”* You say, “What's the difference?” I mean, dear friend, that in all of the Scriptures, there's Jesus.

Jesus said, in John chapter 5 and verse 39, *“Search the scriptures; for...they are they which testify of me,”* (John 5:39) and He was talking about the Old Testament. And, as a matter of fact, He says, in John chapter 5, verse 46, “Moses wrote of me.” (John 5:46) And the book that we're reading from today is a book that Moses wrote, the book of Genesis. And Jesus said, “Moses wrote of me.” “Search the Old Testament,” Jesus said, “for these Scriptures testify of me.” Christ is in all of the Scriptures, and we're going to see that again and again as we study together these portraits of Christ in the Old Testament.

Somewhere years ago some preacher came up with a tremendous outline on the life of Christ. I think all preachers at one time or another have borrowed it and used it to describe the life of Christ, because there are five great events in the life of Christ: first of all, His virgin birth; second, His virtuous life; third, His vicarious death; fourth, His victorious resurrection; and fifth, His visible return. You'll have to admit that's a good outline, isn't it? All right, that's not mine. It's almost common property. Preachers from time immemorial have used that outline of the life of Christ.

Now I want us to lay that outline that preachers have used from time immemorial about the life of Christ alongside the life of another man, a man named Isaac. And I want us to see from the Old Testament what I'm going to call today, “The Gospel According to Isaac,” because Isaac is an Old Testament portrait, picture, type, and prophecy of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now I'm reading here in Genesis chapter 22, beginning in verse 1: *“And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham...”*—now, let's just pull over and park right here for a minute. Look at that word *tempt*. It does not mean that God tried to get Abraham to do something sinful. This word here does not mean, “a solicitation to evil.” It is a word that means God tried Abraham, or God put Abraham to the test. That's what the word means. And so, let's read it that way—*“And it came to pass after these things, that God did [test] Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the*

mountains which I will tell thee of. And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him. Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you. And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together. And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together. And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said,—the angel said—“Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son.” (Genesis 22:1–13)

Now I'm going to assume today that you have a certain amount of Bible knowledge, that you know that Abraham in the Old Testament was the father of the faithful, the father of the Jewish race, and the Jews are the progeny of Abraham. But Abraham had no children, and when God called Abraham, God said, "I'm going to make a great nation out of you, Abraham, and through you all of the peoples of the world are going to be blessed." (Genesis 12:2–3) And God gave Abraham the promise of a son when Abraham and Sarah were too old to have a son. And they had a son. And that son was born of a miracle. His name was Isaac. And Abraham had all of his hopes in Isaac, and Abraham's heart was upon Isaac. He dearly loved Isaac. And then one day God told Abraham to take Isaac, his son, the son of promise and the son of prophecy, and to sacrifice him on a mountaintop in the land of Moriah.

That's the background for this passage of Scripture. And now as we get into it, I want you to see the exciting portrait of the Lord Jesus Christ as we lay the life of Isaac down by the life of the Lord Jesus, and see by what we call in theology a biblical type; that is, one thing standing for and representing something that is later to come.

I. The Virgin Birth of Jesus

First of all, let's think a little bit about the birth of Isaac, because we said that, in the history of the Lord Jesus Christ, those of us who are Christians know something of the virgin birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And I believe that the virgin birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is prophesied by type in the life of Isaac. Now, you see, both of the births of Isaac and Jesus were prophesied before they ever took place. Look, for example, in Genesis chapter 18, verse 9. Go backward just a little bit. Turn left, as we say. In Genesis 18 and verse 9—do you have it?—“*And they said unto him,*”—that is, the angels said unto Abraham—“*Where is Sarah thy wife? And he said, Behold, in the tent...*”—now, if it had been today, he would have said, “I don't know. She's off somewhere. She's got an automobile.” All right now—“*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,*”—she just giggled—“*saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?*” That is, “my husband.” She called him “lord,” ladies. “*And the LORD said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old? Is any thing too hard for the LORD? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.*” (Genesis 18:9–14)

Here God prophesied a miraculous birth: “*Sarah shall have a son.*” And so Abraham received a prophecy and a promise. Now we too, and all of the world, received a prophecy and a promise in Isaiah chapter 7 and verse 14, where the Bible says, “*Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son.*” (Isaiah 7:14) Both of these—Isaac and Jesus—were sons of prophecy and promise. And because they were, they were both born at a predetermined time, at a set time.

Notice in Genesis chapter 21 now, verses 1 and 2—Genesis 21, verses 1 and 2: “*And the LORD visited Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did unto Sarah as he had spoken.*” Hallelujah! What God says, He does. He always performs His Word. Every prophecy in the Bible will find its fulfillment. “*For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age,*”—now, underscore this next phrase—“*at the set time of which God had spoken to him.*” (Genesis 22:1–2) That is, Isaac was born, not a moment early, not a moment late—at the set time.

Now, so was the Lord Jesus. The Bible tells us, in Galatians chapter 4 and verse 4, that Jesus was born in “*the fulness of time.*” (Galatians 4:4) Daniel had prophesied the exact time of the coming of the Messiah. That's how those wise men from the East were studying the stars when they knew that the Messiah had been born. And they made their journey to the birthplace of the Lord Jesus Christ, because both of these were sons

of promise, and both of them were born at a precise time. Hallelujah! God is never in a hurry, and God is never late.

And both of them had their names given before they were born. Turn to Genesis chapter 17 and verse 19—Genesis 17 and verse 19: *“And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac.”* (Genesis 17:19) Now the father didn’t get to choose the name. The angel chose the name. And Joseph did not get to choose the name of Jesus. The angel also announced the name of Jesus. We read there, dear friend, in Matthew chapter 1, verse 21, that God’s holy angel said, *“And thou shalt call his name JESUS.”* (Matthew 1:21)

Both of these were sons of promise. Both of them were born at a predetermined time. Both of them had a name that was given to them from above. And both conceptions were a miracle. Now the conception that took place in the womb of Sarah so long ago, when Abraham was one hundred years old and Sarah was ninety years old, friend, that was a miracle. Here is a decrepit, senile, old man and woman who had their reproductive powers withered up and dried and dead. And yet God supernaturally performed a miracle when Isaac was born.

The Bible makes it very clear and very plain. Look in Genesis chapter 18 again and verse 14. You know, Sarah says, “Look, how could this happen? How is this going to be? Why,” she said, “I don’t have the power to bear a son. And my husband, he doesn’t have the power to father a son.” And I want you to notice the angel’s answer to Abraham about what Sarah said. The angel said, in verse 14, *“Is any thing too hard for the LORD?”* (Genesis 18:14)

Now I want to ask you a question. Is it? Just keep that in mind. Look. You know, sometimes people have difficulty with miracles. They say, “How could this be? How could that be? Do you really believe Jesus walked on water? Do you really believe He fed the five thousand? Do you really believe that He was born of a virgin?” I want to ask you a question, friend. Is anything too hard for the Lord? You see, if you believe in God, you don’t have any difficulty with any kind of miracle whatsoever, amen? People who have difficulty with miracles just have difficulty with God. I don’t know what kind of a God you believe in, but the God who formed this world out of nothing, the God who scooped out the seas, and heaped up the mountains, and flung out the stars—is anything too hard for that God?

But now, listen. That’s what God said to Abraham. But now, when Sarah had a question, God’s answer to Sarah’s question was really, “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” But I want you to think about another little lady, this time a youngster. Her name is Mary, and she received an announcement. Turn to Luke chapter 1, if you will, for a moment. She also is told about a child that she’s going to have, and she has some questions. Sarah had some questions. I want you to listen to the questions now of Mary—

Luke chapter 1, verse 30. The angel is talking to Mary: *“And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.”* Now, notice Mary’s question, in verse 34: *“Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?”* That is, “I’ve never had sexual intercourse with any man. I have not had a physical relationship with a man.” *“And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.”* (Luke 1:30–35) And now, put a big star by verse 37: *“For with God nothing shall be impossible.”* (Luke 1:37)

Now I want you to put those two statements together: the statement given to Mary, and the statement given to Sarah and Abraham. Those of you who have difficulty believing in the virgin birth, I want you to put those two statements together. I want you to put the statement together there in Genesis 18, verse 14, and the statement together in Luke chapter 1 and verse 37. And I want to make one a question and the other an answer.

Are you ready for the question? The question is this: “Is there anything too hard for the Lord?” That’s the question. The answer is: “For with God all things are possible.” Amen? All right now, just keep that in mind. You have difficulty believing in the virgin birth? Some of our Jewish friends say, “You Christians, you believe in the virgin birth,” and they act like we’re credulous for believing in the virgin birth. I want to tell you, every Jew that you see walking the streets of this city, or any city, is the by-product of a miracle birth—every one of them.

You see, dear friend, you believe in God. You believe in miracles. And here God typified so long ago in the Old Testament the miracle birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Can you imagine an old man, one hundred years of age, coming out of the maternity room shouting, “It’s a boy”? Can you imagine that? Listen. We see here way back in the Old Testament a picture, a prophecy, a portrait of the Lord Jesus Christ—His virgin birth.

Somebody says, “Well, what’s so great about virgin birth? What difference does it make?” It’s the difference between life and death, heaven and hell, for you, my dear friend. *If Jesus wasn’t born of a virgin, your hope of heaven isn’t worth half a hallelujah.* You say, “Why?” Well, you see, Jesus had to be a man in order to be a substitute; but also, in order to redeem us, He had to be a sinless man. And, therefore, in order to be a man, and in order to be a sinless man, He had to be born of a virgin. For had He been born as you were born, I was born, then He would have had the bloodline

of Adam, and *“In Adam all die.”* (1 Corinthians 15:22)

Now I want to tell you that the blood that circulates in a little baby’s body when that baby is carried in the womb of his mother is not the same blood that circulates through the mother’s body, contrary to some popular opinion. That little baby may have a completely different type blood, type A, or O, or whatever, than the mother has. You see, the bloodline comes not from the mother, but from the father.

That’s the reason the Bible speaks of the blood of Jesus, in Acts chapter 20—listen to it now—as the blood of God—the blood of God. (Acts 20:28) You see, Jesus was born not as we were born. He did not inherit the sin nature of Adam. But Jesus was sinless. And, therefore, because Jesus was sinless, and only because Jesus was sinless, could He die for the sins of the whole world. He had to be sinless to redeem us. He had to be a man to redeem us. He had to be a sinless man to redeem us. He had to be virgin-born in order to be a sinless man, in order to redeem us. Thank God for the virgin birth! He came to earth that you might go to heaven. He was born of a virgin that you might be born again. And we see it all typified, and, in a way, prophesied, so long ago in the Old Testament.

II. The Virtuous Life of Jesus

But not only His virgin birth; I want you to notice also His virtuous life. You see, that also is typified. What made the life of the Lord Jesus Christ so virtuous? I’ll tell you what made it so virtuous. His will was submitted totally, completely, one hundred percent to God. He says, *“In the volume of the book it is written of me, I come to do thy will, O God.”* And Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, *“Not my will, but thine, be done.”* (Luke 22:42)

I want you to see how Isaac typifies and pictures that same thing as we think about the life of Isaac. Now, in Genesis chapter 22, where we are, God has told Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. So Abraham takes Isaac, two young men, the provisions for the sacrifice, and they start together up that mountain. And when it is time for the sacrifice, finally, Abraham has to explain to Isaac that Isaac is to be the sacrifice. Now I want you to put yourself in that place. You are a young, virile man, completely healthy and strong. Your father is well up in age, well over one hundred years of age, and you’re just a youngster, strong, fast of foot. Do you think that there’s any way possible that that old man could put you to death? No.

You see, Isaac could have easily overpowered his father. Isaac could have easily outrun his father. But I want you to notice in chapter 22, verse 5, as an illustration of all of it. Look, if you will, please, and the Bible says here, *“And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and will come again to you. And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it*

upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together” —“*together.*” (Genesis 22:5–6) Again, Isaac, submitting to his father, in perfect trust—in perfect trust. Again, Isaac is saying, “Not my will, but thine, be done, father Abraham.” And here again we see the virtuous life of the Lord Jesus Christ typified here in this story.

III. The Vicarious Death of Jesus

But let’s move on to the next chapter: not only his virgin birth, not only his virtuous life, but also his vicarious death. Now the word *vicarious* means “in the place of another.” It means that Jesus Christ died, not for His own sins, but He died for the sins of the world. And Isaac had done nothing wrong. He’d done nothing, either, to deserve this kind of a death. But he is dying. He is to be put to death, according to what the Bible says here. Notice again in Genesis chapter 22, verses 1 and 2: “*And it came to pass after these things, that God did [test] Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I shall tell thee of.*” (Genesis 22:1–2)

You will never know how much Abraham loved Isaac. All of his hope was in Isaac. All of the promises of God were in Isaac. The covenant was in Isaac. Abraham loved this son. And now God says, “Offer up your only son, whom you love.” Does that remind you of anything? Friend, if you’re thinking, it reminds you of something, amen? “*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son*” (John 3:16)—incidentally, a Son that He loved, for God said, “*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*” (Matthew 3:17)

Years ago, I read about a preacher who was backing out of his driveway. His little boy loved to play hide-and-seek with his daddy. And this preacher’s little boy jumped out from behind the bushes and said, “Boo, Daddy!” But Daddy didn’t hear him, because he was behind the automobile. This preacher heard that sickening thud as he backed out over and crushed the body of his little boy. And he picked up that crushed little body. The life had already gone from the little youngster. And he was so brokenhearted. Later on he told a preacher friend about it. And the preacher’s friend’s name was Bob. And this older preacher told the younger preacher with the tears streaming down his cheeks, he said concerning the death of his son, “Bob, I wouldn’t have done it for the world”—“I wouldn’t have done it for the world.”

But God did for the world—for the world. “*For God so loved the world, that he gave*”—He gave, He gave—“*his only begotten Son*”—for the world. (John 3:16) And here God says to Abraham, “Take Isaac now. Take him, your only son, the son that you love, and I want you to offer him at a particular place.”

Now what was the place where he was told to offer him? Look in verse 2, if you will. It was in the land of Moriah. (Genesis 22:2) And then, not just in the land of Moriah, but on a certain mountain in the land of Moriah. Do you know where that was? It was on Mount Moriah. Do you know what's on Mount Moriah? The temple. It's where all of the sacrifices were to be made, later on. But that's not the most exciting thing. Actually, the Bible tells us, in 2 Chronicles chapter 3, verse 1—if you want to put it in your margin there by verse 2, just write in there 2 Chronicles 3:1—that tells you that the temple was built on Mount Moriah. (2 Chronicles 3:1) But, you see, the temple was built on Mount Moriah, and Abraham offered Isaac on Mount Moriah, because both of those things were pointing to that one sacrifice that would be made on Mount Moriah. Where did Jesus Christ die? Jesus died on Mount Moriah.

Oh, friend, get it in your heart now! Understand it! As you go to Jerusalem, if you go—we'll all go in the Millennium and have a visit—when you go to Jerusalem and you look at that temple area, and then you turn and you look toward the north, and you see that mountain as it continues to go, and you look right down that mountain, and you'll see that skull-shaped hill, that same Mount Moriah. And it was there on that skull-shaped hill that Jesus died some 2,000 years ago. And the Bible tells us, in Leviticus chapter 1 and verse 11, that when a sacrifice was made, you were to pour out the blood on the north side of the altar. If you stand in the temple area and look north, you'll see Calvary there, where the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the song says, was spilt. But it wasn't spilt; it was poured out. Jesus said, "No man takes it from me. I lay it down of myself." (John 10:18)

And I want to tell you, dear friend, how marvelous it is that God took this one specific spot, and God said, "Abraham, I don't want you to sacrifice your son any place else, but I want him sacrificed on Moriah, on the mountain that I tell you of." And I believe in that exact same spot where Abraham lifted that knife is where Jesus died on a bloody cross. I believe that. I don't believe that the temple was built where Isaac was sacrificed. I believe that Jesus died—that's what I believe—right where Isaac was sacrificed. I believe, my dear friend, that that bloody spot was Calvary.

But now I want to tell you, dear friend, that both sons here carried the wood for their execution. Look in chapter 22 and verse 6: "*And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together*" (Genesis 22:6)—fire representing the judgment of God, the knife representing the life being cut off. And now they're going up this mountain. They're going up the hill of Calvary. And here is Isaac going up the hill of Calvary with that bundle of wood on his back. What does that remind you of? And what does that speak to you of? You turn to John chapter 19, verse 17, and you'll read of the Lord Jesus Christ bearing His cross and going up that same mountain, carrying that wooden cross

upon his back. (John 19:17)

Both of these sons, dear friend, were sacrificed in the heart and mind of their father before they ever went to the place of sacrifice. I want to ask you, when did Isaac die in the heart and mind of Abraham? Pay attention, because I'm going to come back to it in a moment. Isaac died in the heart and mind of Abraham the minute the command was given for him to be put to death. When God said to Abraham, "Sacrifice Isaac," he was as good as dead. Now it's very important for you to remember that, because the Bible says that Abraham offered Isaac; not that he was willing to, but that he did. Literally, in Abraham's heart and mind, Isaac was offered. I mean, it was as good as done.

When we were kids, one of the big days for us would be to go for a ride on Sunday afternoon. My dad would get out the old flivver, and we'd go for a ride, and we would go past a place and go buy gingerbread, and we'd buy a gallon of milk. And we'd ride through the countryside. I used to love that. But I had to sit in the back seat with my brother. And he and I would get sometimes in an awful fight back there on Sunday afternoon in the back seat. My dad would say something like this: "Boys, when we get home, I'm going to whip you." Now, friend, that was it. I mean, it was done—it was done. I mean, no Fifth Amendment, no plea bargaining, nothing. If the Rapture had taken place, he would have whipped us on the way up. I mean, it was done.

Now that's something like what we're talking about here when God said that Abraham actually offered Isaac. I'm going to show you that in a moment, because it's so important for you to understand that Isaac, in the heart and mind of Abraham, was dead from the moment God commanded him to offer him. And what does that remind us of? Well, you read in Revelation chapter 13 and verse 8 where Jesus was "*slain from the foundation of the world.*" (Revelation 13:8) You see, listen. In the heart and mind of God, God had given His Son before He created this world and swung this planet into space. You see, it was done in the heart and mind of God. And so both fathers literally sacrificed their son: one, in actuality; the other, by faith. But both made a sacrifice of a broken heart.

And so we see the death of Isaac. Now it is true that at just the moment when the knife begins to plunge in, God said, "Abraham, you can't do it! I know that you've not withheld your son. You have given your son." Now that sacrifice had taken place typically; potentially, it had already taken place.

And then God gives another beautiful type of a substitutionary death. I wish I had time to talk about that, the ram caught in a thicket, because now for a moment Isaac stops being a type and the ram starts being a type.

IV. The Victorious Resurrection of Jesus

But we'll get to that one later on, because I want you to see that here was, first of all, a

picture of a virgin birth. Here's a picture of a virtuous life. Here's a picture of a vicarious death. And now I want you to see a picture of a victorious resurrection. I want you to read something that just makes me so excited when I think about it. Turn to it here in Genesis chapter 22, and beginning in verse 3. Now in verse 2, God had said, "Sacrifice Isaac." And remember, in the heart and mind of Abraham, it was as good as done. Now, look in verse 3: "*And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him. Then on the third day*"—just underscore that: on the third day—"Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass;"—now, notice verse 5, the last part—"and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you." (Genesis 22:3–5) "We're both going up, and we're both coming down," amen? Amen. Now, listen. Pay attention. "We're both going up, and we're both coming down." And yet he was going up there to put him to death.

Now, what does all that mean? Well, thank God we don't have to wonder about it. Turn to Hebrews for a moment, and look in the book of Hebrews with me—in Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 17. You know, there are some of you that may think that I'm reading into this, and I'm just making this all up, and that all of this is not really a picture of the Lord Jesus. Well, I'm about to blow you out of the saddle. All right now, look. Turn to Hebrews chapter 11 and look in verse 17: "*By faith Abraham, when he was tried,*"—tested—"offered up Isaac:"—it doesn't say that he was willing to offer him up; it says he offered him up. That is, in the heart and mind of Abraham, by faith, it was as good as done. Do you understand? He offered him. It doesn't say he was willing to offer him. He offered him. He gave him—"and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son." (Hebrews 11:17)

How could he do such a thing, knowing that all of the promises were in that son? Well, look, if you will, in verse 19: "*Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence he received him in a figure*" (Hebrews 11:19)—in a type. He received him. Abraham received Isaac from the dead. And when God said to Abraham, "Abraham, don't harm the child! Stay your hand!" at that moment, that son who had been dead for three days came back to life.

It is not without accident that the Bible says it was on the third day that he saw that place. For three days, potentially, typically, Isaac had been dead. And the Bible says that Abraham received his son from the dead. "You stay here," he says, "we're going up, but we're both coming back."

Oh, I'm so excited about this! Isn't it wonderful? Isn't it wonderful that you see His virgin birth typified? Isn't it wonderful that you see His virtuous life typified? Isn't it wonderful that you see His vicarious death typified? Isn't it wonderful that you see His

victorious resurrection typified? What's so important about the resurrection? Again, I just want to say, your salvation—that's all, dear friend! No virgin birth, no salvation! No crucifixion, no salvation! No resurrection, no salvation! The Bible says He was buried for our offenses, but He was raised again for our justification. (Romans 4:25) I like what somebody said about the resurrection. Somebody said, "If Jesus Christ is still in that tomb, nothing really matters. But if Jesus Christ came out of that tomb, nothing but that really matters," amen? Now, you think about it. I mean, if He is "shown to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead," (Romans 1:4) and here in a type, in a figure, it was prophesied so long ago, thank God for it—for this son that was received again from the dead.

V. The Visible Return of Jesus

Now, let's go on to the last point, because we said also that Isaac typifies the visible return of the Lord Jesus. Did you know that Jesus is coming one day soon? Now, when I say "soon," that's just sort of a holy hunch I have. I can't prove it. *"That day and that hour knoweth no man."* (Matthew 24:36; Mark 13:32) I want to tell you something. Jesus is coming this afternoon at 2:59 p.m. ...perhaps. Jesus is coming. We don't know when.

I read in the paper the other day where the Israelis had made Jerusalem now their capital city. You read where Zechariah says, "In the last days Jerusalem shall be a burdensome stone for all people." (Zechariah 12:3) You read that. And you read that the Bible says that, "Jerusalem will be trodden under the feet of the Gentiles until the time of the Gentiles will be fulfilled." (Luke 21:24) Now up until this time, the Gentiles, at least in some way or another, had control over Jerusalem. But now it has been made the capital city. I don't know what all that means. I'm going to study that and think about it some more. But I want to just tell you this, folks. There are things going on. There are some things going on. And I believe that those of us who are alive and living in this day need to keep our knees on the floor and our face in this book. And we need to be understanding what the times are, and living in keeping with the urgency and the emergency of the hour. For Jesus Christ is, one of these days, going to burst through the blue with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, and we're going to rise up to meet Him in the air. I believe that. And I think that Isaac here pictures that.

Now here's an interesting thing. Abraham said, "You stay here. The lad and I are going up. The lad and I will come back." And so, obviously, Isaac went up the mountain. He came back from the mountain. And the two men—two is the number of witnesses—they saw him. After Jesus' resurrection He appeared to many witnesses. But now here's a strange thing. Isaac now is removed from the scene. And as you read Genesis chapter 23, you don't read anything about Isaac; at least, he's not on the scene. We don't know where he was. He had to be somewhere. But the writer of the Scripture doesn't mention

him. And he does not appear back on the scene until the close of chapter 24. And what does he appear for? Now I want you to notice this, because I'm going to preach about it next Sunday. You just get ready and start licking your chops—not because of the sermon, but because of the subject.

I want you to go back now and look, if you will, to Genesis chapter 24. You see, look. The type now becomes so beautiful, because Isaac needs a bride. And so Abraham, who was the father, sends the servant to seek a bride. Now the name of the servant we find in another place was Eliezer, which means “God’s helper.” Eliezer is a type or picture of the Holy Spirit of God. And I want you to notice here in Genesis chapter 24, verse 1: *“And Abraham was old, and well stricken in age: and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things. And Abraham said unto his elder servant of his house,”*—now, notice how the servant is described—*“that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh: and I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Caananites, among whom I dwell: but thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac.”* (Genesis 24:1–4)

Now here was the servant, sent by the father to seek a bride for the son. Can't you see God the Father sending the Holy Spirit into this world to seek a bride for His Son, the Lord Jesus? And don't you know that the Bible tells us, in Ephesians chapter 5, that the Church is the Bride of Christ? (Ephesians 5:23–32) And don't you know that this message this morning through God's servant and preacher is the Holy Spirit seeking you to be a bride for our Heavenly Isaac, the Lord Jesus? Don't you know that's what it's all about? Don't you know that the Heavenly Father is using the Holy Spirit today, and the Holy Spirit is serving the Father to seek a bride for the Son? Don't you know that?

And I don't want to tell too much of the story, but you talk about a super salesman! Listen. This fellow, Eliezer, went into a far country, and he found a beautiful virgin girl named Rebekah. And he started bragging about Isaac. He didn't speak of himself. All he spoke about was Isaac. He told how strong Isaac was, how handsome Isaac was, how kind Isaac was, how rich Isaac was, how wise Isaac was! And he had all of the father's riches, and he kept giving her these jewels and these tokens of Isaac's love. And do you know what he persuaded her to do? Pay attention. He persuaded her to leave houses and land and father and mother, and go with a man that she had never met to marry a man she'd never seen. He had to have been a pretty good salesman—huh, ladies?

But listen. Have you ever thought of that scripture that speaks of our Lord Jesus Christ, where the Bible says, *“Whom having not seen, ye love”*? (1 Peter 1:8) I love Him. I'll tell you why I love Him—and I do love Him! I love Jesus! I do! I'll tell you why I love

Him. I really love Him, because God, the Holy Spirit, makes Him real to me. I've not seen Him. But I want you to see how this chapter ends. I wasn't prepared for that, but listen—listen. Look in verse 64. Rebekah has been traveling now with Eliezer, because he has been her paraclete; he has been her guide; he has been her comforter. And we read in verse 64, *“And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel. For she had said unto the servant, What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant had said, It is my master: therefore, she took a veil, and covered herself. And the servant told Isaac all things that he had done. And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife.”* (Genesis 24:64–67) And as the tent folds close together, we could say, “And they lived happily ever after”—“happily ever after.”

What a scene! She's been traveling along, and there she sees him. And her companion says, “That's him!” And she goes out to meet him. You see, dear friend, that's the way the Church is going to end. The Holy Spirit is going to say, “That's Him” when He appears in the sky. And we'll be caught up in the arms of our dear Savior to live forever with Him. And I don't know when it's going to come, and you don't know when it's going to come, but we'll rise to meet Him in the air. Yes, His visible return is pictured by Isaac.

Conclusion

It makes me love the Bible, friend. But I'll tell you even more than that: it makes me love the Lord Jesus, amen? It makes me want you to be saved. It makes me want you to know the Lord Jesus. So when He comes, the Holy Spirit in you will say, “That's Him!” And you'll rise to meet Him, and you'll know Him, because He died for you. He rose for you. He's coming for you.

*Living, He loved [you]; dying, He saved [you];
Buried, He carried [your] sins far away;
Rising, He justified freely forever:
One day He's coming—oh glorious day!*

—J. WILBUR CHAPMAN

A Dress Rehearsal for Calvary

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: May 24, 1981

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 22:1–14

“And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.”

GENESIS 22:10

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Way of the Cross
- II. The Woe of the Cross
- III. The Willingness of the Cross
- IV. The Weight of the Cross
- V. The Word of the Cross

Conclusion

Introduction

Take your Bibles, please, and find the book of Genesis, and the twenty-second chapter of that book—Genesis chapter 22. You will remember that about a year ago I preached a series of messages on Christ in the Old Testament. And in that time we dealt with this chapter. We shall deal with it again today, because, indeed, it is a veritable mountain peak in the Word of God. And I want you to find Genesis chapter 22. It’s one of the great, great chapters in all of the Bible. And I want to read with you now the first 14 verses of Genesis chapter 22:

*“And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham”—now, let me pause right here to say, when the Bible says “that God did tempt Abraham,” it does not mean that God solicited Abraham to do evil. The Bible says, “God tempteth no man with evil, neither can He be tempted with evil.” (James 1:13) The word here, *tempt*, means “tested” or “tried.” God did test Abraham, or God did try Abraham—“and said unto him, Abraham, and he said, Behold, here am I. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of. And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him. [And] on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here*

with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you. And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together. And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for [the] burnt offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together. And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son. And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovahjireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen.” (Genesis 22:1–14)

At 11:30 a.m., on May 29, in 1953, Sir Edmund Hillary hoisted the British flag upon the top of Mount Everest. He had climbed to the top, and, in so doing, became the first man to conquer that mountain. He had veritably climbed to the very top of the world, as he scaled the awesome face of Mount Everest. As he did, he faced discouragement, he faced danger, he faced disaster, he faced death, as he made his way up sheer mountain faces, great walls of ice, gaping crevices, falling boulders. His arms were aching. His supplies were running low, his spirit sometimes jaded, but he pressed on and on against the bitter cold and the elements until finally he stood where no other man had ever stood, 29,002 feet above the level of the sea, and planted the British flag there upon Mount Everest. And no other man will ever climb higher, because there's nowhere higher to climb than what this man climbed, in the physical sense. But I believe, ladies and gentlemen, that we come to another mountain here in Genesis chapter 22 that rears its head—Mount Moriah. And we come to two mountaineers, Abraham and Isaac, who will climb higher spiritually than any man had ever climbed up to this point—or, I think, ever will climb upon this earth—other than the Son of God Himself, as they climb to this spiritual pinnacle that is described for us here in Genesis chapter 22.

Abraham climbed the highest mountain of submission, and Isaac climbed the highest mountain of sacrifice, because you will remember that Abraham was the friend of God—the man of faith. And God had promised him a son, and God said to Abraham, “Through this son I'm going to bless the entire world, and I'm going to make you a father of many

nations.” (Genesis 17:4) And God comes to him in this chapter and says, “Take Isaac, your only son. Take him up to a mountain that I’ll show you, and there offer him for a burnt offering. Sacrifice him. Put him to death.” (Genesis 22:2) Abraham, doubtless, is in consternation; he cannot understand it. But by this time he has learned to say yes to the commands of Jehovah God. And he takes this boy Isaac, and they start up the mountainside. And Isaac sees Abraham with a knife in one hand and the fire in the other hand, and Isaac says, “Father, I see the knife. I see the fire. I see the wood. But where’s the sacrifice?” And Abraham, with his bosom heaving, says, “*My son, God will provide himself a lamb for [the sacrifice].*” (Genesis 22:8) Then, up the mountain they go. Isaac is bound. He himself is laid upon that wood. Abraham’s hand is raised to the heavens. He’s ready to plunge it into the heaving bosom of his son Isaac when the angel of the Lord Jehovah God stops him and says, “Abraham, hold your hand. I know now that you fear me. I know that you will obey me.” And then Abraham sees a ram caught in a thicket by his horns, and the ram becomes a substitute for Isaac. And the ram itself is slain. Isaac is set free. Now that’s the basic story.

But my, what rich lessons are here for us today! I want to speak to you today on this subject: “A Dress Rehearsal for Calvary”—“A Dress Rehearsal for Calvary”—because I believe, indeed, in Genesis chapter 22, that is precisely what we see. Now some of you may think in a moment that I’m going to read too much into this Old Testament scripture. You’re going to think that I’m trying to see too much New Testament truth way back here in the book of Genesis. But I think not. The Bible says, in John chapter 8, verse 56—the Lord Jesus Christ is speaking, and this is what Jesus said—Jesus said, “*Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.*” (John 8:56) That is, Abraham saw Jesus in the Old Testament. “*Abraham rejoiced to see my day...he saw it, and [he] was glad.*” And the Bible tells us, in the book of Galatians chapter 3 and verse 8, that the gospel was preached to Abraham. (Galatians 3:8) And the Bible tells us, in the book of Romans, that Abraham was justified by trusting in the Lord and by believing the gospel. (Romans 4:2) Isaac is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ who died upon the cross. Isaac is an Old Testament portrait, an Old Testament prophecy, an Old Testament type and picture and projection of the Lord Jesus Christ, who would one day die upon the cross, because the book of Genesis is the seedbed of all Christian theology and doctrine that will follow.

And I preached a message a while back where I showed you how Isaac was a type of Christ, and you will remember some of these things. For example, the birth of Isaac was prophesied before he was born, just as the birth of the Lord Jesus was prophesied: “*Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and be with child.*” (Isaiah 7:14) Isaac’s birth date was preset. As a matter of fact, you are there—turn back to Genesis chapter 21 and look in verses 1 and 2: “*And the LORD visited Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did unto*

Sarah as he had spoken. For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age”—now, notice this phrase—*“at the set time of which God had spoken to him.”* (Genesis 21:1–2) Isaac was born right at the precise time. The Bible tells us that Jesus was born in *“the fulness of...time.”* (Galatians 4:4) I believe that the prophet Daniel prophesied the time of the birth of the Lord Jesus, and Jesus’ birthday was prophesied and preset.

Jesus was named before His birth, and so was Isaac named before his birth. Go back to Genesis chapter 17, and look, if you will, in verse 19: *“And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bare thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac.”* (Genesis 17:19) That reminds us of Matthew chapter 1, verse 21: *“Thou shalt call his name JESUS.”* (Matthew 1:21) Both of these sons who were prophesied, both of these sons who were born at a set time—both of them had names from heaven; both of them were conceived by a miracle. Now you know that little Isaac was born when Abraham was one hundred years of age and when Sarah was ninety years of age. And Sarah, when she heard about the fact that she was going to have a child, asked a very interesting question. She said, “How”—in chapter 18, verse 13, she said, “How can this happen? How can I have this child?” (Genesis 18:13) And the angel answered—and here’s a great verse; look at it, in Genesis chapter 18 and verse 14—the angel said, *“Is any thing too hard for the LORD?”* (Genesis 18:14)

What does that remind you of? I’ll tell you what it reminds me of. It reminds me of the first chapter of the Gospel of Luke in the New Testament, when there was another woman who was to have a miracle child. Her name was Mary, and Mary asked the angel, “How can this be? How can these things be?” And the angel answered Mary, in Mark chapter 10, verse 27, *“With God all things are possible.”* (Mark 10:27) It reminds me precisely of this Old Testament text: *“Is [there] any thing too hard for the LORD?”* (Genesis 18:14) As a matter of fact, if you put them together, it makes a question and an answer: *“Is [there] any thing too hard for the LORD?” “With God all things are possible.”* Both of them were born of a miracle birth.

Both of them are the only son of promise and prophecy. Look, if you will, in Genesis chapter 22, verse 2. When God told Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, He said, *“Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering.”* (Genesis 22:2) What does that remind you of? When Abraham is told to take his only son—and, as the book of Hebrews calls him, *“his only begotten son”*—it reminds me of John chapter 3, verse 16: *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life”* (John 3:16)—the only begotten of the Father offered up as a sacrifice.

And not only that, but Isaac was received back to Abraham as though he had come

back from the dead. He actually prefigures, not only the death of Jesus, but the resurrection of Jesus. And lest you think I'm stretching the point, turn to the book of Hebrews chapter 11—it's worth turning to—and read with me verses 17 and following—Hebrews chapter 11 and begin reading in verse 17. Now, folks, these scriptures are worth seeing. All right, I'm going to read, beginning in verse 17—Hebrews 11:17: *“By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called”*—and why did he offer him up? Well, look in verse 19—*“accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.”* (Hebrews 11:17–19) That means “in a type”—the words *figure* and *type* mean the same thing. That is, Isaac was raised from the dead figuratively, typically. When Abraham went up that mountain to offer his son Isaac, he told those, “You stay here. We're going up to worship the Lord, and the lad and I both are coming back down.”

How could he say such a thing? He knew if God told him to put him to death, God would have to make him alive again—amen?—because God had made a promise through Isaac, and he knew somehow, someway, that Isaac was going to live, that he could not die, because of the promise that God had made. And so when Abraham came back down that mountain with Isaac, the Bible says, figuratively, Abraham had received him from the dead. He prefigures not only the death of the Lord Jesus, but the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Jesus died literally, and Isaac died figuratively. But I want you to see beyond the shadow of any doubt or peradventure that the Bible uses this man Isaac as a type of picture of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I. The Way of the Cross

Now, having said all of that, I want you to see with me today what I call “A Dress Rehearsal for Calvary.” Go back now to Genesis chapter 22, and the first thing I want you to notice is what I want to call the way of the cross. There's a word that's a very interesting word that comes in verse 3, verse 4, and verse 9. Look at it. In verse 3, God says this: *“And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place...”*—now, just underscore that word *place*—*“the place of which God had told him.”* And then, look if you will, in verse 4—*“Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place.”* (Genesis 22:3–4) Just underscore the word *place* there one more time. And then, look if you will, please, in verse 9: *“And they came to the place which God had told him of”* (Genesis 22:9)—the place, the place, the place. Do you know what the name *Moriah* means? It means “chosen of God” or “foreseen of God”—that God had Moriah in His heart and in His mind. God had chosen it. God had foreseen it. This place was not incidental. This

place was not accidental. This place was fundamental to the plan of Almighty God. God had one place on all of this earth in mind where He wanted Abraham to take Isaac. It was a place foreseen of God. It was a place chosen of God.

Why? Because it was the same place later that Jesus was to die. Jesus died, my friend, on Mount Moriah. And from eternity past, God had that hill called Calvary in His heart and in His mind. And from eternity past, Jesus walked the way of the cross. Jesus said, *“To this end was I born.”* (John 18:37) Jesus steadfastly set His face toward Jerusalem. Jesus came out of the ivory palaces and into this world of woe to go to that place, and that’s the reason we read, in Luke chapter 23, verse 33, in the New Testament, *“And when they were come to the place...called Calvary, there they crucified him.”* (Luke 23:33) That place and this place were the same place. Isaac was offered upon Calvary. Jesus was offered upon Calvary. It was the place appointed of God, the place chosen of God, the place foreseen of God. It is the way of the cross, and Jesus walked the way of the cross.

II. The Woe of the Cross

But I want you to see not only the way of the cross; I want you to see with me this morning the woe of the cross—the woe, the anguish of the cross. Look, if you will, please, in verse 4: *“Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.”* (Genesis 22:4–5) The young men went with Abraham and Isaac as far as they could go, but there was a place, there was a point, there was a line of demarcation beyond which they could not go. And the young men stayed, and the father and the son went up that rugged hill together and alone.

What does this speak of? It speaks of dark Gethsemane. I want you to turn, in the New Testament, to Mark chapter 14 for a moment. Turn to Mark chapter 14, and I want you to look with me, please, in verses 34 and following. Remember now that Abraham has said to the young men, “You stay here. I and the lad are going further.” I’m reading here in Mark chapter 14 and verse 34: *“And [Jesus said] unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch. And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.”* (Mark 14:34–36) Here are the father and the son going further and going alone. I believe what happened here on Mount Moriah is but a prefiguring of dark Gethsemane, when the Father and the Son alone trudged that pathway, that way of the cross.

Can you imagine what was going through Isaac’s mind as they go up that mountain

together? And there is the aged father, now over one hundred years of age, with the fire in one hand and the knife in the other. He sees the wood, and he says, “Father, I see the wood. I see the fire. I see the knife. Where’s the sacrifice?” And with a quivering chin, Abraham says, “The Lord will provide Himself a lamb for the sacrifice.” (Genesis 22:8) And Isaac looks into the face of Abraham, and he asks no more questions. Isaac senses—he knows—what his father can no further articulate. And there are no more questions from Isaac. Can you imagine what went through the heart of Isaac as father and son go up that mountain together? Can you imagine what went through the heart of Abraham? My dear friend, Genesis chapter 22 is as close as you’ll find to finding the pulse beat, the heartbeat, of God. If you want to know what God felt when Jesus went up the hill of Calvary, place your hand on the bosom of Abraham and feel what went through Abraham’s heart as he went up that mountain with Isaac. Only God knows.

I remember when our first child was born. My pastor said to me, “Adrian, you used to love God because of what Jesus did for you on the cross, but,” he said, “now that you’ve had children of your own, now that you have a son of your own, you’ll understand more about Calvary. You’ll see it: not only the love that Jesus had when He died for you, but you’ll see the love now that God the Father had when He gave His Son.” And how true that was! How true that was!

When God gave us that precious little boy Stephen, named after that Stephen in the Bible who had a face like an angel, and Stephen had to have some minor surgery as a baby, I remember taking that little baby boy to that hospital and looking at that doctor. I looked at him from top to bottom, this way, that way, thought to myself, “Where did he go to school? What does he know about all of this? Is he good enough to lay one finger on that baby?” And I remember that hopeless feeling as I stood there and watched them take my little baby boy out themselves, without me even standing there, just trusting that baby boy to them. I remember when he came back out of the surgery. He had a little mark on his face, where they put that cup on his mouth to put him to sleep, and his hair was standing straight up. He was ridiculous looking—really was. His hair was standing straight up on his head. I looked down at that little baby boy, and I thought, “Oh, my God, I’d love to trade places with him, if somehow I could get him off, if somehow I could put myself down there.” I believe that I felt what ol’ David felt in the Old Testament when he said, “Absalom, my son! My son, Absalom! Would to God I could die for thee! Absalom, my son! Absalom!” (2 Samuel 19:4)

Only God knows what was going through the heart of Abraham at this time. I believe it prefigures dark Gethsemane. “You stay here. The lad and I are going together.” And Jesus went into Gethsemane, and Peter, James, and John stayed there, but Jesus went a little further.

III. The Willingness of the Cross

But I want you to notice, thirdly, not only the way of the cross, and the woe of the cross, but I want you to notice the willingness of the cross. Look, if you will, in verse 6: *“And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together.”* (Genesis 22:6) And then, verse 8: *“And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.”* (Genesis 22:8) Now, what does this mean? By this time, doubtless, Isaac has sensed what’s going to happen. By this time, Isaac knows that he is to be the sacrifice. Certainly, he knew it when Abraham asked him to stretch out his hands and he was bound.

Now I want you to think about it. How old was Abraham at this time? He was well over one hundred years of age. I believe he well could have been 133 years of age. I will not be one bit surprised when I get to heaven to find out that Isaac was thirty-three years of age when this happened. Now the word here that calls him a *lad* is also spoken of in the Bible as strong men of war and so forth. He was a young, viral man—so strong that they laid that bundle of wood upon his back. Not some little child—a man. And there they go together. Here’s an aged man—over one hundred years of age. Here’s a strong, viral man by his side. They both go together. Isaac could have easily overpowered Abraham. Isaac easily could have outrun Abraham. But, oh, there is that willingness. There is that submission. There is the way that Isaac says, “Not my will, but thine, be done,” as he goes with his aged father together.

For Jesus said, *“No man taketh [my life] from me...I lay it down of myself.”* (John 10:18) The willingness of the cross—the willingness. Jesus was willing to die—*“Not my will, but thine, be done.”* (Luke 22:42) When Jesus was hanging upon that cross in agony and blood, they came by, wagged their heads, and pointed at Him, and they said, “Ha ha! Ha ha! Look at Him! He saved others. Himself He could not save.” (Matthew 27:42; Mark 15:31; Luke 23:35) But they were so wrong. It was Himself He *would* not save. The only man that Jesus refused to save was the man Jesus. That was the only man He refused to save. The only man through all eternity that Jesus has ever refused to save was Himself. He could have called twelve legions of angels, but He willingly went to the cross. And I’m so glad that the Bible says here that Abraham and Isaac went together, for to me it speaks not only of the way of the cross, and the woe of the cross, but it speaks of the willingness of the cross.

IV. The Weight of the Cross

But I want you to see something else. It’s what I call the weight of the cross. Look, if you will, in verse 6: *“And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son.”* (Genesis 22:6) Wood, in the Bible, is symbolic of humanity. A righteous man is

spoken of as a tree planted by the rivers of water. Jesus is spoken of as “a root out of a dry ground” (Isaiah 53:2) —out of the stump of Jesse. Wood, in the Bible, in typology, has been used as a symbol of humanity. And I believe the laying of the wood upon Isaac is symbolical of the laying of humanity upon the Lord Jesus Christ. I appreciate the song:

*Out of the ivory palaces,
Into a world of woe,
Only His great eternal love
Made my Savior go.*

—HENRY BARRACLOUGH

He left the gold of His glory and took the wood of our wickedness. “*And the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.*” (Isaiah 53:6)

Turn with that same thought to John chapter 19, if you will, for a moment, in the New Testament—John chapter 19, and let’s look, if you will, in verse 17. Keep in mind now Isaac going up Mount Moriah. Just keep that in mind. Now, read John 19:17: “*And he*”—Jesus—“*bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha: where they crucified him.*” (John 19:17–18) I believe that Jesus, with a cross upon His back, went up the very same hill that Isaac went up with that wood upon his back to that place foreseen of God, that place chosen of God, that Mount Moriah in the heart and mind of God, bearing the burden, bearing the weight of the cross. And the weight of that cross that got heavier with every step, so heavy that Jesus fell beneath the load, it speaks of the weight of our sin, the weight of our humanity, the weight of our weakness, the weight of our failures that was laid upon the Lord Jesus, again, who laid aside the gold of His glory, took the wood of our wickedness, and bore it to Calvary. Thank God for the weight of the cross.

But I want you to see something else. Go, if you will, please, back to Genesis chapter 22, and read with me verses 9 and following: “*And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.*” (Genesis 22:9–10) There are three elements that are mentioned there. There’s a cord—by inference—because he’s bound. There is wood, because he’s laid upon that wood. And there is a knife with which to wound and to cut. What do these things speak of? They speak of the work of the cross. What was the cord for? For binding. What was the knife for? For bleeding. What was the wood for? For burning. The binding, bleeding, burning power of sin; the awful penalty of sin; the horror of sin; the price that must be paid—that’s what these elements symbolize. Sin has binding power. Sin has blood-shedding power. Sin has burning power, for the wicked will burn in hell forever. And Jesus upon that cross, as they bound

Him, as they laid Him upon the wood of His cross, as the nails caused Him to bleed, and as Jesus literally baptized His soul into hell, for us felt the binding, bleeding, burning power of our sins.

What is the work of the cross? It is this: “Him who knew no sin God hath made to be sin for us.” (2 Corinthians 5:21) And when He became sin for us, and when the wood of our wickedness was laid upon Him, He went up Mount Moriah, and there He died upon Calvary’s cross and paid in full the penalty for our sins. I want to tell you, ladies and gentlemen, that one day God knew that He would see His own Son stretched out upon the wood. And God knew that one day He must raise the knife—the great knife of His own fierce wrath—against sin, and that knife must fall upon His own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The work of the cross is that Jesus died for our sins, that He took the full penalty, He took the binding, He took the bleeding, He took the burning—He took it all. Praise His holy name!

V. The Word of the Cross

One last thing I want you to see. Not only do I want you to see the work of the cross, but I want you to see the word of the cross. Continue to read now in verse 10 as we continue through Genesis chapter 22: *“And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son. And Abraham called the name of the place Jehovahjireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen.”* (Genesis 22:10–14)

What is the word of the cross? I’ll tell you what it is in just a moment. But I want you to see Abraham with his hand raised to the heavens. That quivering hand is about to plunge into the heaving bosom of Isaac, his only begotten son—the son of promise, the son of prophecy, the son of miracle birth, the son of love, and the son of hope—and that knife is about to fall when the angel says, “Abraham, hold your hand,” because now God is about to give us another great significant spiritual lesson. And He is to pour illustration on top of illustration.

And now we move into another area of the cross. Isaac is not to die. Why could the knife not fall upon Isaac? Because one day it must fall upon Jesus. Up until this point, Isaac can be the type; up until this point, Isaac can be the illustration. But now God does something strange and something wonderful. He says, “Abraham, don’t do it. I know that I have your heart.” Abraham looked and he sees a ram caught in the thicket.

And, incidentally, dear friend, God always knows what He's going to do. I believe, when Abraham started up one side of that mountain, that ram started up the other side. You know, God had the whole thing all in his heart and all in his mind. And there Abraham sees that ram—and here's a strange thing: his head is caught in the thicket. He's wearing a crown of thorns. There he is. And He says, "Take him. Put him to death." What must Isaac have felt when he saw that ram? What must Isaac have felt when the bonds were taken from him? When he gets up off that altar, I wonder, did he embrace that ram? I wonder, did the tears flow down his eyes when he looked into the liquid eyes of that ram there dying upon that altar? I wonder what he thought when he saw the blood of that sacrificial animal that was spread there. And he knew: "He died in my place; this ram has become my substitute."

What is the word of the cross? The word of the cross, ladies and gentlemen, is that God has provided a substitute for mankind. That's the word of the cross—that's the word of the cross. Do you know Abraham called this place by a very special name? Look, if you will, in verse 14: "*And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovahjireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen.*" (Genesis 22:14) Do you know what the name *Jehovah Jireh* means? It means "the Lord will provide." Do you know what Abraham called Mount Calvary? He calls Mount Calvary "the Lord will provide"—"the Lord will provide." Why did Abraham call Mount Moriah, upon which Jesus would die one day—why did he call it Jehovah Jireh? Why? Because now he'd seen; now the gospel had been preached unto Abraham.

Now Jesus said, "Abraham saw my day and was glad." (John 8:56) What had he seen? What is God going to provide? Why did he call it "the Lord will provide"? But go back to verse 8—look at it. Abraham said, "*My son, God will provide himself a lamb.*" (Genesis 22:8) That's what Abraham saw. That's why he called it "the Lord will provide"—because Abraham now had looked down through the tunnel of time, and God had spoken to this man who was a friend of God, and God said, "I will provide a lamb." But watch it, folks—look at it: "*[The Lord] will provide himself a lamb.*" It doesn't say, "The Lord will provide a lamb for Himself. The Lord will provide Himself a lamb." He is that lamb. The Lord presents Himself. Jesus is that lamb. And, "*[Upon] the mount of LORD it shall be seen.*" (Genesis 22:14) That's what verse 14 tells us—look at it: "*[Upon] the mount of the LORD it shall be seen.*" On Mount Calvary, one day, men would see God providing Himself as a lamb. One day, on this place—this sacred place—God has provided Himself a lamb. And that's the reason when John the Baptist saw Jesus Christ, who was God in the flesh, come, John the Baptist pointed to Him and said, "*Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world*" (John 1:29) —for the Lord, Jehovah Jireh, has provided Himself as the lamb.

Conclusion

That's the word of the cross. That's the reason I've told you that Genesis chapter 22 is a dress rehearsal for Calvary. *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son."* (John 3:16) There was no reprieve for the Son of God. There was for Isaac, but not for Jesus. And God knew that one day He would spare not his own Son, because He loved you that much.

An Old Testament Portrait of Christ

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: August 24, 1997

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 22:1–14

“And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together.”

GENESIS 22:6

Outline

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Introduction

Take God’s Word and find Genesis chapter 22. Those of you who have known and loved the Bible for a long time know that we’re on sacred ground in Genesis chapter 22.

Now, look up here after you’ve found it, and let me remind you of something: that at 11:30 a.m., May 29, 1953, Sir Edmund Hillary stood at the very top of Mount Everest. He was the first man to ever climb that mountain and reach the top—29,002 feet. He planted the British flag there. No man could climb higher on this earth than Sir Edmund Hillary climbed when he climbed Mount Everest that day. Up sheer walls of ice, howling winds, deep crevices, rock after rock, steep, torturous, dangerous, up and up and up Sir Edmund Hillary went.

But there’s another mountain spiritually steeper, spiritually more costly, than Mount Everest. It is when Abraham and Isaac went together to climb Mount Moriah. And we’re going to see that today, because when Abraham and Isaac, in the Old Testament, went

up Mount Moriah so long ago for a very special offering, it was a foretaste of Calvary; it was a dress rehearsal for Calvary. It was a picture, a prophecy, an Old Testament portrait of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. No one could, without divine inspiration, write a book like the Bible. And I hope today that you will be blessed, as I am blessed, as we look into this wonderful chapter, because the Bible says the Lord Jesus said, in John chapter 8 and verse 56, that *“Abraham rejoiced to see my day...and was glad.”* (John 8:56) Abraham saw Jesus. He *“rejoiced to see my day...and was glad.”* And, in Galatians chapter 3, verse 8, we read that the gospel was preached to Abraham. (Galatians 3:8)

Now Abraham lived centuries before Jesus Christ was born in the flesh upon this earth. There are several things I want you to notice in this chapter.

I. A Special Person

The very first thing is what I want to call a special person—and that special person was Isaac. Isaac, the son of Abraham, was a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. And let me tell you how.

A. His Birth Was Prophesied

First of all, his birth was prophesied. Go back to Genesis chapter 18, if you will— and we haven’t read yet from Genesis 22, but just go to Genesis 18 for just a moment, and let’s give a running start. In Genesis 18, beginning in verse 9: *“And [the angels] said unto him, Where is Sarah thy wife?”*—that is, speaking to Abraham. *“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.”* That is, Sarah had gone through the menopause and her womb was no longer productive. And Abraham was presumably too old to father a child. And so, when Sarah heard she was going to be a mother, the Bible says, in verse 12, *“Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also? And the LORD said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old?”* Now, here’s the key to the whole thing. Look at it in verse 14: *“Is any thing too hard for the LORD?...”*—by the way, I want to ask you that question: Is anything too hard for the Lord? Okay—*“Is any thing too hard for the LORD? At the time appointed...”*—underscore that—*“At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.”* (Genesis 18:9–14) That is, here is a birth that is prophesied, and it was a miracle birth. Isaac was born of a miracle, just as the Lord Jesus was born of a miracle in His virgin birth.

B. His Birth Date Was Preset

Now also, not only was his birth prophesied; his birth date was preset. God said to Sarah and Abraham, “I’m going to do it at a time appointed.” Now the Lord Jesus Christ came into this world, the Bible tells us, in Galatians, in the fullness of time. (Galatians 4:4)

C. He Was Named Before He Was Born

Now this child was named before He was born. Go back to Genesis chapter 17, and look, if you will, in verse 19: “*Call his name*”—the angel said—“*Isaac.*” (Genesis 17:19) Jesus was named before He was born. Matthew 1, verse 21: “[*Thou shalt*] *bring forth a son...and call his name Jesus.*” (Matthew 1:21)

D. He Was Conceived by a Miracle

Isaac was conceived by a miracle, just as Jesus was conceived by a miracle. Isaiah 7, verse 14: “*Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and [be with child].*” (Isaiah 7:14) Our sweet Jewish friends—and I hope some of them are listening today to this program—you know, they wonder about our faith, that we believe in a virgin-born Savior. They wonder about that. Precious friend, if you’re a Jew, I want to tell you something: You are here because of a miracle. Every Jew today is the result of a miracle birth. When Sarah and Abraham came together and had a son, that was a miracle. When little Isaac was born, Abraham was one hundred years old and Sarah was ninety. I can see Abraham coming out of the maternity ward on a cane, saying, “It’s a boy!” Here he is, one hundred years of age. Listen. The birth of Isaac was prophesied. He came at a set time. His name was given before he was born. His very birth was because of a miracle conception.

E. He Was Counted as Abraham’s Only Beloved Son and Offered as a Sacrifice

And he was counted as Abraham’s only beloved son. Let’s go back to our text now, beginning in verse 1: “*And it...*”—this is Genesis 22, verse 1—“*And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt*”—that literally means “God did test”—“*Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am.*” Now, watch this: “*And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son...whom thou lovest*”—now, what does that remind you of? John 3:16: “*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son*” (John 3:16)—“*Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.*” (Genesis 22:1–2) Here was this one, conceived by a miracle, counted as Abraham’s only son. And now God the Father says, “Abraham, I want you to offer your son—your only son—as a burnt offering.”

F. He Was Figuratively Raised from the Dead

Abraham saw his son raised from the dead. Now he did not see him literally raised from

the dead, but he saw him figuratively raised from the dead. The Bible—go down to verse 4—and it says, *“Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off.”* (Genesis 22:4) That is, he saw Mount Moriah afar off. Abraham and Isaac, going to the place of sacrifice, after three days, Abraham sees Moriah as it rears its head there on the horizon. In the heart and mind of Abraham, from the time that God told Abraham to put his son to death, was three days, just as the Lord Jesus Christ was three days and three nights in the grave. In the heart and mind of Abraham, Isaac was as good as dead for three days.

You say, “Pastor, I think you’re pushing the point here.” No, I’m not. Put in your margin Hebrews 11, verse 19. The Bible says that Abraham did this—and I’m reading—*“Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.”* (Hebrews 11:19) Abraham said, “God, if you want me to put my son to death, then you’re going to have to raise him to life again.” And he did, in a figure. Symbolically, Abraham received Isaac raised from the dead.

Can you see how Isaac pictures Jesus—say, “Yes”—how Isaac pictures Jesus? He is the son of prophecy and promise. His birth is at a set time. His name is given before he is born. He is conceived of a miracle. He is the only beloved son. He is offered up as a sacrifice. He is received from the dead. God has just put an Old Testament Calvary here just to show us that Calvary was not incidental or accidental, that Calvary had been in the heart and mind of God for centuries—actually, before God created the universe.

II. A Specific Place

Now the very first thing we’re talking about is a special person; his name is Isaac. Now, here’s the second thing I want you to see here today: not only a special person, but a specific place. Look in Genesis chapter 22, verse 2, again: *“And he said,”*—God is saying to Abraham—*“Take now thy son, thine only son...whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there”*—underscore “Moriah,” “offer”; underscore “there”—*“for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains”*—underscore that—*“which I will tell thee of.”* (Genesis 22:2) He didn’t just say any place—“you go to a particular place.” And then, if you will, look down in verse 4: *“Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off.”* (Genesis 22:4) What was this place? It was Mount Moriah. And, by the way, *Moriah* means “foreseen of the Lord.” Now, keep that in your mind. That’s what *Moriah* means: “foreseen of the Lord.” Here was a particular place in the heart and mind of God. God said, “Abraham, take your beloved son and offer him upon one of the mountains that I will show you.”

Now, listen. Listen very carefully, friend. This is a big universe. Last night, before I went to bed, about eleven o’clock, I went out and looked up at the stars. I don’t know

whether you looked up last night or not, but the stars last night were incredible; they were just beautiful. I wanted to get my heart ready for this message this morning. I went out and I looked up at the stars—that vast stellar universe, empires and empires of stars piled one upon another, stretched across the black velvet of space—and I just had to give a gasp as I looked up there. And, you know, the astronomers tell us that there are one hundred million known galaxies. Now our galaxy is the Milky Way, and out of that one hundred million galaxies, God chose one galaxy, the Milky Way. The Milky Way—100,000 light years from rim to rim, six hundred million billion miles of space, a disc-like galaxy, revolving around its center. And can you imagine six hundred million billion miles of stars in the Milky Way? And God, in the Milky Way, finds one moderately small star: our sun. And then, revolving around our sun, our solar system, is a handful of planets. And God takes one planet, Planet Earth, and God says, *“The earth is the Lord’s.”* (Exodus 9:29) It all belongs to Him, but there is one planet that is very special. *“The earth is the Lord’s.”*

And then in this magnificent globe called Planet Earth, God rejects many so-called “beautiful” places, magnificent places, and He takes a little land there on the edge of the Mediterranean, and He calls it His land. That’s the land of Israel. And then, in the land of Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, God takes one city out of that land, and He calls that city Jerusalem, the city of the great King, the holy city. *“The earth is the LORD’S.”* (Exodus 9:29) “This land is my land. This city is the holy city.” And God keeps tightening the focus, and God takes one mountain in that city, in that land, on that earth, in that solar system, in that galaxy—God takes one little place, one mountain, and He calls that mountain “my holy hill.”

Now, what was so important about that? Do you know where Moriah is and was? Friend, Moriah is Calvary—Calvary. That’s where the temple was built: on Moriah. That’s where Jesus died: on Moriah. And God says, “Now, Abraham, take your son, the son of miracle birth, your beloved son, the son that you love, the son that I named, the son that I gave to you, take that son, and take him to the place I’ll show you of, and you sacrifice him there”—“there.”

A special person, a specific place. Doesn’t it remind you of Luke 23, verse 33? *“And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him.”* (Luke 23:33) You see, *Moriah* means “foreseen of the Lord.”

III. A Solemn Purpose

A special person, a specific place, a solemn purpose—a solemn purpose. Verse 2: God says to Abraham, “Offer him up. Offer up your son.” (Genesis 22:2) Now Abraham and Isaac started up Mount Moriah. The others cannot go. Abraham says to the others, “You stay here. The lad and I are going to worship God.” And I’ll tell you, God the Father and

God the Son have gone places you and I will never, never know. This pictures dark Gethsemane, as the Lord Jesus went alone with the Father.

Can you imagine what must have gone through the heart and mind of Isaac? Can you imagine the suffering of Isaac? Isaac looked at his father, and his father had a fire. There were no matches in that day, so he had to carry a torch with him. It's going to be a burnt offering. And Abraham had a fire in one hand, and in the other hand Abraham had a knife. And they're going up Mount Moriah. Isaac doesn't know what is about to transpire. He can tell there's a troubled look on his father's face, and he says, "Father, I see the fire. I see the knife. Where is the sacrifice?" Look in verse 7: "*And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering:*"—"God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering"—"so they went both of them together." Isaac now is beginning to understand; he's beginning to understand that he is going to be the sacrifice. Look in verse 9: "*And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood.*" (Genesis 22:7–9)

Now, don't get the idea here that Isaac is a little baby boy. Isaac is a strapping teenage boy. Abraham now is well over one hundred years of age. Isaac could have outrun him. Isaac could have wrestled him to the ground and overpowered him. But Isaac allows himself to be bound. As the Savior said in Gethsemane, "*Not my will, but thine, be done.*" (Luke 22:42) You see, Isaac did not refuse to be a sacrifice. As Jesus laid down His life, they said, "*He saved others; himself he cannot save,*" (Matthew 27:42; Mark 15:31) concerning Jesus. It was Himself He *would* not save.

Now Isaac goes up that hill carrying his cross, as it were. Look, if you will, in verse 6: "*Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son.*" (Genesis 22:6) Here is Isaac carrying, as it were, the wood of his cross up Calvary. He laid aside the gold of his glory. He took the wood of our wickedness and the wood of our weakness. Doesn't this remind you of John chapter 19, verse 17? Speaking of Jesus: "*And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull.*" (John 19:17) Now, listen. Notice the sacrifice, the suffering, of the cross. Look, if you will, in verses 9 and 10: "*And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.*" (Genesis 22:9–10)

The cord speaks of the binding power of sin. The knife speaks of the bleeding power of sin. The wood speaks of the burning power of sin. It speaks of all that Jesus would suffer on that cross for us, and it foretells a time when God would lay His own Son upon

a cross and raise the knife of His fierce wrath against sin. You cannot imagine what it must have been like for Abraham at that moment. Don't think so much about Isaac, friend. Thank God for Isaac, but think for a little bit about Abraham—to sacrifice his own son.

IV. A Sacred Promise

Now, here's the fourth thing I want you to see. I've talked to you about a special person. I've talked to you about a specific place. I've talked to you about a solemn purpose, a sacrifice. Now, here's a sacred promise I want you to see. Abraham is about to plunge that knife into the beating breast of his own dear son. And now, look in verses 11 through 14: *"And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven..."*—here's the scene: Abraham is ready to make the sacrifice—*"And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son. And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovahjireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen."* (Genesis 22:11–14) That knife did not fall upon Isaac, because one day it would fall upon Jesus.

Here, the scene shifts. No longer is it a picture of the Savior, but now God dramatically shifts the scene, and Isaac becomes a picture of Adrian, and of Bob, and of you. He's there. He is destined to receive the knife. But there's a change. God says, "Isaac, get up. There is a substitute for you. There is a sacrifice that's going to take your place." And Abraham looks up, and there is a ram caught in a thicket, in thorns, by his head; his horns are caught in a thicket. Do you know what it was? It was a lamb crowned with thorns. That's what it was: a lamb crowned with thorns. And God says, "Take that one and sacrifice him instead of Isaac." And Isaac is up, and a substitute is down. What a picture of Calvary! What a picture of what the Lord Jesus Christ did for me and for you!

And look at the sacred promise. Here's the sacred promise. Look at it now in verse 14: *"And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovahjireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen."* (Genesis 22:14) What shall be seen? Calvary. That's the promise. In the mount of the Lord, in this same place, God will provide Himself a lamb. Foreseen of the Lord—it will be seen. Now you can understand the Bible when it says that, "Abraham saw my day and was glad." (John 8:56) Now you can understand what the Bible means when it says that the gospel was preached unto

Abraham. Do you think Abraham was glad that day when Isaac got up and that ram got down? Of course he was!

Now, folks, let me just tell you what this means to me, and I'll be finished. Remember again that *Moriah* means "foreseen of the Lord." Remember that. Jehovah Jireh—that's how God described Himself: as the God who is sufficient, the God who will provide. He's done that for me. Dr. Allison is here today, and I can tell you that he would say, "He's done that for me." God has provided for Mid-America Seminary. Mid-America Seminary is a miracle school. Do you want me to tell you why Mid-America Seminary is here? Jehovah Jireh.

God called me to preach as a teenage boy. My dad wasn't able to send me to college or to seminary. Joyce and I got married when we were just kids. I was nineteen, about to turn twenty; she was eighteen. We didn't have anything. We went off on our honeymoon with fifty dollars—that's it. Eight years I spent in school, seven of those eight years married. God provided it all. I worked as a car salesman, worked as a fruit packer, worked as a busboy, worked as a meat cutter, worked as a construction worker, worked as an elevator mechanic—done all kinds of things. I can remember one time in school I went to buy my lunch, I reached in my jeans—had twenty-three cents. I looked at the menu. A cheese sandwich was twenty cents. She said, "You want anything to drink?" I said, "No, ma'am." I still had three pennies. I want to tell you, friend, God has provided. I can tell you something, folks. We took care of our children. We started our family when we were in school. For seven years we lived from hand to mouth—and I'm talking about God's hand to our mouth. It was Jehovah Jireh. When I started preaching, I said, "Dear God, how am I going to preach?" I preached three or four times, and I preached everything in the Bible, and everything there was to preach; there was nothing left to preach after I'd preached three or four times. And I preach now—I average preaching—five times a week every week—sometimes more—sometimes more. But I'm going to tell you something, folks. God provides. And out of the wealth of His Word and out of the riches of His grace God provides. Joyce and I laid to rest a little baby, a little baby that died after we'd just graduated from seminary. We'd never, never, never tasted that kind of bitter sorrow. Where did we go? To Jehovah Jireh. God has provided. When we decided we wanted to move out here, this thing, folks, was impossible. How did we do it? Jehovah Jireh.

Let me tell you something, folks. Do you know why God provided for Abraham? Because Abraham was willing to give back to God that which God had already provided to him. Who was it that gave Abraham Isaac? It was Almighty God. How could Abraham trust Isaac back to God? Because God had given him Isaac to begin with. Now, folks, listen to your pastor. Anything God has given you, you can trust Him with. Now, if God hasn't given it to you, you don't need it anyway. Anything God has given you, you can

trust Him with it. So take everything you have, and hold it this way, and say, “Lord, it’s yours.”

A father took his son to McDonald’s. They were having father/son fellowship. And the son bought a large pack of fries. And the father and son sat down there. And the father reached out to get a french fry to eat, and the boy put his hand on his father’s hand, and said, “Dad, those are mine.” That father said, “Something flew all over me.” He said to himself, “My son has a bad attitude. And then,” he said, “what he doesn’t realize is that I bought those fries. And what else he doesn’t realize is that I can take them all from him if I wanted to. And what else he doesn’t realize: I’ve got enough money in my pocket I could bury him with french fries. And if I wanted to, I could go get my own french fries.” And he said, “God spoke to me, and said, ‘All that stuff you think is yours, I gave it to you, and I could take it from you if I wanted to. And I could bury you in more blessings if I wanted to. And I don’t need your french fries. I want to have some fellowship with you.’”

Friend, it wasn’t—it wasn’t—Isaac that God wanted; it was Abraham. That’s what God was after: a man who could love Him and trust Him. God says, “I love you so much I am not going to spare my Son.” *“He that spared not his own Son...how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”* (Romans 8:32)

Conclusion

Now, folks, it’s time we loved and trusted our Father more. Calvary—Calvary, bloody Calvary—ought to kill any selfishness in us and fill our hearts with praise. Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. If you’re not saved, let me tell you that Jesus died for you, and the fierce knife of God’s wrath was plunged into the bosom of Jesus that it might not fall upon you. God allowed the Lord Jesus to be crowned with thorns that you might be crowned with grace and forgiveness. Would you receive Him right now? Would you pray a prayer like this: “Lord Jesus, thank you for dying for me. Thank you, Lord, that I was able to get off that altar, and that, Lord, you took my place. And now, Lord, by faith I receive you into my heart as my Lord and Savior. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me. Save me, Lord Jesus. In your name I pray. Amen.”

The Testing of Your Faith

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: March 4, 1990

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 22:1–14

“And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.”

GENESIS 22:2

Outline

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Introduction

People just like you and me need the Lord. God has given us so much. And *“unto whomsoever much is given, of [the same] shall...much [be] required.”* (Luke 12:48) We are with Abraham in the school of faith. And I want you to take your Bibles today and turn to the pinnacle of Abraham’s life, I believe. It’s found in Genesis 22, and turn to it with me, please—Genesis 22. Our message today has so much to do with world missions.

May I tell you something that I trust you will never forget? Are you ready for it? *A faith that cannot be tested cannot be trusted.* If you can’t test it, how do you know it’s real? How do you know it is trustworthy?

I was watching last night on TV the testing of airplanes—airplanes for the defense of the United States. And they showed these test pilots and these airplanes. How would you like to fly on an airplane that had not been tested? I mean, they just built it, and they

said, “All right, get on it,” but nobody tested the individual parts, and nobody tested the whole thing after it was put together. Frankly, folks, if you can’t test it, you can’t trust it. We don’t want to be the first to try something, and we don’t want to try something that’s not been tested.

I heard of a lady who was getting ready for surgery, and the doctor came in to visit her. The doctor said, “You look nervous.” She said, “I am nervous. It’s my first operation.” “Well,” he said, “I know how you feel: it’s mine, too!” Many of us would like the comfort of something that has already been tested.

And I mean, how do you know that your faith is real unless it can stand the test? Look, if you will, in Genesis 22, beginning in verse 1: “*And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham...*”—now, if you’re reading, like I’m reading, from the King James Version of the Holy Scripture—and I love the King James—but just simply write in there, where it says, “*tempt*,” write in the word *test*, because the word *tempt* and the word *test* are the same word; they mean the same thing. Read it this way—“*And it came to pass after these things... God did [test] Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. And he said,*”—that is, God said—“*Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him*”—that is, Isaac—“*there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.*” (Genesis 22:1–2)

Now God did not tempt Abraham to do something that was wrong. “God tempts no man with evil.” (James 1:13) And, thank God, He doesn’t, because if God were to tempt us, none of us would be able to withstand the temptation. “God tests or tempts no man with evil, and neither can God be tempted with evil.” So what does this mean? It simply means that God was putting Abraham to the test. He was testing Abraham’s faith. Now the devil tempts us to do wrong in order to cause us to stumble. God tests us to do right in order to cause us to stand. And what God is doing to Abraham is not trying to get Abraham to stumble, but to get Abraham to stand. And God is putting his faith to the test, all right? So I want to speak to you today on the testing of your faith—okay?—the testing of your faith.

Now this is an incredible story. God comes to Abraham, and God says, “Abraham, now I want you to go to a place that I’m going to show you: Mount Moriah.” You need to understand that Mount Moriah later would be Mount Calvary—same place. And here you have a picture of God sending His Son, the Lord Jesus, His only begotten Son, to die for us. And so God says, “Abraham, I want you to take your son—the son of promise, your only begotten, and your dearly beloved—I want you to take him to a place that one day will be Calvary. And there I want you to sacrifice your son.” (Genesis 22:2) An incredible thing! God has never before asked for a human sacrifice, but here we have a gleam of Calvary. The Bible says that “*the gospel [was preached] unto Abraham.*” (Galatians 3:8)

Jesus said later, *“Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.”* (John 8:56) And so this verse tells us that immediately after he receives this word from God, with no hesitation—there’s nothing between verse 2 and verse 3—it’s just the next morning that Abraham sets out.

I thought as I prepared this sermon how Abraham must have felt in his heart. Can you imagine, as he was sitting there around the campfire with his son, Isaac? I suppose that about this time, Isaac must have been seventeen, eighteen years of age. Abraham is now approaching 120 years of age. Can you imagine the father and the son sitting around the campfire there on their way to Mount Moriah? And Abraham looks into the handsome face of Isaac, whose name means “laughter,” and as he sees the fire playing on Isaac’s face, he remembers the day that they said, *“a child be born unto him.”* (Genesis 17:6) God has prepared a miracle. He remembers the day God spoke to him and said, “Abraham, I’m going to give you a son, and through your son all the nations of the world are going to be blessed.” (Genesis 17:16) He remembers the good times that they had together, the times when he held him as a child in his arms. He remembers the time when he told him about the covenant that God had made with him. And he thinks, “What will he say now? What will he think when I bind him to the altar? What will the look in his eyes be? What would it be like to place that knife into his bosom? What will his last words be?” I cannot imagine what must have gone through Abraham’s heart and Abraham’s mind, but he did it.

Now I want to give you four tests of faith. Are you ready? Let’s see if you have the real thing. Let’s find out if your faith can be tested.

I. Faith Is Tested by the Depth of Its Devotion

Test number one: Faith is tested by the depth of its devotion. Do you have it? Faith is tested by the depth of its devotion. Why did God say to Abraham, “Abraham, take your son—your only son whom you love—and offer him”? I’ll tell you why, my friend: because God had seen that Abraham was in danger of loving Isaac more than he loved God Himself. Abraham was in danger of loving the gift more than the Giver. Abraham was in danger of loving the promise more than the One who had promised.

Learn this about God: God will never willingly let anything take first place in your devotion other than God Himself. God does not want a place in your life. God does not want prominence in your life. God desires, God deserves, and God demands preeminence in your life. Here’s a question for your heart: Does Almighty God have preeminence in your life? God says, *“Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”* (Exodus 20:3) Does God have preeminence in your life? Some of us will never get to the mission field, because we already have a ministry, and we love the ministry more than we love the Master. Some of us will not get to the mission field because of our

families, and we love our loved ones more than the Lord. Some of us will not get to the mission field because we're already comfortable, and we love our gifts more than the Giver.

Now, my dear friend, the question comes this morning, no matter what God has given you, and no matter what God has done for you: Do you love what God has given you and what God has done for you more than the God who gave it to you? Is there in your heart a higher love? Do you love anything more than you love the Lord? I thought about that as I prepared this message this morning. And I thought about it last night, and I thought about it the day before yesterday. "Adrian, in your life, is there anything that you love more than Jesus Christ?" May I ask you to think about it? You see, it's not that God doesn't want us to love our sons. God wants us to love our sons. It's not that God doesn't want us to love the promises and the ministry that He's given us. God wants us to love that. But none of these things can take first place in our lives.

Now, if you think there's a danger—that there's something that you love more than the will and the way of God, or more than you love God Himself—I want you to listen very carefully today, because you're going to hear the voice of God saying to you, "Take that loved one to Mount Moriah, and offer him up there." You're going to hear God say, "Take those possessions to Mount Moriah, and offer them up there." You're going to hear God say, "That ministry, that ambition, those plans"—or whatever it may be, however good it may seem—"take it to Mount Moriah, and offer it there." Do you have faith to do that? That's faith, my dear friend. You see, faith is measured—faith is measured—by the depth of its devotion.

II. Faith Is Tested by the Height of Its Obedience

Now, let me move on, secondly, and say that, not only is faith measured by the depth of its devotion, but faith is also measured by the height of its obedience—not only how deep do you love God, but also how quickly will you obey God.

At 11:30 a.m. on May 29, 1953, Sir Edmund Hillary hoisted the British flag on Mount Everest. He had climbed Mount Everest. He had faced danger. He had faced disappointment, and he had faced death. He had faced the raging elements. He had climbed up sheer walls of ice. He had known hunger and pain and fear. But, finally, he arrived at the pinnacle of Mount Everest. It was over 29,000 feet tall as it towered toward the sky. As he planted that British flag there, he stood where no other human being had ever stood. And he climbed as high as a man can climb on this earth.

But may I tell you, spiritually, Abraham climbed a higher mountain when he climbed Mount Moriah. It cost him more. He climbed spiritually higher when he climbed up this mountain with his son, Isaac, to obey God.

Let me tell you what faith is. Are you listening? Please listen to this. Faith is not—

listen—it is not believing God in spite of evidence. Faith is not believing anything in spite of evidence. That is not faith; that is superstition. Always, when you believe, you are believing a word from God. Do you understand? That is your evidence. That is your warrant. That is your authority. Faith is not—is not, is not—believing in spite of evidence; faith is obeying in spite of consequence. Do you like that definition of faith? That’s what faith is. Faith is obeying in spite of consequence, or appearance, or anything else. “Get up to Mount Moriah. Offer up Isaac. I have told you to do it.” Faith is measured by the depth of its devotion, the height of its obedience. And what kind of obedience is this?

A. **Intelligent Obedience**

First of all, it is intelligent obedience. You cannot obey God until you know God and hear God. God has not promised to bless any endeavor that He has not commanded. Many Christians are endeavoring to do things for God that God doesn’t want done, and they’re calling it faith. It’s not faith; it is mere presumption.

B. **Intentional Obedience**

Now in order for you to obey God, you must hear God. And in order for you to hear God, you must have a quiet time. So not only must it be intelligent obedience—are you listening?—it must be intentional obedience. Do you want to know the will of God? Many of us are really not ready to report for orders. It is not that God is not speaking; it is that we’re not listening. You see, dear friend, you’re not excused from doing the will of God because you don’t know the will of God. If you’ve not sought, do you report in for orders? Are you listening to God? Ignorance of God’s will is no excuse, because the Bible says, “*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.*” (Romans 8:14)

C. **Immediate Obedience**

God will lead you. Your obedience, therefore, needs to be intelligent obedience; it needs to be intentional obedience; and it needs to be immediate. Intelligent, intentional, immediate: that is, when God speaks, then you’re to obey. For Abraham, there’s nothing in between verse 2 and verse 3. God tells him what to do in verse 2, and in verse 3, the next morning, he sets out. (Genesis 22:3) Procrastination, my dear friend, is a form of disobedience. Most of the people who feel called to the mission field and who surrender to missions never get there. Do you know why? They procrastinate until the vision dies or the opportunity or whatever passes.

*Ours is not to reason why
Ours is not to make reply,
And ours is but to do or to die.*

—ADAPTATION OF ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

It must be, my dear friend, immediate obedience.

When I graduated from seminary—some of you think that I didn't graduate; you think I was probably paroled, but I did graduate—when I graduated from seminary, I was praying about the will of God for my life. What did God want me to do? I wanted to be a missionary. I wanted to be an evangelist. I wanted to be a pastor. I really did not know what God wanted me to do, however. But I received in the mail two letters as a seminary graduate—one was on top of the other—from two small churches in Florida. Both of them said, "Adrian Rogers, we have prayed. We want you to come and be our pastor." Both of them were very small churches. I prayed over the matter. I thought, you know, it was humorous to me, because both of them said, "We know it's God's will you come." And there were two churches. I knew that one of them had to be wrong, and I thought probably both of them were wrong. But I did pray over it, and I didn't feel led to go to either of the churches. So I wrote back a letter, and I said, in essence, "Thanks, but no thanks."

Now one of the churches—the least of the two, and the one I would have most likely not wanted to go to—wrote back and said, "We know that you're God's man for us, and you just keep on praying until you know what God wants you to do." And so, you know, that will put a barb in your soul. So I went back and I prayed some more. And they were right, and I was wrong. And God did want me to go. And so I was pastoring a little church on the Gulf Coast of Mississippi when I was a seminary student. And I decided I would indeed go to this little church down in Florida that was having less than one hundred in Sunday School—a small little church.

But I announced to my seminary church this—I said to them on Sunday morning, "God has called me to go to Florida to pastor thus-and-such a church." And I thought I would be eloquent when I said it, so I said it this way... This is Sunday morning. I'd not told the church in Florida I would come, but it was done in my mind, and I knew that it was the will of God; so I said to my congregation on Sunday morning, "A nail-pierced hand has pointed to Florida, and I must obey." I thought that really sounded good. I didn't think they could argue with that: "A nail-pierced hand has pointed to Florida, and I must obey." Well, there were some tears, and I suspect a few people were happy about it.

Anyway, I went home that day having done what I thought was God's will. That was Sunday morning in that little church on the Gulf Coast of Mississippi. Joyce was fixing our lunch, and the telephone rang. And it was a man that I'd never heard of, never met before. His name was Mr. Graham. And he said, "Are you Adrian Rogers?" I said, "Yes, I am." He said, "I'm Mr. Graham. I represent the pulpit committee of..." And he told the name of the church—a First Baptist Church in one of Florida's largest cities, I think, certainly, one of the three largest cities in Florida. And he said, "We're without a pastor, and your name has been given to us. And we're excited about you, and we'd like for

you to consider coming to be our pastor.” Then he told about the church staff. Why, dear friend, the church I went to didn’t have a staff. He told about the amenities, the educational buildings, these things, and those other things. And in the midst of him telling me that, the Holy Spirit said to me, “Adrian, this is a test and only a test. This is a test.” I interrupted in the middle of what he was saying. I said, “Pardon me, Mr. Graham. Don’t tell me any more. It wouldn’t be any good for me to hear it. I don’t want to hear it. God has given me a place to go, and it is settled. Thank you, sir. Thank you for calling. God bless you. Good day.”

The little church that I went to, God blessed. It was the sweetest, most wonderful six years of my life. That church doubled, doubled again, and doubled again. It was incredible—souls that we saw saved and blessed. The other church—the big church—went down. But I didn’t know all of that ahead of time—that, really, if God had not wanted me to succeed, I’d have nothing to do with it. But I can remember as clearly I can see me in my mind’s eye that thing. When the devil said to me, “Adrian, this is an opportunity for you,” the Holy Spirit said, “Son, I’m watching. Where is all that nail-pierced-hand business that you were just telling your congregation about?” And I knew immediately it was a test of my faith, and I knew immediately that I couldn’t say, “Mr. Graham, let’s just talk a little more about it.” I knew immediately that God said, “Adrian, there’s only one substitute for obedience—and it is disobedience.” And, my dear friend, I want you to listen. I wish I could say that I’ve always operated in that realm, but I can tell you when I have operated in that realm, always, God has blessed when I have.

D. Impassioned Obedience

Let me tell you about obedience. Faith is tested by the height of its obedience. It must be intelligent obedience. You must know the will of God. It must be, dear friend, it must be immediate obedience, and it must be impassioned obedience, desiring to do the will of God.

III. Faith Is Tested by the Length of Its Sacrifice

Now, may I tell you a third way that faith is tested? And God will test your faith, not only by the depth of its devotion, not only by the height of its obedience, but it will be tested by the length of its sacrifice. Faith will go to any length to obey God. You see, if you have devotion, and have obedience, then the length of the sacrifice will follow.

Now I want you to put in your margin Hebrews 11:17, and that’s the New Testament commentary on Genesis 22. And listen to what it says here. It says, “*By faith Abraham, when he was tried,*”—that is, “when he was tested”—“*offered up Isaac.*” (Hebrews 11:17) Now it doesn’t say that he was only willing to offer. It says he “*offered up Isaac.*” From the time he left home, in Abraham’s mind, Isaac was as good as dead. I mean, in his heart and in his mind, he offered up Isaac. It was in the past tense. And what was he

offering when he offered up Isaac? What was he sacrificing?

A. **The Sacrifice of Future**

Well, first of all, he was sacrificing his future, because God has said, “Abraham, I’m going to give you many descendants—a nation—and nations will come of you. And through you all the nations will be blessed.” (Genesis 12:1–3) And when he offered up Isaac, there went his future.

B. **The Sacrifice of Family**

Not only his future, but also his family. I mean, you think about it. Can you imagine? What would he tell Sarah, Isaac’s mother? What would he tell Isaac? What would he tell others? But his family could not come first. *“He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me,”* (Matthew 10:37) the Lord Jesus said.

C. **The Sacrifice of Fellowship**

But not only his future, not only his family, but also his fellowship. There were others who wouldn’t understand. There were others who would say, “Abraham, you’ve done wrong. You ought not to do that. God doesn’t ask that of you. That’s too great a sacrifice.”

And anybody who’s called to the mission field will go to any length to get there. His future, his family, and his fellowship—he’ll face all three. But if God says, “Go,” he’ll go. Isn’t that right? He or she will go. There will be people who don’t understand. There will be people who will hurt, and there will be tears. But, you see, my dear friend, faith is measured by the depth of its devotion. It is measured by the height of its obedience. It is measured by the length of the sacrifice. It will pay any price.

IV. Faith Is Tested by the Wideness of Its Confidence

Now the fourth and final thing—here’s the fourth test of faith. Remember the Bible says that God is testing Abraham. He’s testing him to see if the faith is real. A faith that cannot be tested cannot be trusted. So here’s the fourth test. Faith is tested by the wideness of its confidence—the wideness of its confidence.

Now I gave you Hebrews 11:17, and I only read a part of verse 17. Let me read the rest of verse 17. The Bible says—Hebrews 11:17 and following: *“By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called:”*—now, how was he able to do that? Well, the writer of Hebrews tells us what was in Abraham’s mind, and it says Abraham was “accounting.” That’s a business term. If you’re an accountant, you understand what that means. Abraham was—*“accounting”*—or, “banking on it”—*“that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.”* (Hebrews 11:17–19) Now what happened is

this: that Abraham has this wideness of a confidence in God. And this confidence is that, “If I do offer him up, God will still keep His promise if He has to raise him from the dead.”

Now, why was Abraham able to do this? This morning as I set at my desk, I wrote these words down, and I believe they’re from God. Abraham was thinking this: “Anything that God has given, I can trust Him with.” You see, God had already given Abraham Isaac: “Anything that God has given, I can trust Him with. Anything He has not given, I don’t need.” Does that make sense to you? You see, God had already given. I mean, Isaac was a miracle child to begin with, so the reason he could offer him up is that God had given him. *“The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.”* (Job 1:21) “If God gave it, I can trust God with it. Anything God has given me, I can trust Him with. Anything He has not given me anyway, why not do what God says?”

Actually, God gave Isaac back to Abraham. And I’m going to talk to you about that in a moment. But I tried to imagine what it would be like. How did Abraham explain this to Isaac? I imagine he said to him something like this: “Isaac, sit down, son. Look into Daddy’s face. Do you remember God making a covenant with Daddy? Do you remember me, Isaac, telling you that God made a covenant with me one day, a blood covenant? And God said, ‘Abraham, all that I am belongs to you. All that you are belongs to me.’ And God became my friend. I was called, and am called, a friend of God. And as a result of that covenant, Isaac, you were given to me. And, Isaac, you’re a miracle child. You don’t really belong to me, Isaac; you really belong to God. Isaac, you’re a covenant child. You belong to God. And three days ago God asked for you, and God said that I was to give you back to Him. And, Isaac, I have no recourse, because I am in covenant with your God and my God.” And Isaac seems to understand that he is a covenant child, because now Abraham is an old man. Isaac is a virile young man. He could have outrun and outwrestled his dad. But as the Lord Jesus allowed Himself to be crucified, Isaac allows himself to be bound. He’s there on the altar, and Abraham has the knife in his hand, ready to plunge it into the quivering bosom of Isaac.

Then, begin reading in verse 10—this is Genesis 22, verses 10 to 12: *“And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God,”*—that is, “you have passed the test”—“*seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.*” My dear friend, Abraham did pass the test, and verse 13 says, *“And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son.”* (Genesis 22:10–13)

There was a substitute for Isaac, and Isaac did not have to die.

Are you listening? Here's something else I don't want you to miss. What God was saying to Abraham was this: "Abraham, you've not withheld anything from me, and therefore I will not withhold anything from you." Pretty good deal, right? "Abraham, you have not withheld anything from me. Therefore I will not withhold anything from you." Now, here's the point. Listen very carefully. It was not Isaac God wanted; it was Abraham. It was not Isaac; it was Abraham. He wanted all that Abraham was, and He got it. Bottom line and heart of the message—listen if you don't hear anything else: If you love it, let it go—if you love it, let it go. If it is really yours, God will give it back to you. But if He doesn't give it back to you, thank Him, because you'll be saved from a fate worse than death, and that is having something in your life that would impede your usefulness for God and your fellowship with God. May I say that again? If you love it, let it go. And if it's truly yours, God will give it back to you. But if it's not yours, you will be saved from a fate worse than death, and that is having in your life anything that would impede your fellowship with God and your usefulness with God.

Conclusion

A man told a missionary, "I would give anything—I would give the world—to have the joy that you have." And the missionary said, "That's just what it cost me." I would give the world. Would you? Would you give the world?

Abraham said, "Lord, if you want it, you can have it." And God says, "It's really you that I want, Abraham." And God revealed Himself, in verse 14, and I'm finished—look in Genesis 22, verse 14: "*And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovahjireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen.*" (Genesis 22:14) Do you know what *Jehovah Jireh* means? "God our provider." Let's say it together. Say after me, "Jehovah Jireh: God our provider." Say it again: "Jehovah Jireh: God our provider." Sometimes we say *Jehovah Jireh* means "the Lord will provide." Do you know what *provide* means? Do you know what provision is? It's to see ahead of time: *pro-vision*.

You see, when Abraham started up one side of that mountain, a ram started up the other side. Abraham couldn't see the ram, but God saw the ram. God saw the need, and God provided. God saw ahead of time. And, my dear friend, Jehovah Jireh knows things you don't know. Yours is not to reason why. Yours is but to do or die. He is Jehovah Jireh, the God who sees ahead. Hallelujah!

Faith: Look, Examine, Test

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: September 28, 1997

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 22:1–18

“And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.”

GENESIS 22:12

Outline

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Introduction

Would you turn to Genesis chapter 22. Immediately, you will remember that several weeks ago we spoke from this chapter as a foretaste of Calvary, and we showed how Isaac represented the Lord Jesus Christ, and how Abraham offered up Isaac and was a wonderful picture of God the Father offering up His beloved Son. But the Bible is so rich, so full—there’s so much in this chapter that we did not get to speak on. I want to talk to you tonight from another aspect from Genesis chapter 22, and I want to talk to you tonight about your faith. You know, the Bible tells us to be strong in faith. (1 Corinthians 16:13) And I want us to think tonight about our faith, and I want us to look at our faith. I want us to examine our faith. I want us to test our faith, because, you see, folks, *faith that cannot be tested cannot be trusted*.

How do you know that your faith is real and strong? Would you like to fly on an airplane that had never been tested? I mean, would you like for it to be built but never once put to any test—would you want to get on it and commit your life to that airplane, and it had never been tested? Would you like for a doctor to do surgery on you who went through medical school without a test?

A man was about to have surgery, and the doctor said, “You look kind of nervous.” He said, “I am nervous. This is my first surgery.” The doctor said, “I know how you feel. It’s my first surgery, also.”

Do you want to put your faith and your confidence in something that hasn’t been tested? Again, I want to tell you, the faith that cannot be tested cannot be trusted.

Now, notice here that God is testing Abraham—chapter 22, verse 1: *“And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham.”* (Genesis 22:1) Now, if you’re using the King James Version, as I do, you will recognize that the word *tempt* is used in two different ways. It is used to mean a “test” or it is used to mean a “solicitation to do wrong, to do evil.” Now God tests us, and the devil tempts us. The devil tempts us to cause us to fall. God tests us to cause us to stand. Now what God is doing here is not getting Abraham to do evil, but what God is doing now is encouraging Abraham to do good. And so He’s giving Abraham a test, and the test for Abraham is a test, in many ways, for us tonight.

And so we want to look at this. This is an incredible story. Let’s continue to read: *“God did [test] Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. And he said,”*—that is, God said to him—*“Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of. And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him.”* (Genesis 22:1–3)

This is an incredible story. Never before had God asked for a human sacrifice. And now God is telling a man to take his son—the son of promise, the son of hope, the son of prophecy, the only begotten son, in that sense—and offer him up as a sacrifice. Again, you see a foretaste, a preview, of Calvary in this story. And Abraham obeys God. He lets God have His way.

Now the liberal theologians tell us that this could not be, that this story somehow is a misinterpretation. But, friend, when God is sovereign, He can do anything He pleases—and God is sovereign. And this is what God told Abraham to do. And so the command is given, and then the next morning, without hesitation, early in the morning, Abraham takes Isaac—his beloved son, the son of prophecy, the son of promise, the son of hope, the beloved son—he cuts wood for a wood sacrifice, and he and the lad head toward Mount Moriah, where Isaac is to be offered up. Folks, if you have any imagination at all, any empathy at all, any of fatherhood or motherhood in you, if there’s a sympathetic chord in your being, this story will deeply, deeply stir you.

When we bought from Mid-America Seminary the Jewish temple there on Poplar, near old Bellevue, I went over to look over those buildings, and our Jewish friends had

there in the lobby of that building a figure. It was a statue, or a figurine, of Abraham. Abraham has under his arm a young man, a lad, Isaac, and the lad is looking up into the face of his father, Abraham. And Abraham is looking up into the face of his Father, Almighty God. It's a very touching thing, as the boy's looking to Abraham and Abraham is looking to Almighty God. And there's a sermon, a lesson, in all of that.

I wonder what Abraham thought as they sat that night around the campfire. I wonder, as he looked into the face of that boy through the flickering flames—I wonder if Abraham thought, “What will he think? What will he say? How will he feel? What will his last words be? What will his last look be?” as Abraham goes to offer up Isaac. Now the key to the whole thing is this: that God is testing Abraham's faith. Now Abraham is the father of the faithful. Abraham is known as a man of faith, and he's the brightest star in the Hebrew heaven. And he's worthy of our study, as God is testing his faith.

Now, if you were to measure faith, how would you measure faith? Well, you could measure it with the dimensions of faith. You could measure it by its depth. You could measure it by its height. You could measure it by its length. Or you could measure it by its wideness. Now we're going to measure faith that way tonight, and we're going to test faith that way tonight. How was Abraham's faith measured? How was it qualified?

I. The Depth of Its Devotion

First of all, it was qualified by the depth of its devotion—by the depth of its devotion. You see, what was this test? It seems to me that Abraham had begun to love Isaac more than he loved God Himself. And, you know, there's always that danger—there's always the danger that when God blesses us that we come to love the gift that God has given us more than the Giver Himself. And God will never willingly let anything or anybody other than Himself be in first place in our lives. Now I've told you before that God does not want a place in your life. God does not want prominence in your life. God desires, deserves, and demands preeminence—God absolutely demands preeminence. *God is not satisfied to be a part-time Deity with a duplex for a throne.* Now it was not wrong for Abraham to love his son. It was right for Abraham to love his son. God had given Abraham this son, and it was well and good for Abraham to love his son. And yet he is to love the Father even more than he loves his own son.

I've told you many times I love Joyce with all of my heart, but she knows that she's second in my life. She's not first. That doesn't mean that I love her less when I say she's second in my life; that only means I love her more, because, when I love God in first place, I can love Joyce with a godly love, but I could not love her if God were not first place in my life. And sometimes there are things that take first place of our lives, or take the place of the Lord. And I told you before, *anything you love more, fear more, serve more, desire more than Almighty God, for you, is an idol.* And now God has

given to Abraham Isaac, and could it be—could it be—that Abraham had taken his devotion and placed it upon Isaac? God says, “Take your son, your beloved son, and offer him up.” (Genesis 22:2)

Is there anything you love more than Jesus tonight? After His resurrection, the Lord Jesus appeared on the shore of Galilee to Simon Peter. And Simon Peter was there, and Simon Peter cursed and swore and denied the Lord Jesus prior to Calvary. And now in the post-resurrection appearance of the Lord Jesus He says to Simon Peter, “Simon Peter, do you love me more than these?” Now that’s a question: “Do you love me more than these?” (John 21:15) It can be put two ways: “Simon, do you love me more than James and John? Do you love me more than Matthew?” He could be asking the question that way—and maybe He was. Or maybe He was saying to Simon Peter, “Simon, do you love me more than these boats? Do you love me more than these nets? Do you love me more than these fish—the old life that you went back to? Do you love me more than these things?” And I think that’s what the Lord wants to know of me tonight: “Adrian, if I’ve blessed you with Bellevue Church, if I’ve blessed you with friends, if I’ve blessed you with a family, if I’ve blessed you with health, if I’ve blessed you with a ministry, Adrian, do you love me more than these?” He’s asking you that question: Is there anything, anybody, that has taken first place in your life? If so, get thee up to Moriah, and sacrifice it there.

His faith was measured, I say, by the depth of its devotion. If there’s no greater love in your life than the love for Jesus, rejoice, and praise God for it, and say, “My faith has passed that test.” Abraham’s did.

II. The Height of Its Sacrifice

And I’ll tell you another way Abraham’s faith was tested: not only by its depth, but by its height. It was measured not only by the depth of its devotion, but the height of its sacrifice. Now Abraham and Isaac went up Mount Moriah—itsself, not a particularly high mountain, 2,700 feet above sea level—but, spiritually, no man has ever climbed higher than Abraham and Isaac climbed that day in Genesis chapter 22. He went up to that mountain to make a sacrifice to our Lord.

Now sacrifice will go to any heights if there’s love there. You might want to turn to Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 17. If you don’t turn to it, let me read it to you. Maybe that will be the quickest thing. The Bible says—they are commenting on this Old Testament sacrifice, this Old Testament passage: “*By faith...*”—now, listen; they’re talking about Abraham’s faith—“*By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son.*” (Hebrews 11:17) Now he did this by faith. By faith he offered up Isaac. Now it doesn’t say, “By faith he was willing to offer up Isaac”—“By faith he offered up Isaac.” That is, in his heart, it was done. Don’t get the idea that Abraham did not slay Isaac. Abraham offered

Isaac. Now, literally, Isaac did not die. Literally, God stopped the knife before it plunged into the pulsating heart of Isaac. But in the heart and mind of Abraham, the sacrifice was made, because, you see, when we love, love will go to any sacrifice.

*Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.*

—ISAAC WATTS

You think about what was in that sacrifice when he offered up Isaac. What was he doing? Well, he was sacrificing his future, because all of his hopes were in Isaac. God said to Abraham, “In Isaac will your future be. You’re going to be the father of many nations, but it’s all wrapped up in Isaac. You’re to be a great nation. I will give you a great name.” (Genesis 17:19) “And now,” he says, “take your future—take your future—and sacrifice it.” (Genesis 22:2) Not only is he called upon to sacrifice his future; he was called upon to sacrifice his family. Have you ever thought about what he had to say to Sarah? Can you imagine him going to Sarah, and she says, “Where is Isaac?” “Sweetheart, I sacrificed him. I put him to death.” Can you imagine what would have happened in the family? Abraham was willing to do that because he could not put his family first.

Your faith will always give your children up to the Lord for anything God asks of your children. And, by the way, that’s one of the greatest sacrifices that faith can make. He sacrificed his future. He sacrificed his family. He sacrificed his fellowship. Nobody else could understand that day Abraham and Isaac went alone up that mountain. No one would have understood what was in his heart. And the man who follows God, the woman who follows God, sometimes must do it absolutely alone.

III. The Length of Its Obedience

Faith is measured by the depth of its devotion. Faith is measured by the height of its sacrifice. Faith is measured by the length of its obedience. That’s the third way. You see, we’re not saved by faith and works, but we are saved by faith that works. And the Bible tells us here that as soon as the command was given to sacrifice Isaac, immediately, the next morning, he rose up and went his way. Verse 3: “*And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son.*” (Genesis 22:3) No hesitation, no consultation—just simply, “God, you say it, and now I must obey.” Obedience is the greatest proof of devotion and the means of sacrifice.

Now, do you have faith? I mean, do you have faith to lay the dearest thing that you own at God’s feet? Do you have faith to sacrifice at any cost when God speaks to you? Do you have faith to obey God immediately, instantaneously? What kind of obedience am I talking about when I’m talking about the length of its obedience?

A. **It Must Be Instant Obedience**

I'm talking about immediate obedience. Did you know that procrastination is a form of sin, when God speaks to you?

In Fellsmere, Florida—I just preached last Monday night in Fellsmere, Florida—my first little church. I pastored that church when I was a nineteen-year-old boy. They were having homecoming—fifty years—and nothing would do for them but for me to come back, and I went back—a little church running about seventy-five in Sunday School, out near the edge of the Everglades. I went back there last Monday night and preached for those people. In that town we had a revival meeting when I was a college student. There were about five hundred people in that town, and God laid it upon my heart to visit every home in that little town—every home—and invite those people to revival. You won't believe this, but the way we went visiting was on horseback. There were so many. It was kind of rough country, and some places it was hard to get around. And so we saddled up a couple of horses, the evangelist and myself, got a couple of cowboy hats, rode up to the doors of those houses, kicked on the door. When the people came out, we were still sitting on the horse, we would say, "Howdy, ma'am. We're having a revival meeting and want to invite you to come to that revival meeting." God blessed. We, by automobile, by foot, or by horseback, visited every home, to my remembrance, except one home. And I remember passing that home and thinking, "I'm tired. We've worked so hard. I'm not going to visit that particular home. Maybe later I will visit, but not today."

Later on, a matter of days—I never did get to the home to visit that home—I was driving down the little road there that went past that house, and that house was back in an orange grove. And I saw a woman come out of that driveway. She had, it seemed like, both hands in the air. I don't know how she was steering the automobile, and she was screaming at the top of her voice. I wheeled my car around and came alongside of her, and I said, "Ma'am, tell me what is wrong." She said, "It is terrible! It is horrible! He has killed himself! He has killed himself! He has killed himself!" And I said, "Let me go see," and I went up into that orange grove there and found that body. That man had taken a high-powered gun, and propped it up in a tree, and put it to his temple, and pulled the trigger. It wasn't a beautiful sight to see. I've never been able to forget it, because I wondered in my heart and in my mind, "Adrian, why didn't you go to that house? That was the one house you didn't go to. You said you were going to go to every house. You were going to visit every house. That's the one house you didn't visit." I don't know if I could have led that man to Jesus or not—I don't know. But, friend, in my mind right now I can see that man. I see that corpse. I see that body that was stiff and stark with the bullet hole there in the temple.

You know, folks, when God tells you to do something, you need to do it. You need to do it immediately. Real obedience is instantaneous obedience. Procrastination is a form

of sin; it is a form of disobedience. Now so we must—we must—obey Him. It must be instant obedience.

B. It Must Be Intelligent Obedience

And it must be intelligent obedience. You just don't run around knocking things over. Abraham heard God speak. What do you hear God speak? You can't obey Him instantly if you've not heard Him speak, and you'll not hear Him speak unless you're listening. God came to Abraham, and God could talk to Abraham face to face as a man speaks to his own friend. Abraham was a friend of God. He had the heart, the mind, of God. So many times we may call ourselves serving God, but we're not obeying God. God doesn't appreciate what He doesn't initiate. What we need to do is to get in the place where we can hear God, so we can obey God.

C. It Must Be Intentional Obedience

It has to be instantaneous obedience. It has to be intelligent obedience. It has to be intentional obedience. You see, don't get the idea that, just because God hasn't told you anything, you're excused. You may not have reported for duty. You may not have listened to Almighty God.

D. It Must Be Impassioned Obedience

And it must be impassioned obedience. There ought to be a zeal to obey God. The cause of this church, and all churches, is hurt more by Sunday-morning benchwarmers who think they do God a favor by coming to church than all the infidels put together. We need a burning, passionate, blazing, emotional love for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now faith is measured by the depth of its devotion. Is there anything that you love more than God, than the Lord Jesus? If there is, you don't have faith like Abraham had. Faith is measured by the height of its sacrifice. Is there anything that you would withhold from God if He asked you for it? Faith is measured by the length of its obedience: immediate, intelligent, intentional, impassioned obedience.

IV. The Wideness of Its Confidence

Now I want to tell you, frankly, as I studied this and thought it out, I was challenged. And I want to tell you that I don't think I measure up, and I want to grow. But I want to say, again, faith is tested one other way: not only by its depth, its height, its length, but it's tested by the wideness, the broadness, of its confidence. Why was Abraham willing to do this? What went through the mind of Abraham? God says to Abraham, "Abraham, I'm going to give you a son. This son is going to be a miracle son. This son is going to come out of your dead body." That is, "Your reproductive organs are dead. Your wife is past the age of bearing children. You are sterile. And she is sterile. And yet you're going to have a child." God made this promise to Abraham. Abraham believed God. God says

to Abraham, “I’m going to take this child, and I’m going to make him a blessing to all the world.” And now God says, “Take him and sacrifice him.”

How could Abraham put that together? Let me tell you what went through his mind. We don’t have to guess about it. You can find this also in Hebrews chapter 11, verses 17 through 19. Now we’re talking about the testing of his faith—and listen to it: *“By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac.”*—that is, in his heart and mind, Isaac was offered. It’s past tense: he offered up Isaac—*“and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called:”*—now Isaac had not yet had any descendants, and God said, “In Isaac all of your children are going to be called. He’s going to be the progenitor of your grandchildren, your great-grandchildren, your great-great-great-grandchildren.” And now God says, “Put him to death.” Well, how was he able to do that? Look in the next verse—*“accounting”*—verse 19—*“that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.”* (Hebrews) That is, figuratively, he had already sacrificed him, and when God did not allow the ultimate sacrifice, in a figure, he received this man back from the dead. That’s the reason I’m glad we sang that little get-acquainted chorus tonight, “What a Mighty God We Serve.” What Abraham learned is that there is nothing too hard for God.

Did God give Isaac back? Indeed, he did. Abraham did not know He would do it, or he did not know how He would do it. However, I believe his conversation with Isaac must have been something like this: “Son, have a seat. Look Daddy in the face. Son, there’s something I need to tell you. Son, do you remember the covenant that I told you that God made with me when I met with Him under the oak tree? Do you remember that covenant, son? I’ve told you about it many times. And, son, do you know that you are a miracle child? Son, did you know that you were born as a result of a miracle? You are a covenant child. Son, I want you to understand, therefore, you don’t really belong to me. You never really belonged to me. Son, you belong to God. Now, son, three days ago, He asked me to give you to Him. And, son, I have no recourse but to give you back to Him, because I’m in covenant with Him. Son, do you understand that?” Isaac seemed to understand and cooperate. Isaac knew that he was a covenant child. He’d been told from a child that he belonged to the Lord.

And now his hands are bound. He’s placed on that wood, and he’s ready to be offered. God sends an angel to hold back that knife and to say, “Abraham, hold back. Don’t kill the child.” Verse 10: *“And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him:”*—now, watch this—*“for now I know that thou fearest God,”*—here’s the key—*“seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.”* (Genesis 22:10–12)

Conclusion

What is all of this about, ladies and gentlemen? God is testing this man's faith.

"Abraham, you will withhold nothing from me. And now, Abraham, I will withhold nothing from you." Now, here's the bottom line: it wasn't Isaac that God really wanted; it was Abraham's supreme devotion. You've got to learn that. Here's the heart of the message. Are you ready for the bottom line? Listen to me. If you love it, let it go. If it's yours, you'll get it back. But if not, you'll be saved from a fate worse than death, and that fate will be to hold on to something that is an impairment to your spiritual life. Jesus taught the same thing in Mark chapter 8, verse 34: *"And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."* (Mark 8:34) Give it to God. Take up your cross. Give everything to the Lord.

When I was a child, we used to play a little game called "Finders, keepers; losers, weepers." But our Lord is saying, "Losers, finders; keepers, weepers." Give it to God. If you'll lay your Isaac upon the altar, and God doesn't want you to have him, then you're better off without him. If the gift is from God, anything that God has given you, you can trust Him with. Anything He has not given you, you do not need.

And so after Abraham had passed this test—the test of devotion, the test of obedience, the test of sacrifice, and the test of confidence—God gave to Abraham an incredible blessing. His faith was tested, and it passed the test. He doesn't have to worry now about losing something that he's already given to God. And God revealed Himself to Abraham that day as Jehovah Jireh, which literally means "the God who will see to it" or "the God who is a provider." It's the word we get *providence* from. God sees ahead.

There's a ram that started up the mountain that side when Abraham and Isaac started up the other side. That ram was there ready to be sacrificed in Isaac's place. The ram did not get there ahead of time, and the ram was there on time: no earlier and no later than he was needed. Abraham passed the test. And I have to ask myself this question: "Adrian, would you pass that test if God were to say to you, 'Adrian, take the dearest thing on earth and give it to me?'" I hope I would. I want to, and I believe you do. Faith is measured by the depth of its devotion, the height of its sacrifice, the length of its obedience, and the wideness of confidence.

Would you bow your heads in prayer? And while heads are bowed, why don't you pray, "Lord, increase my faith. And, Lord, when the test comes, when you ask of me something—to go somewhere, to give something, to sacrifice something—Lord, help me to obey. May my obedience be quick, intentional, instantaneous, impassioned, intelligent." You don't have to think up things to sacrifice. You just have to say, "Lord, all that I am, all that I have, belongs to you."

Till Death Do Us Part

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: May 31, 1981

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 23:1–2

“And Sarah was an hundred and seven and twenty years old: these were the years of the life of Sarah.”

GENESIS 23:1

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Introduction

Take your Bibles, please, and turn to Genesis 23—Genesis 23. And while you’re turning to that, may I remind you that this evening we’re going to continue our study in the book of the Revelation. And, tonight, we come to that passage that deals with the beast from the sea, the Antichrist, lurking in the shadows in the sea of humanity. I believe the Antichrist is alive and living on Planet Earth right now. We’re going to be talking about that tonight. You’ll certainly want to be here as we continue this series in the book of the Revelation. But, today, we’re continuing our series in the book of Genesis. And we have two verses to read here—Genesis 23:1–2: *“And Sarah was an hundred and seven and twenty years old: these were the years of the life of Sarah...”*—now I don’t know whether Sarah appreciated the Lord saying how old she was or not. Most women are not all that happy about giving away their age.

I heard of a widow who asked a young man, “How old do you think I am?” He said, “Well, I haven’t got any idea.” She said, “Well, surely you have some idea.” “Well,” he said, “it’s very hard to say, because,” he said, “I’d like to say that you’re ten years younger, because of your beauty, or ten years older, because of your wisdom.” He was

a smart young man, wasn't he?

All right, so—*“these were the years of the life of Sarah. And Sarah died in Kirjatharba; the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan: and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her.”* (Genesis 23:1–2)

Look at that last phrase now: *“And Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her.”* I want you to see this scene. I want you to see this noble, old man. I can imagine him with long white hair, and a flowing beard, and a marvelous countenance, as the tears course down the deep ravines in his cheeks and soak that white beard as he looks into the lifeless face and the cold clay of the body of Sarah. And how he loved her! And how he appreciated her! And I'm certain that his mind went back to the time when he first met her, perhaps as a saucy, frivolous young lady. She was a beauty queen. She was a knockout. And Abraham put his eyes upon her, back when they were pagan kids living back there in Ur of the Chaldees.

Doubtless, he thought about how he had wooed her and won her; how he had wed her. He thought of the times that they'd been through. And they'd been through a lot of times. He thought about that time how God revealed Himself to Abraham, and how Abraham had been saved, converted, came to know the Lord, the one true God of heaven and earth, and was saved out of paganism. Doubtless, Abraham witnessed to Sarah, brought her to faith in his Lord: how they shared the things of God together, how they had cried together and laughed together and praised God together. And now he knows that no longer will he see that light dancing in her eyes, no longer will he see that smile as it begins to play around the corners of her mouth, for she was one given to laughter. No longer will they hold hands and go side by side to watch the sunset together. Now she's dead, she has died; and he weeps, because she was so precious to him.

But he's not weeping as those that have no hope, for Abraham looked for a city that has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. (Hebrews 11;10) And Abraham knew that Sarah had moved out of the bedouin tent into the ivory palaces. And he knew also that one day they would be joined together for all eternity. But the important thing is this: that Abraham and Sarah stayed together as husband and wife. As we say in the marriage ceremony, “Till death did them part.” That's what God intends: one man for one woman, so long as they both shall live. But what is happening today for many young couples is this: that what is meant to be a lifetime contract is little more than a ninety-day option.

And many of those who even are married are not living in wedded bliss. I heard of a little girl in nursery school who heard for the first time the story of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, how that wicked witch gave that poisoned apple to Snow White, and then how Prince Charming kissed her awake again. And she came home and told her

mother that story. And she said, “The handsome prince kissed Snow White, and she came back to life. And then, guess what happened?” The mother said, “They lived happily ever after.” She said, “Oh no, they got married!”

Well, dear friend, being married and living happily ever after are not necessarily synonymous. And, indeed, they are not. And sometimes these people who’ve made it for a long time haven’t necessarily lived in all that much joy.

I heard of a farm couple who’d been together for sixty years, and they were sitting around and reminiscing, and she said to him, “You know, husband, this is our sixtieth anniversary. Don’t you think we ought to kill a pig?” “Well,” he said, “there’s no need to murder a pig for something we did sixty years ago.”

We talk about love at first sight. Listen, friend. The miracle is not love at first sight; it’s when you can keep looking at each other and still love each other, amen? Just keeping it up, staying married, keeping the home fires burning. “Well,” you say, “if I were like Abraham and Sarah, I’d be able to do that. I mean, after all, they were Bible people. They didn’t have any of the problems that we have today.” Don’t you kid yourself. They had all kinds of problems. And if you study the life of Abraham and Sarah, you’ll find out that neither of them were perfect people. They made some mistakes, and some of them were biggies. But they made it.

I mean, you just think about all of the things that they had against them. You remember the Hagar affair? They overcame that. You know, for a while there was sort of a triangle thing. But they overcame it. They worked through it. Remember the difficulty they had with their children Isaac and Ishmael? But they made it. Remember the fact that they didn’t always just settle down, and they were moving, constantly moving—the life of nomads living in a tent? But they made it. Remember the fact that sometimes Abraham backslid and told some half-truths, which were whole lies, and called Sarah his sister when she was really his wife? That was a bad thing for him to do. But, dear friend, I want to tell you that Abraham loved God. And don’t mistake the moment for the man. Surely, he made a mistake, but still down in his heart he loved God.

Oh, they had some difficulties. They had the problem of age. They went through this thing of middle age. Boy, they say that youth looks forward; old age looks backwards; middle age looks worried. They went through middle age. They made it. They made it through old age, those tottering years when they had gone from the romantic to the rheumatic. They made it. They made it—from the Pepsi generation to the Geritol age. They stayed together. They made it. They made it till death did them part. And here was Abraham who sat by the grave of Sarah and wept over his beloved.

And that is what God intended, and that is God’s plan. But they didn’t make it by chance. They didn’t make it because of propitious circumstances—because many times

the circumstances were against them. They made it because of Bible principles. And I want you to see what those Bible principles are. Because Simon Peter in the New Testament talks about what happened here in the Old Testament. I want you to turn to the third chapter of 1 Peter—1 Peter chapter 3.

Now, here's Peter's advice to married couples. Here's how to keep the home fires burning. Here's how to keep the honey in the honeymoon. Here's how to live together till death do us part. Here is it. First Peter 3:1: *“Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands:”*—now, watch this verse—*“even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement. Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.”* (1 Peter 3:1–7)

Now I want to give you some principles today for making your marriage last, and principles today for putting new life in tired marriages. Now, first of all, I want you to learn something for the women, and I want you to learn it from Sarah, and what I'm going to call here, Sister's Sarah's simple secrets for wives, okay? Sister Sarah's simple secrets: that's hard to say. And then I want you to turn not only and see some of Sister Sarah's simple secrets, but we're going to also see some of Aged Abraham's able advice for you men. And I believe we're going to find it right here in the book of 1 Peter.

I. Sister Sarah's Simple Secrets for Wives

I want us to look at it right now. Sarah discovered three principles, three principles that enabled her to live with this man Abraham, and to keep the home fires burning. And here they are. She learned, principle number one, an attitude of submission; principle number two, an adornment of serenity; principle number three, an activity of service.

Now, let's look at them.

A. An Attitude of Submission

First of all, principle number one of Sarah's secrets is an attitude of submission. Look in chapter 3, verse 1: *“Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives.”* (1 Peter 3:1) Now this verse tells us that women, if they would have a lasting

marriage, ought to be in subjection to their own husband.

You say, “Well, that’s fine and good if I have a husband like Abraham, or if I have a good, godly husband. But you don’t know that two-legged rascal I’m married to.” Well, I want to ask you a question. Why did you marry him? You chose him, didn’t you? You married him. And when you married him, you entered into a covenant relationship. And the Bible teaches that simply, because he is your husband, you’re to be in submission to him. You’re to be in subjection to him. You say, “But what if he’s not a Christian? What if he’s not a godly man?” Then you’re still to be in subjection to him. That’s what Peter says here: *“Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word”*—here’s a man who’s not obeying God’s Word—*“they may also without the word”*—literally, “without a word.” It doesn’t mean without the Word of God. It means without your nagging. Literally, “without a word”—*“be won by the [behavior] of the wives.”* That word *conversation* in the King James doesn’t mean “what you say”; it means “what you do.” It means “your behavior.” They’re not won by your words; they’re won by the way that you live. They are to go to bed with a sermon; get up with a sermon; eat breakfast with a sermon. They are constantly to see the beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ in you. Nagging—listen to me now—nagging has never, so far as I know, never ever brought a man to Jesus Christ—never!

Now, what does it say? It says, *“Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands.”* It doesn’t say nag them. It doesn’t say scold them. It doesn’t say preach to them. It doesn’t say pin little notes on their pillow at night. It says be in subjection to them. And that, my dear friend, is the way that you’re going to bring him to the Lord Jesus Christ: with a submissive spirit, an attitude of submission. Just put in your margin Ephesians 5:22–23: *“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.”* (Ephesians 5:22–23) As this church is to be subject to Jesus Christ, every wife listening to me is to be in subjection to her own husband in the Lord.

You say, “But, Brother Rogers, there are some things that he needs to know; and if I don’t tell him, who’s going to tell him?” God will tell him. You say, “I want to get his attention, though.” This is the way to get his attention. Look in verse 2: *“While they behold your chaste conversation...”* Look at that word *behold*. Do you know what that word *behold* means? It means “to peer at intently.” It means “to look at; to have one’s full attention.” That’s the impact of the Greek word—just like he looks at Monday night football. I mean, he is to be totally given to it. There’s something about your life of purity and submissiveness that will get his attention.

One woman said, “I hit my husband on the head with a pot of geraniums.” Someone said, “Well, why did you do that?” She said, “Well, he wouldn’t pay any attention to me,

and I thought I would get his attention. And I heard that advertisement, 'Say it with flowers,' so I thought I'd get his attention."

Well, friend, the way to get his attention is to be submissive to him. "But," you say, "there are some things that he needs to know."

Do you know what Ruth Graham said? Ruth Graham, the wife of Billy Graham, said, "It is the woman's job to love her husband; it is God's job to make him good." Oh, that's good advice. "It is the woman's job to love her husband; it is God's job to make him good."

"But," you say, "Brother Rogers, I'm not inferior to him. Why should I be in submission to him?" Submission has nothing to do with superiority or inferiority. Anybody who knows his Bible knows that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit are co-equal and co-eternal. And yet God the Son is submissive to God the Father. And the Bible says, "*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant.*" (Philippians 2:5–7) That is, He submitted Himself willingly and voluntarily. And, dear lady, you're not inferior when you are in submission to your husband. It is a superior lifestyle.

As a matter of fact, you are never, no never, no never, more like Jesus Christ than when you are submitting. And you are never, no never, no never, more like the devil than when you're rebelling. Just put it down. The devil is the author of all rebellion. Christ is the author of this submissive spirit.

B. An Adornment of Serenity

And one thing that kept Sister Sarah, the sweet wife that she was, and became the example to all wives down through the ages, is that she learned to have, number one, an attitude of submission. Number two: Because she had an attitude of submission, she also had an adornment of serenity. Look in verses 3 and 4. We're in 1 Peter 3:3–4: "*Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.*" (1 Peter 3:3–4)

Now here he's saying how to be beautiful. Now, what lady doesn't want to be beautiful? Well, here's God recipe for making a beautiful woman. Here's the way she is to adorn herself. Now the New American Standard says, "Your adornment must not be merely external." I'm glad that they put that word *merely* there, because I think that carries the sense of what Peter is saying; because, you know, sometimes preachers can preach on this thing and go wild. I mean, they can misinterpret it. They get to preaching along, you know, and they think it's wrong for women to beautify themselves, to wear makeup, or to fix their hair—anything like that. And so they get to preaching

along, and they say, “All right now, let’s listen to this: ‘*Whose adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair,*’—see there, it’s wrong to fix your hair—‘*and of wearing of gold,*’—see there, it’s wrong to wear gold—‘*or the putting on of apparel.*’” Friend, if it’s wrong to fix your hair, if it’s wrong to wear gold, it’s wrong to wear clothes.

See, that’s not what Peter is saying. Listen. He’s not saying it’s wrong to fix yourself up. *Somebody asked, “Do you think it’s a sin if women wear makeup?” I think it’s a sin if some women don’t.* I mean, listen. Sarah didn’t keep Abraham by going around looking like an unmade bed. Mister, she was a knockout. She was a beauty queen. And while she was eighty years old, men were still vying for her—eighty years old, and Max Factor hadn’t even been born. Boy, you think about this. She was a beautiful woman. But Sarah had enough sense to know that outward beauty fades. The Bible calls it *corruptible*. It fades. But not inward beauty. Sarah learned a secret that every day she could become more beautiful, because she learned the ornament of a meek and a quiet spirit—and she had that adornment of serenity.

And how beautiful that was! How that made her so beautiful! See, she was smarter than some of these twentieth-century girls. They put all their eggs in that one basket. They think that they’re going to keep their husband by staying outwardly beautiful. Well, dear lady, you’re fighting a losing battle. I mean, don’t you know what Father Time and Mother Nature are doing to you? I don’t want to be crude, but, folks, it just happens. You know, they say,

Beauty is skin deep; ugly goes all the way to the bone.

Beauty fades, but ugly holds its own.

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

I mean, beauty is going to fade. And I don’t care how beautiful you are. I don’t care how gorgeous and how scrumptious you are. Lady, you’re getting older, and there’s a new bevy of beauties being born every year. And if you think that you’re going to keep your husband with outward beauty—that alone—you’re wrong.

Now I’m not saying that it’s wrong for you to stay pretty. I’m saying you ought to. But I’m saying that Sarah had discovered a secret. She had discovered an adornment that is the adornment of serenity. The Bible calls it “*even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit.*” Now, think about that word *quiet*. That does not mean that Sarah was timid. It doesn’t mean that she was mousy. It doesn’t mean that she never lifted her voice. That isn’t what the word *quiet* means. The word *quiet* here means “serene.” It literally means “tranquil.” She had peace of heart. And because she had peace of heart, she had inward beauty. And because she had inward beauty, the love lights just flowed from her eyes. Her countenance, every wrinkle and every gray hair, was a thing of beauty, because she was inwardly beautiful.

I want to tell you something, friend. Some of the most beautiful people you will ever

meet—and some of them are in this church—are senior citizens who walk with God. I tell you, I know some of our dear little old ladies in this church that are beauty queens. They are knockouts. They are lovely, beautiful, and you see the Lord Jesus Christ in them, the beauty of the Lord that is just shining through these lovely ladies. It's because they've learned to walk with God. And, dear friend, you cannot have that outward beauty and inward rebellion at the same time. And there must, first of all, be that attitude of submission before there can be that adornment of serenity. But Sister Sarah learned it. And because Sister Sarah learned it, she passed it on to a lot of other ladies today. And Peter told us about it. And we'd be wise if we'd learn Sister Sarah's simple secrets for keeping her husband.

C. An Activity of Service

Now, let's go on, and let me give you the third one: not only an adornment of serenity, but an activity of service. Read with me verses 5 and 6: *“For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord.”* (1 Peter 3:5–6) Now, boy, there are some women who almost choked. “You mean I'm to call my husband lord?” Well, Joyce has never called me Lord Adrian yet, I don't think. She's up here in the choir. But that doesn't mean *lord* in the sense that we use the word *lord*, like “Lord God.” It means that she had respect and reverence for her husband. It's something very similar to the word *mister*.

As a matter of fact, when we were in China here a couple of years ago, I preached a citywide crusade in Taipei, Taiwan. And I noticed that the wife of the Chinese pastor always called him Mr. Shir. That was his name. She was married to him, but she had that sense of respect. She never called him, “My old man.” She called him Mr. Shir. Well, Joyce never calls me Mr. Rogers either, but she does speak with a sense of love and devotion.

But that's not the word I want to key in on. The word I want to key in on is the word *obey*, because I'm talking about an activity of service; it's the word *obey*. Now the word *obey* does not here merely mean to do what you're told. It doesn't mean that the husband is to be the boss, and every time he says, “frog,” she's supposed to jump. That isn't what it's talking about here. It says that Sarah obeyed Abraham. It has the idea of attention—paying attention to. That's the idea. That is, she was attentive to his needs. She was looking to see how she could meet his needs. For, indeed, that's why God gave the woman to the man: to be a fitting help, or a helpmeet, to him. And she was obeying those impulses.

She was attentive to the needs of Abraham. She was looking to see how she could meet his needs emotionally. She was seeing how she could meet his needs physically.

She was seeing how she could meet his needs domestically. She was seeing how she

could meet his needs in the business activity. She was there by his side serving him and helping him and making him a better man than he could have been without her. And those were Sister Sarah's simple secrets.

II. Aged Abraham's Able Advice for Husbands

You say, "Brother Rogers, I sure hope you get a chance to get to verse 7." I know what you ladies are saying, because we've heard enough about Sister Sarah's simple secrets. Let's hear a little bit about Aged Abraham's able advice. All right now, let's go on and talk then, and spend a little time saying what God has to say to the husband, because Abraham learned some things too. And Abraham would pass these things down. Now Abraham's name is not mentioned in this passage, but Sarah is mentioned. And Sarah was married to Abraham, and so we can know that Abraham certainly was a part of that team. And we can know that verse 7, in many ways, therefore, would refer to qualities that were found in Abraham's life.

And so, let's look at them. And I want you to notice some things, I believe, that Father Abraham would teach some of his sons today, just like Mother Sarah would teach some of her daughters today: *"Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered."* (1 Peter 3:7)

There are four key words that I want to wrap our thoughts around here as we look at Abraham's able advice. All right, are you ready, fellows? The very first word is the word *share*. The next word is the word *aware*. The next word is the word *care*. And the next word is the word *prayer*. Do you have those four words? Let's think of them.

A. Men Who Will Share

If you would be the Abraham-type of man, if you would be the kind of man that could go through life and live with your wife until death do you part, first of all, you have to be a man who will share. Look at verse 7: *"Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them."* "Well," you say, "I do live in the same house with her." That's not what he's talking about. This word *dwell* is not talking about living under the same roof. It's talking about a life of sharing. Continue to read and he explains it. He says in the last part of that verse, *"as being heirs together."* He says in verse 8, *"Finally, be...of one mind."* (1 Peter 3:8) That is, that the husband is to give himself to his wife. He is to share his life with his wife totally.

Isn't that what Jesus Christ does with the Church? And if a husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the Church, has not Jesus Christ given Himself to us? I mean, does not the Lord Jesus Christ share His very life with the Church? Jesus said to His disciples, "I don't call you any longer servants, for the servant does not know what his master does. I call you now friends." (John 15:15) And, mister, your wife is to be your

friend, someone with whom you share.

Did you know that there are wives here who don't get to share with their husbands? There are wives in this congregation, doubtless, who do not even know how much money their husband makes. They don't even know what kind of investments they have. They don't know that. He says, "That's none of your business. I'll take care of that." Who do you think you are: Little Lord Ha-Ha? Sure, it's her business. The Bible says you are heirs together. You're to be of one mind. You're to dwell together. You ought to share the very intimate secrets of your life with your wife. What good is it being a partner if you're excluded? What some men call a nosy wife is simply a wife seeking her rightful and God-given place. She's been excluded, and she's been shut out. There should be no secrets. You should dwell with them as partners, as equals, and never, never, never, never think because she's to be in submission to you that she's not equal with you. She's probably better than you. Most men that I know have out-married themselves. I know I did. And we're to share.

Are you sharing with your wife? Does she feel that you are an island that she's constantly circling trying to find a beachhead somewhere? Or is your heart, your life, open to this one who is the one by your side whom God has given?

B. Men Who Are Aware

Men who will share. And then, secondly, I want you to notice men who are aware. Look in verse 7 again. The Bible says, "*Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge.*" (1 Peter 3:7) That is, have an awareness; have some knowledge. Mister, what do you know about marriage? What do you know about women? How much knowledge do you have? How much studying have you done? Most men I know study the manual that comes with their automobile far more than they study how to be a husband. I mean, they know all about that—when to change the oil and everything—but they don't know about marriage. I mean, they're ignoramuses. They're plain stupid when it comes to getting married. They just don't understand.

They're like the man whose wife had to go to the psychiatrist. She had an emotional problem, a breakdown. He said, "Well, I don't know what got into the old gal. She hasn't been out of the kitchen in ten years."

Another man went to the marriage counselor, and the marriage counselor said, "Well, what do you think is the problem with your marriage?" "Oh," he said, "I don't know. Old what's-her-face says I don't love her anymore."

Well, dear friend, do you understand? Do you have knowledge? Husband, how much do you really know about this matter of being a husband? How many books have you read? Let me tell you, right over there in our Christian bookstore we've got some fantastic books on the home and on being a man of God and a husband. I want to challenge you men to buy some of those books and get them home and read them.

Why do you read everything else and you don't read something about your most vital relationship here on this earth? Learn. Listen. Learn some things about women.

Guys, I want to tell you, they are different. Man, they're made of different stuff. They think different—they really do. A woman doesn't think with her head—not altogether. I mean, they get it from somewhere else. Have you ever heard this thing about a woman's intuition? Now, listen. Don't laugh at that. The agonizing thing is that they're often right. Most of the time they're right. That's what knocks me out of the ballpark. I mean, that it can be illogical and right. You know, they don't think that way necessarily. That doesn't mean that they're wrong. It just means that they've got a different antenna. And they don't think with their head always, and so therefore you can't listen with your ears; you have to listen with your heart. Joyce says to me, "Don't listen to what I say; listen to what I mean." There's a difference.

A woman says, "Do I look all right?" or, "How do I look?" That doesn't mean she wants to know. She means, "Tell me I'm beautiful," amen? I mean, you have to dwell with them according to knowledge. The Bible says, "*as unto the weaker vessel.*" (1 Peter 3:7) They outlive us by seven years, they control all the money, and they're the weaker vessel. Let me tell you why the weaker sex is stronger than the stronger sex. *The weaker sex is stronger than the stronger sex because of the weakness of the stronger sex for the weaker sex.* They are physically weaker. That is, they can't pump iron like we can, and they can't tote that barge and lift that bale.

But, sirs, you need to understand what the Bible is talking about here when it says "as the weaker vessel." What it means by that is that they are different emotionally. They come at things differently. And I'm not saying they're inferior. I believe, in a way, that is a superiority. But whatever it is—whatever it is—God, give us some men who are aware. Really, how much real, honest-to-goodness study have you done, mister, about this business of being a husband? Most of you guys know more about training bird dogs than you know about being a good husband. That's all right. You can say "amen" or "oh, me"—I don't care. It's the truth. You know it.

C. Men Who Care

But now, listen. Thirdly, not only men who will share, who will dwell together; not only men who are aware, who will dwell with them according to knowledge; but also men who can care. Listen. The Bible says here, "*giving honour unto the wife.*" (1 Peter 3:7) Do you know what this word *honor* means? "Well," you say, "that means to stand up when she enters a room. It means to be courteous to her." Well, it certainly includes that, but it means far more than that. You're in 1 Peter 3. Turn to 1 Peter 1:18: "*Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ.*" (1 Peter 1:18–19) Now, look at that word *precious*. That word

precious is the same word that's rendered *honour* over here. What does that tell us? That means that you are to look at your wife as someone who is precious to you. That's what it means to honor your wife. It has the idea of accounting her as precious, just as we think of the blood of Jesus. And Peter, when he was trying to think of a word that would speak of the blood of Jesus, he says, "*the precious blood.*" Your wife is to be to you someone who is precious. You are to care for her.

Now I want to ask you wives—let's go back to the wives a moment—do you love your husband enough to live for him? Let me ask you husbands a question. Do you love your wives enough to die for her? You see, if the wife is to live for the husband, the husband is even to go beyond that. He is to be willing to die for the wife. For the Bible says, "Christ also gave Himself to the Church." (Ephesians 5:25) That means Christ died for the Church. You're to love your wife sacrificially. Now it's easy to talk about being willing to die for her. But you don't have to die physically to die to your ambitions, your desires; to put her first; to count her so precious that you love her even as you love your own body.

There's a story told of a man who went in to see Dr. Ironside, who pastored Moody Church, and he said, "Pastor, I have a problem." He said, "What is it?" He said, "Well, I think I love my wife too much." "Oh?" He said, "Well, come in and tell me about it. Why do you think you love her too much?" He said, "Well, you know, when I wake up in the morning, I wake up thinking about her. I go off to work. I can hardly bear to leave her. I think about her all day long, just counting the moments till I'm off work and get back and be with her, be at her side. I dream about her at night. See, I just love her. I'm just afraid I'm sinning, afraid I love her too much." The pastor said, "Well, I want to ask you a question. Do you love her so much that you would die for her?" "Oh," he said, "no, I don't think I love her that much." He said, "Well then, you don't love her enough. You'd better get with it—you'd better get with it."

See, Christ died for the Church. She is to be precious to you. But not just that you say *precious*, not just that you call her *precious*. Listen. If you want to vitalize it, verbalize it, and visualize it. They need to be told, and they need to be shown. And to vitalize it, verbalize it, and visualize it, it will be real. Is your wife precious to you? Peter speaks of your wife as one who receives that honor, that care, that love, as Christ loves the Church.

D. Men of Prayer

Men who will share. Men who are aware. Men who care, who count their wives precious. Finally, men who are men of prayer. Go on and look here in 1 Peter 3:7 again: "*Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.*" (1 Peter 3:7) Mister, you're to be a man of prayer. You're

to pray for your home. You're to pray over your home. You're to pray with your home. And when you pray, God will hear your prayer. If you're a man who will share, and a man who is aware, and a man who can care, then you can be a man of prayer. But if not, your prayers are going to be hindered. And without your prayers, your marriage is not going to make it.

You're to be a man of faith, a man of prayer. Abraham was. Abraham was. As a man who believed God, and knew how to get hold of God, he could pray to God. And that's the reason Abraham made it. Prayer would hinder a lot of divorces, and also save a lot of marriages, if people knew how to pray, if they knew how to say, as Joshua of old, "*As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.*" (Joshua 24:15) O God, help us to be men of prayer, holy men. I'm to be a holy man in my home. You're to be a holy man.

A man told me one time, "Well, I don't go to church. You know, the Bible says, '*Watch and pray.*' The little woman prays, and I watch her." He thought that was funny. It made me want to upchuck. I felt like telling him, "Well, the little woman, then, is going to heaven; you're going to hell."

You're to be a man of prayer, a man who knows how to get hold of God, a man who will set the example. You, sir, are to be the pastor, the priest, the prophet, in your home. Your duty as a husband is to make your wife a radiantly beautiful Christian. That is your duty. That is your chief aim: to make your wife a radiantly beautiful Christian. That is your ministry. You know, my greatest ministry is not here in this pulpit; it's in my home. That's not a thing apart from my ministry. That's my number one ministry. Your number one job is your home—more important than anything else. And you are to be man who is a man who can get hold of God.

Conclusion

Well, I must conclude this message.

I heard of a subdivision that was built over a garbage dump. What had happened was this: that the city for years had been dumping garbage in a big ravine outside of town. You know, there's always a developer with a good idea. And this man came along, and he looked at that abandoned garbage dump, and he bought it for a song. And then he ordered fill, clay, and dirt. And the huge tandem trucks came in there and they dumped that dirt over that garbage, and dumped it, and they dumped it, and they dumped it. And then they put the bulldozers in there and spread it out. And then they put the graders in there and graded it. And then they put the rollers there and they tamped it down. And then they went out there with the engineers and they laid out the streets. And then, when they laid out the streets, then they put in the road, and they put in the sewers, and they put in the curbing. And then they subdivided it. And then they planted it with winter rye grass. And it was beautiful. And then the developers came in

and they started buying those lots. And they bought those lots and they built those homes. And people went to the banks and got loans, and they moved into those homes. And it was as beautiful and lovely as any subdivision you've ever seen.

But, after a few years, the sidewalks started to buckle, and the curbs started to sink, and the streets turned into something like a roller coaster, and the foundations of the houses started to sag, and the lintels over the windows broke. And, after a while, the entire place had to be abandoned, and everybody had to move out, and much money was lost. And, of course, everybody knew what happened. They made the tragic mistake of trying to build their homes on garbage—and it can't be done. It can't be done.

We've got a generation of people who are trying to build their homes on garbage rather than building their home on the solid rock of God's Word. It's time we learned from Sister Sarah and Father Abraham. You say, "Well, the bottom fell out of my marriage." Well, if the bottom falls out, you'd better go back and examine the foundation. When your home is built upon Jesus Christ, the solid rock, the bottom's not going to fall out. Christ is that solid rock. Is your home built upon Jesus Christ? A Christian home is a union of three: a man, a woman, and Jesus Christ. And the home that's built upon Jesus will stand, for it will be built upon a rock, not garbage.

A Bride for Isaac

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: Merritt Island

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 24

“And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah’s tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her...”

GENESIS 24:67

Outline

Introduction

- I. Isaac Is a Picture of the Lord
- II. Abraham Is a Picture of the Father
- III. Eliezer Is a Picture of the Holy Spirit
- IV. Rebekah Is a Picture of the Church
 - A. A Pure Bride
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Conclusion

Introduction

Tonight, I want you to open your Bibles to the Old Testament, to the first book in the Bible, the book of Genesis, and we'll start in chapter 22. And I believe our hearts are going to be blessed as we see the marvelous story of how Isaac sought a bride. You know, God is seeking a bride for His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And in this passage of Scripture that we're going to study tonight, you're going to see how Isaac, the son of Abraham, who was seeking a bride, is a marvelous picture of Jesus, the Son of God, who is seeking a bride.

I. Isaac Is a Picture of the Lord

Now, if you have your Bibles open to the book of Genesis the twenty-second chapter, let's start reading, and we'll read the first three verses. And I want to show that in the Old Testament Isaac is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now you remember Abraham was an old, old man; he was far past the time for fathering children. And Sarah, his wife, was barren and unfruitful. And God came to them in their old age, and God promised them a son: a son that was born miraculously, because Sarah was past the time for having children; it was physically impossible for

Sarah to have a child. And yet she wanted a child so much. And God performed a miracle in the womb of Sarah, Abraham's wife. And it reminds us of the miracle that God performed in the womb of Mary, the mother of the Lord Jesus Christ. Isaac was an Old Testament picture of Jesus. And Isaac was a son of promise, just as Jesus is the fulfillment of the promise of God. Isaac was born miraculously just as Jesus was born miraculously.

II. Abraham Is a Picture of the Father

And, with that in mind, let's start reading in Genesis 22: *"And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham..."*—now the word *tempt* there means "test" or "try"—*"God did [test] Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest,"*—the Lord Jesus Christ was God's only Son, whom He loves—*"and get thee up into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of."* God told Abraham to take his only son and offer him for a sacrifice. God Almighty offered His only Son, the Lord Jesus, for a sacrifice. *"And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him. Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off."* (Genesis 22:1–4)

For three days Abraham traveled with his youngster, this son that he dearly loved, this son that was born miraculously, this son that was promised—for three days! Remember now, for three days he traveled with his son. I don't imagine he even shared this with Sarah. I imagine he said to Sarah, "Sarah, pack my things. Pack Isaac's things. We're going on a trip." She said, "Where are you going?" "To make a sacrifice." Now I imagine Sarah little realized what was in Abraham's heart, because God had told Abraham to sacrifice his only son. Some people who are unbelievers picture God here as being brutal and cruel. To those of us who know the Bible, this is one of the most tender, one of the most precious scenes in the entire Bible.

Now Abraham had such unbelievable faith. He knew that God could not lie, and God had promised Abraham that of Isaac God would make a great nation. And so, when Abraham took Isaac his son, to sacrifice his son, this was in the mind of Abraham. Abraham said, "If God tells me to sacrifice my son, I'll do it, because God will bring him back to life again." Abraham had this much faith: that, if Isaac died at his hand, the same God that commanded him to slay his only son would bring him back to life again. But, oh, we cannot imagine this awful pain that went through Abraham's heart, and we can never imagine the pain that went through the great heart of God as He prepared that cruel cross upon which to sacrifice His only Son, the Lord Jesus. We remember

that story of how Abraham told the servants to stay there, and he told Isaac—he said, “Come along with me, son. We’ll go up there on the mountaintop and make an offering to the Lord.” And, after a while, when they got up there at the place of the offering, and as Abraham prepared the altar, and as he got the wood and put it upon the altar, Isaac looked at him, and he said, “Father, here’s the wood, and here’s the place for the offering, but, Daddy, where’s the sacrifice?”

Can you imagine what went through Abraham’s heart when that question was asked? Can you imagine? Abraham said, “God will provide a sacrifice.” Finally, when they got there, Abraham said, “Isaac, my son, stretch out your hands,” and Isaac, in obedience, stretched out his hands, trusting his father. And his hands were bound, and his feet were bound, and then Abraham said, “Isaac, stretch yourself upon that altar.” And I believe Isaac, in obedience, trusting his father, leaned there upon the altar.

My dear friend, let me tell you, Isaac is a picture of Jesus. And Jesus willingly went to the cross. Jesus was not held to that cross by nails. Jesus was bound to the cross by the golden cords of love. Jesus could have called 10,000 angels to come and deliver Him. But the Lord Jesus was obedient to the Father, as Isaac was obedient to his father. And Isaac waited there for whatever might come, trusting his father implicitly. And then Abraham the father, trusting God in heaven, took that long, curved knife that the priest used to make animal sacrifices, and said, “O Jehovah God, at thy word I am going to do what you told me to do,” and he raised it high, ready to plunge it into the quivering heart of his only son. When the angel of God said, “Abraham, Abraham, stay thy hand; yonder in a thicket is the sacrifice,” and there was a ram caught in the thicket, Isaac was released; the ram was sacrificed; God was well pleased.

God was testing Abraham. But so far as Abraham was concerned, Isaac was slain. He was as good as dead for three days, in Abraham’s mind. Notice Hebrews the eleventh chapter; the book of Hebrews tells us what went through Abraham’s mind, and Hebrews the eleventh chapter, beginning in verse 17, says this: *“By faith Abraham, when he [tested],”—“when he was tried”—“offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called:”—and this is the reason he did it. Notice the great faith that Abraham had—“accounting that God was able to raise him up...”—remember what I told you? Abraham did this knowing that, if God took his son, God would raise him up—“accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead from whence also he received him.”* (Hebrews 11:17–19) Actually, in a figure of speech, so to speak, Isaac was as good as dead, and Abraham received his son Isaac from the grave after three days. From the time that God told Abraham, “I want you to sacrifice Isaac,” up until the time God stopped Abraham, in the mind of Abraham, Isaac was as good as dead. And so Abraham received his son back to life again after three days.

The point I'm making is that in the Old Testament Isaac is a clear-cut picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was born miraculously; he was a child of promise; he was Abraham's only begotten son. In him was the hope of the Hebrew nation, as in Jesus Christ is the hope of the entire world. He was sacrificed by the father. He willingly submitted. He was as good as dead for three days, and the father received him back the third day from the grave.

I've said all of this to set the stage for the rest of what I want to say: that in the Old Testament Isaac is a picture, an Old Testament picture, of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Old Testament says somebody is coming. The New Testament says somebody has come. The book of Revelation says somebody is coming again. And the entire Bible is the story of the Lord Jesus Christ. And if you read the Bible and you don't see Jesus Christ, you have misread the Bible. Jesus is on every page; Jesus is in every verse and every chapter. And Jesus started at the book of Genesis, and went all the way through the law and the prophets, and spoke to them of all of the things in the Scripture concerning Himself.

Oh, that we had eyes to see the Lord Jesus Christ every time we pick up this blessed book! Oh, as I read the book, and I read the story of Isaac, and some of the things I'm going to share in just a little bit, it just excites me; it sets my soul on fire! And I'm convinced more and more, the more I study this wonderful book, that it is the inspired Word of God. I know it to be the Word of God. I know it! I believe it with all my heart and soul!

And I'll tell you why. My dear friend, bad men would not have written this book. Sinful men would not have written this book. A bad man couldn't write a book that condemned sin. Bad men would not have written this book, and good men couldn't have—good men couldn't have. A good man wouldn't tell a lie over and over and over again, saying, "the Word of the Lord came to me," if the Word of the Lord didn't. Notice what I'm saying. Bad men wouldn't have; good men couldn't have. There's only one other alternative: God Almighty did. This book is the handwriting of God. He used men. And he used good men. But they were not the authors. God was the author of this wonderful book.

Well, Abraham's son, Isaac, in a figure, died. He was raised again the third day, and now he needs a bride. And so I want us to consider that Abraham is seeking a bride. And I want you to remember that Abraham is a picture, a picture of the Father; and that Isaac is a picture of the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. Eliezer Is a Picture of the Holy Spirit

Now, would you read with me Genesis 24? Let's see something very precious and very sweet in the Word of God: *"And Abraham was old, and well stricken in age: and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things. And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of*

his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh: and I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell: but thou shalt go unto my country and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac.” (Genesis 22:1–4) Now the name of this servant to whom this commission came was a man by the name of Eliezer. And notice in verse 10: *“And the servant took ten camels of the camels of his master, and departed; for all the goods of his master were in his hand: and he arose, and went to Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor.”* (Genesis 22:10)

Now, if Abraham is a picture of God, and if Isaac is a picture of Jesus, of whom is this servant a picture? Catch this now: it will be great blessing to your heart. This servant is an Old Testament picture of the Holy Spirit, God’s helper. The very word *Eliezer* itself means “God’s helper.” And this reminds us of the scripture in Romans 8, verse 26, where it says, *“the Spirit...helpeth our infirmities.”* (Romans 8:26) God’s Holy Spirit is God’s helper. He’s God’s helper. And he helps our infirmities. And Eliezer here is a picture of the Holy Spirit. And notice this servant was sent by the father on behalf of the son as the Holy Spirit is sent by God the Father on behalf of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Notice with me, in John 14, verse 26, Jesus said, *“But the Comforter, who is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”* (John 14:26) Notice what Jesus said about the Holy Ghost. The Father sends the Holy Ghost in Jesus’ name. Abraham sent Eliezer in Isaac’s name. Do you get the picture? Do you see how marvelously it fits together? This servant, who went to seek a bride for Isaac, is a picture of the Holy Spirit.

Did you know that the Holy Spirit of God is here tonight? And do you know what He’s doing tonight? He is seeking a bride for the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the purpose of the Holy Spirit in the world. The Holy Spirit has been sent by the Father on behalf of the Son to seek a bride. And the Spirit of God was here this morning, and some came to be the bride of the Lord Jesus Christ. And the Spirit of God is here tonight. And the Spirit of God is seeking tonight men and women to become part of the great bride of the Lord Jesus Christ. What a wonderful picture Eliezer is of the Holy Spirit!

IV. Rebekah Is a Picture of the Church

Now I want you to notice what this servant did in the calling of this bride. And Genesis 24—let’s start reading in verse 13 now. And you have to go home and read the rest of it when you get by yourself, but I’m reading Genesis 24, verses 13 through 19. This is what the servant Eliezer said—and remember the word *Eliezer* means “God’s helper”—this is what the servant, who represents the Holy Spirit, said. He said, *“Behold, I stand*

here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water: and let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master. And it came to pass, before he had done speaking, that, behold, Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, with her pitcher upon her shoulder. And the damsel was very fair to look upon, a virgin, neither had any man known her: and she went down to the well, and filled her pitcher, and came up. And the servant ran to meet her, and said, Let me, I pray thee, drink a little water of thy pitcher. And she said, Drink, my lord: and she hastened, and let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink. And when she had done giving him drink, she said, I will draw water for thy camels also, until they have done drinking.” (Genesis 22:13–19)

And here now is a picture of the bride. Remember, Isaac is a picture of Jesus. Abraham is a picture of God the Father. Eliezer is a picture of the Holy Spirit, who seeks a bride for the son. And remember, the bride is a picture of the Church—the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, let's notice then the calling of the bride.

A. A Pure Bride

In the first place, this bride was a pure bride. Notice verse 16: *“And the damsel was very fair to look upon, a virgin, neither had any man known her.”* (Genesis 24:16) This is the kind of bride that the Lord Jesus Christ wants: a pure bride, a chaste bride, a virgin bride. Do you know what this teaches me? This teaches me that we cannot become the bride of the Lord Jesus Christ until our sins are washed away; until every stain, every blot, every blemish, every blur is cleansed from our soul, because the Bible says that the Church is to be presented to the Lord Jesus Christ as a bride clothed in white linen, chaste and pure. (Revelation 19:8)

Now there is none of us who qualify to be this bride, because all of us have committed spiritual adultery, and we've sinned, and we're unclean. But, oh, the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ makes us clean and worthy to be the bride of the Lord Jesus Christ! Now I never did want to be a bride—not in the world! I always wanted to be a bride's groom, and I was one once; but, you know, I am looking forward to being the Lord's bride. And I know that right now I am a part of that great heavenly bride of the Lord Jesus Christ. And I could never come and present myself to Him and say, “Lord Jesus, I want to be a part of thy heavenly bride.” I could never do it, except He had washed me, and saved me, and made me clean and pure. And if you think you can go to heaven without being saved and having your sins forgiven, you are ignorant of two things: you don't know how wicked your heart is; and you don't know how holy God is. You're just ignorant of those two things. You're going to have to be saved if you ever get

to heaven. God is a holy God, and the bride that God wants is a pure bride.

B. A Serving Bride

Now the second thing I want you to notice about this bride is that she was a serving bride. Notice in verse 18: *“And she said, Drink, my lord...”*—she offered him water, and she—*“...let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink.”* (Genesis 24:18) And after she got through giving him water to drink, she watered the camels. And, you know, we’ve got a lot of folks around church: they are willing to get up, and get here, and sit down, and sit here. And most of them are folded-hand Christians, and they say, “All right, preacher, I’ll give you a half an hour to work on me,” and then they get up and leave, you know. But they never really do anything for the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, but the bride that the Lord wants is not only a pure bride, but He wants a serving bride.

Somebody handed me a little slip of paper and said, “Have you heard of an Alka-Seltzer Baptist? Do you know what kind that is? They fizz a little after being placed in the water, and then they disappear.” Well, we’ve got a lot of them like that. They, you know, make a little show, but then they’re just gone, and you don’t see them anymore, and they don’t serve.

Here this lady is pictured as one who is willing to work. She was willing to water the camels. Now we have some folks: they are just not willing to water the camels; they’re willing to sing a solo, or they’re willing to teach a Sunday School class, or do something, if they get a little recognition. But, you know, we need some camel waterers around.

I heard of some little boys one time. They were all sitting around, and they were all being real quiet. No one was moving. Someone asked them, “What are you fellows doing?” He said, “We’re playing war.” He said, “Well, you are the quietest boys I have ever heard playing war.” He said, “Well, we’re all generals.” And this is the way it is in the church. So often we have a lot of people who are willing to be generals, but we need more soldiers, more who will get out and water the camels.

C. A Believing Bride

This bride was a pure bride. And this bride was a working bride, a serving bride. And she was a believing bride. And, oh, this is what the Lord wants! Notice verses 57 and 58. The servant, Eliezer, spoke to this bride and this woman who had never seen Isaac and up until this time had never heard of Isaac, and he said to her, “I want you to come and follow me. I am going to take you back to be the bride of my master, a wonderful, rich, and wealthy man named Isaac.” And notice in verses 57 and 58. Well, let me explain this scripture just a little bit and get the background. When they asked her parents about it, they said, “Well, don’t take her right away. Let her stay around for about ten days.” You know, a lot of times people will try and keep us from making an immediate decision for the Lord Jesus Christ. But Eliezer the servant said, “No, I want

her to go right now.” And they said, “Well, let’s call her and ask her.” *“And they said, We will call the damsel, and enquire at her mouth. And they called Rebekah, and said unto her,”*—listen to this—*“Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go. And they sent away Rebekah their sister, and her nurse, and Abraham’s servant, and his men.”* (Genesis 24:57–59)

Now, notice this. She had never seen Isaac. All she’d done was heard about Isaac. She was going into a land that she’d never seen, to meet a man that she’d never known, to be his bride, never again to return, so far as she knew. This took a lot of faith, to go off and marry this man, and to stay with him forever. She wasn’t just going off on a little trial to see if she liked it. She believed that marriage was “until death do us part.” You know, it used to be people spoke of marriage as a contract. Now I think they think it’s a ninety-day option. But it’s a marriage contract. And here was this little girl who all she heard was someone who had come and said, “My master is the most wonderful person in the world. He’s fabulously wealthy and rich, and he has sent me to tell you about him. And his father sent me to get him a bride. And we want you to come.” And she just left and went.

Now, how many of you ladies would do that, and marry a man that you’d never seen, and just take someone else’s word for it? Of course, the Spirit of God worked upon Rebekah’s heart. And that is the secret of the whole thing.

But notice the wonderful faith that she had. She left home and went with him. And so it is when we come to the Lord Jesus Christ. Let me read you a precious passage of Scripture over here in 1 Peter the first chapter and the eighth verse. This tells us exactly what we have done. We have done the same thing as she did when we received the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior. You know what the Bible says, concerning the Lord Jesus here? First Peter 1:8: *“Whom having not seen...”*—I haven’t seen Him yet, but I love Him. I’ve done exactly what Rebekah did. One day the Spirit of God came and spoke to my heart. The Spirit of God said, “I’ve been sent by the Father to seek a bride for the Son, and I want you to forsake all that you have, and I want you to go to be His bride. And you haven’t even seen Him, but I want you to love Him.” And I said, “All right, I’ll go. I’ll go.” That’s what you said; that’s what happened to you when you got saved. And you walked by faith and not by sight. You haven’t seen the Lord Jesus Christ yet. But notice what it says—*“Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”* (1 Peter 1:8)

And herewith, this little old teenage girl, just hopping and skipping and jumping, she said, “All right, let’s go. Let’s go. I’m leaving mother and father, houses and land, and I’ll go and be married to this man forever and ever.”

D. A Following Bride

All the point I’m trying to make is that Abraham is a picture of the Father; that Isaac is a

picture of the Son; that Eliezer is a picture of the Holy Spirit; and Rebekah is a picture of the Church. She was a pure bride. She was a working bride. And she was a believing bride: willing to forsake all and love one whom she had not yet seen. Ah, but notice also that she was a following bride. Come back to Genesis 24 with me just a moment. Now our story is almost done tonight, but this ought to bless your heart. It's blessed mine so much. Genesis 24, verse 61—and the Bible says, *“And Rebekah arose, and her damsels, and they rode upon the camels, and followed the man: and the servant took Rebekah, and went his way.”* (Genesis 24:61)

“Now,” you say, “it must have been awfully hard for this little girl to go with this man.” But remember he represented the father, and he represented the son. And this was a long journey to meet Isaac. But all the way along, the servant was her guide. The Holy Spirit is my guide. All the way along, the servant was her protector. The blessed Spirit of God is my protector. All the way along, he was her entertainer; he amused her; he made her happy; he told her stories all the time about Isaac; and he entertained her. And he was her sustainer. He took care of her. Notice what the Bible says, in John 16, concerning the Holy Spirit and those of us who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now I know I've got you flipping through the Bibles tonight. John 16, verses 12 through 14—notice what Jesus said concerning the Holy Spirit. He says, *“I have yet many things to say unto you,”*—He's talking to His bride—*“but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth:”*—just as Eliezer took Rebekah the bride and guided her, so the Holy Spirit guides us—*“for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.”* (John 16:12–14)

Oh, this ought to just thrill your heart and your soul! Jesus said it's the job of the Holy Spirit of God to make Jesus real to you. And He is not going to glorify Himself. I've noticed this: that a lot of people talk about being filled with the Holy Ghost. They say, “Praise God, glory, I am filled with the Spirit of God.” And all they talk about is the Holy Spirit. Now, my friend, I love the Holy Spirit, and I thank God for Him. But when a person is filled with the Spirit, they glorify Jesus. The Spirit does not glorify Himself. A wonder is the Holy Spirit; grand is the Holy Spirit; the third person in the Blessed Trinity. But people who are filled with the Spirit, the mark that they're filled with the Spirit is not that they're always talking about the fact that they're filled with the Spirit; the mark is they're talking about the Lord Jesus Christ. And the Bible says of the Holy Spirit, “He will not speak of Himself.” “He will glorify me,” Jesus said.

And here's Eliezer: he never talked about himself, but all the time, when Rebekah left her home and was going to meet Isaac, you know what Eliezer was talking about? It was Isaac *this*, and Isaac *that*. He said, “You ought to see Isaac's big brown eyes.” “You

ought to see Isaac's curly hair." "You ought to see Isaac's shoulders." "You ought to see how strong Isaac is." "You ought to see how kind Isaac is." "You'll like Isaac's smile." "You'll like that dimple." And he just kept on telling her about Isaac—"Isaac! Isaac!"—all the way.

And then you know what he'd do? All the way, along this trip, he had a treasure chest. It was just filled with jewels: diamonds and rubies and bracelets. Every now and then, when the journey would get a little long and a little dreary, with a twinkle in his eye, he'd reach in this treasure chest, he'd pull out a beautiful gem, he'd hand it to her and say, "This is from Isaac"—"This is from Isaac." And this is what he'd do: he'd just take the things that belonged to Isaac and show them unto her. And the Bible mentions this: that he kept on giving to her these presents.

And, you know, that's what the Holy Spirit does. That's what He does! Ah, when I got saved, when the Lord said to me, "Will you go with this man? Will you follow the Holy Spirit, even though you've never seen the Lord Jesus Christ? Will you go? I said, "Yes, I'll go." And every now and then, the road, you know, it gets a little weary sometimes. It gets a little dusty, and it gets a little dreary. But then the Holy Spirit of God opens up the treasure chest of the Lord Jesus. And every now and then, He'll reveal some gem to my heart. I'll be studying the Bible, and I'll come up with a golden nugget. I'll be reading the Bible, and I'll come up with two fistfuls of diamonds. And, oh, I'll be in prayer, and the Lord will just bathe me in His love, and I'll say, "Thank you, Spirit of God, for revealing to me about my master, the Lord Jesus Christ." Oh, how sweet the journey is! We haven't seen Him, but the Spirit of God just makes Him real to us.

Conclusion

And I want you to notice one last thing, as we go back to Genesis 24. You notice we've been kind of going through Genesis and John. But I've wanted you to see what a beautiful picture this is tucked way over here in the Old Testament of the Lord Jesus Christ. I want you to notice when the bride and the bridegroom met. I want you to notice the coming of the bridegroom. Now, remember they'd been on this journey for a long time. Rebekah has not yet seen the bridegroom, who represents the Lord Jesus Christ. And I haven't seen Jesus yet. But one of these days, I'm going to see Him. One of these days, the heavens are going to open with the shout, "*Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him,*" (Matthew 25:6) and I'm going to meet the Lord Jesus Christ.

But I'm reading Genesis 24, verses 62 through 67: "*And Isaac came from the way of the well Lahairoi; for he dwelt in the south country.*" Now, notice Isaac is coming; she's going to meet Isaac, and Isaac is coming to meet her. "*And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide: and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, the camels were coming. And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac...*"—oh, won't

that be wonderful when you see Jesus? Oh, glory to God, won't it be wonderful?—
“when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel. For she had said unto the servant, What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant had said, It is my master: therefore she took a veil, and covered herself. And the servant told Isaac all things that he had done. And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her.” (Genesis 24:62–67)

There it is! The camels are coming, and there's Isaac, the fine, handsome, strong, stalwart, kind, gentle man. He comes out there at the edge of the field at evening time as the sun is radiantly going down. There he stands with the faraway look in his eyes as he's meditating. You don't have to tell me what he's thinking about. I know what he's thinking about. He's saying, “When is that servant going to get here with my bride?” And he's waiting, and there, all of a sudden, he lifts up his eyes, and there, the camels are coming, and Rebekah. She looks, as the most handsome man she has ever seen is Isaac, and she jumps off the camel and runs to meet him.

How did she know it was Isaac? The servant had told her it was Isaac. Do you think you'll know Jesus when you see Him? You'll know Him. You'll know Him. I've never seen Him, but the first time I meet Him, I'll know Him—I'll know Him. The minute I see Him, I'll recognize Him. And how will I know Him? God's Spirit in my heart will say, “That's Him! That's Him!” Oh, my friend, one of God's children is not going to follow a false ship. You'll know Jesus. You won't be following some false Christ. Jesus said, “Many will come in my name.” (Matthew 24:5; Mark 13:6; Luke 21:8) “If it were possible, they would deceive the very elect.” (Matthew 24:24) But it is not possible, because, when you see Jesus, the Spirit of God will say, just like Eliezer said to Rebekah, “That's Him!” And she ran to meet him. And he ran to meet her. And they embraced. And as the tent flap closes upon the happy couple, we say, “May they live happily, happily, ever after.”

And won't it be wonderful when we meet the Lord Jesus Christ, when we're received into His arms for that honeymoon in the heavens, and the tent flap of this life closes beyond us, and we're with the Lord Jesus Christ never to be separated again? I'm glad, I'm glad, that God's Holy Spirit went to seek a bride. And I'm glad I answered. And one of these days, I'm going to see Him, whom, having not seen, I loved.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Every head bowed, every eye closed. The Spirit of God is here tonight. God's Eliezer, the Holy Spirit, is here tonight. And you know what He's doing? He's going up and down the aisles of the First Baptist Church of Merritt Island and He's seeking a bride for the heavenly Isaac, the Lord Jesus. He's speaking to your heart. And you know what the Holy Spirit is saying to your heart right now. He is saying to you, “Will you, by faith, forsake all that you have and come with me and go to

meet the Lord Jesus Christ? Will you leave all other loves, and will you cling to Jesus alone?

My friend, getting saved is just like getting married. And I've brought you tonight to the marriage altar. And Jesus Christ has already said, "I do," to you. Now He's waiting on you to say, "I do," to Him. He's waiting on you. I'm asking you right now, lost sinner, friend, will you receive the Lord Jesus as your Savior? Will you go with this man? If you will, He'll save you.

Father in Heaven, bless tonight, that others would come and say an everlasting yes to Jesus Christ; that they would follow the leadership of God's Holy Spirit; that they would become tonight a part of this pure bride; this serving bride; this believing bride; this following bride. For we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Bringing Back the Bride

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: June 21, 1981

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 24

“But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac.”

GENESIS 24:4

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Concern of the Father
 - II. The Commission of the Spirit
 - III. The Courtship of the Bride
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 - C. Her Comforter
 - IV. The Coming of the Groom
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- Conclusion

Introduction

Take God’s Word, the Bible, and turn, if you will, please, to Genesis chapter 24. We’re working our way through the book of Genesis, and I don’t know whether the congregation is enjoying it, but the preacher is. I’m having a wonderful time as I’m going back again, seeing some marvelous, wonderful truths that God has given us in the book of Genesis. Now the name *Genesis* means “beginnings,” and we see here the beginnings, the seedbed, of all Christian theology, doctrine, and teaching. And here today you’re going to see a marvelously wonderful lesson concerning Christ and the Church—that’s right, Christ and the Church—as we study here in the Old Testament. The title of our message is “Bringing Back the Bride.”

Now some of you will remember that some while back we preached a series of messages on “Portraits of Christ in the Old Testament,” and we preached from this particular passage. And at first I thought, “Well, perhaps I’ll skip over this passage since we’ve preached on it—and some time recently.” But then I thought, “No, I’ll break the continuity if I skip over this passage.” And I believe today that we need to look at it again and add some points of emphasis. And so, in Genesis chapter 24, I begin reading in

verse 1: *“And Abraham was old, and well stricken in age: and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things. And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh: and I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell: but thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac.”* (Genesis 24:1–4)

Now, notice specially, *“Thou shalt...take a wife unto my son Isaac.”* May I tell you, by introduction, that in the Old Testament Abraham is a figure, a type, a prophecy, an illustration of God the Father. His son who was miraculously born, Isaac, was a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. And you will remember the last message we had with you—how Isaac so marvelously portrays the Lord Jesus Christ. Well, Rebekah, therefore, the bride of Isaac, is a picture, a prophecy, a type, an Old Testament illustration of the Church: of us, of those of us who are here right here this morning. And so as we find Abraham seeking a bride for his son, Isaac, we have a picture of God the Father seeking a bride for His Son, Jesus. That is, we find out how God the Father is in the business of bringing souls to Himself so that we might be the Bride of Christ.

Now, keep that in mind, because that’s the picture, that’s the figure, that we’re going to see together as we study the twenty-fourth chapter of the book of Genesis: “Bringing Back the Bride.” And there are about five things I want us to see together. And let me just give them to you up front, so if you’re taking notes, you’ll know where we’re headed. And sometimes that frightens people when I have five points, and I’m only on two, and it’s five minutes to twelve o’clock. But anyway, I hesitate sometimes to give the points ahead of time for that reason. But we’ll get finished on time. But I want you to see these five things as we look into this chapter. First of all, I want you to see the concern of the father. Second, I would like for you to see the commission of the Spirit. Third, the courtship of the bride. Fourth, I want you to see the coming of the groom. And, fifth, the consummation of the marriage. Now, just keep those things in mind as we study together.

I. The Concern of the Father

And, first of all, I want you to notice the concern of the father. Now, what was the great concern of the father, Abraham, for his son, Isaac? Well, you’ll see it here in verse 4: *“Thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac.”* (Genesis 24:4) Abraham, the old patriarch, Abraham, the father, said to Eliezer, the servant, “I want you to go and bring back a bride for my son.” He knew that his son Isaac needed a bride. He knew that his son Isaac wanted a bride. And so he set out to

provide a bride for his son.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, as the typology follows, that is exactly what God the Father is doing right now. God the Father is in the business of bringing a bride to Jesus. That's what it's all about. That's what evangelism is all about. That's what I'm going to be aiming at this morning as I preach this message: to bring the bride to Jesus. The Church is the Bride of Christ. There are many similes and many metaphors for the Church in the Bible. The Church, in the Bible, is called a building. The Church, in the Bible, is called a body, but one of the most descriptive and illustrative figures of the Church is this: the Church is the Bride of Christ. He is the Bridegroom, and we are the bride. And the Father is seeking a bride for His Son.

Now the Bible tells us, in Matthew chapter 22, verse 2, "*The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son*"—"the kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son." (Matthew 22:2) Why is God the Father so interested that His own dear Son have a bride, the Church? Now you will be stunned by this if you're a thinking person, but I want to tell you that Jesus Christ is incomplete without His Church—Jesus Christ is incomplete without His Church. Now I'm not taking away from the deity of Christ, nor the sovereignty of Christ, when I say that, because He Himself has deemed it and ordained it that way.

I am incomplete without Joyce. Do you know the Bible says, when God gave to man the woman, she is to be a helpmeet for him? (Genesis 2:18) That is, she is to be a fitting helper. She is to be my completer, not my competer. She is to complete me. She is to make me all that I ought to be. That's the reason that sometimes we call our wives "the other half" or "the better half." I'm the bitter half; she's the better half. And that's why we call them "the other half," because a man without his bride is incomplete. I'm only half a person without her, and the Lord Jesus Christ is incomplete without His bride.

Say, there's an interesting verse over in the book of Ephesians. Would you turn to Ephesians chapter 1 and let me show you this very interesting verse? I say, it's exceedingly interesting, so let's look at it together. In Ephesians chapter 1, the last few verses of chapter 1, here the Bible is speaking of the exaltation of the Lord Jesus. It tells how God has exalted Him and put all things under His feet. And let's start reading in verse 22. The Bible speaks of God, and it says, "*[God] hath put all things under his feet,*"—that is, all things are put under the feet of the Lord Jesus, the glorified Christ—"and gave him to be the head over all things to the church"—that is, Christ is the head of the Church. And now he uses the figure of the Church as the body, with Christ as the head. But notice something very interesting. In verse 22, he speaks of the Church; and then, in verse 23, he says, "*Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.*" (Ephesians 1:22–23)

Now, what is "*the fulness of him that filleth all in all*"? The One who fills all in all is

Jesus. And what is the fullness of Jesus? The Church—the Church—is “*the fulness of him that filleth all in all.*” That word *fulness* is the Greek word *pleroma*, and it means “that which completes.” The Church is that which completes the Lord Jesus. The Church is that which fulfills the Lord Jesus. The Church is that which meets a need in the Lord Jesus. And just as Father Abraham knew that his son Isaac had a need that could only be met by a loving bride, God the Father in the glory knows that His Son, Jesus Christ, has a need that can only be met by a bride, the Church. The fullness of Christ is His Church. And without His Church, He is incomplete.

And, therefore, the great concern of the Father is that there be a bride for His Son. Say, is that your concern? Is that your concern? Do you want me to tell you how close you are to God the Father? How much in tune with God the Father you are? I’ll tell you how. If the things that concern God concern you, then you’re close to God. How many of you are concerned with soul winning? How many of you are concerned with bringing a bride to the Son? Don’t tell me you love God if you don’t love the things God loves. Don’t tell me that you know God if you’re not concerned with the things that God is concerned with. I want to tell you that my heart sometimes almost leaps out my throat as I sit here on Sunday morning and see this vast congregation, which is the second congregation that I’ve already preached to here today, and I know that most of you are not soul winners—most of you are not soul winners. How do I know that? Because if you were, every Sunday morning there would be hundreds of people walking down this aisle giving their hearts to Jesus Christ. You’re quite content to sit here, open your Bibles, study your Bibles, make notes, nod your head, say amen, and think you’re right with God. But all you do is come sit, soak, and sour.

I want to tell you something, friend. If you’re right with God, you’re going to be a soul winner. I don’t care how circumspectly you walk. I care not how liberally you give. I care not how beautifully you sing. I care not how eloquently you teach. I care not how faithfully you attend. If you’re not winning souls, you’re not right with God, amen? Some of you have to say, “Oh, me!” You’re not right with God. Andrew Murray said, “There are two classes of Christians: soul winners and backsliders.”

A little boy talking to his daddy about a place he thought he might go said, “I ain’t going.” Well, the dad didn’t like that kind of language, and he said, “Now, son, you’re not supposed to use the word *ain’t*; that’s not proper English.” And then he gave him a little English lesson: “first person singular—‘I am not going’; second person singular—‘you are not going’; third person singular—‘he is not going’; first person plural—‘we’re not going’; second person plural—‘you all are not going’; third person—‘they are not going.’ Now, son, do you understand it?” He said, “Yeah, it looks to me like there ain’t nobody going.” Well, I tell you, when I look at the Church and I see these people who come and sit here on Sunday morning, I say, “Looks to me like ain’t nobody going.”

Jesus said, “Go and make disciples.” (Matthew 28:19) I tell you the thing, dear friend, that moves the great heart of God is that there be a bride for His Son. And it matters not what else you do. Suppose when Abraham sent this servant down there to find a bride and he goes, the servant comes back, and he says to the servant, “Well, did you bring back the bride?” He said, “No, but we got down there, and we all manifested the gifts of the Spirit.” He said, “I didn’t send you to do that. I sent you to bring back the bride. Well, did you bring back the bride?” “No, but, boy, did we have a great choir when we were down there.” “I didn’t tell you to do that. I said, ‘Bring back the bride.’” “Well, I didn’t bring back the bride, but we sure raised the budget. Man, we had 4,000 in Sunday School.”

Listen. There is nothing that moves the heart of God any more than this: to bring the bride for His Son. Are you a part of that business? Are you a soul winner? You say, “Well, God didn’t call me to win souls.” Oh, yes? Well, there’s nothing wrong with you that a good revival and an old-fashioned dose of salvation wouldn’t cure. I want to tell you, dear friend, that God has called every one of us to be a soul winner. No one is excused—no one is excused. Don’t tell me that you love God if the thing that concerns the Father doesn’t concern you. And what concerns the Father? “I want a bride for my Son.” And the Church is the Bride of Christ, and we are to be bringing the bride to the Lord Jesus. That is the concern of the Father.

II. The Commission of the Spirit

Now the second thing I want you to see is the commission of the Spirit. Notice here in verse 2: *“And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh: and I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell: but thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac.”* (Genesis 24:2–4)

Now I’ve called this the commission of the Spirit because I believe this servant illustrates the Holy Spirit. Do you know the name of this servant? His name is not given here, but I believe his name is given in another place. I believe in the book of Genesis, in Genesis chapter 15, verse 2, you find the name of this servant (Genesis 15:2). His name is Eliezer—Eliezer—an interesting name, because it’s a compound of the Hebrew word for God, *El*. *El* is the Hebrew name for God. And the name *Eliezer* means “the helper of God”—“the helper of God.” Abraham’s servant is called “the helper of God.” And in the type, in the figure, it fits perfectly. Abraham represents God the Father. Isaac represents God the Son. Rebekah, the bride, as we’re going to see, represents the Church. But the servant represents the Holy Spirit, the helper of God, sent by the Father into the world to seek a bride for the Son. And that’s exactly what the Holy Spirit has

come to do: the Holy Spirit has come to bring the bride to the Lord Jesus.

And I want you to notice that in this figure, if we're correct in saying that this verse 2 illustrates the Holy Spirit, that the Holy Spirit is shown here as a helper—as a helper, as a servant. The word *Eliezer* means “helper of God.” Have you ever noticed that in the New Testament the Holy Spirit is illustrated as a helper—He is defined as a helper? For example, in Romans chapter 8, the Bible says, “*The Spirit [himself] helpeth our infirmities.*” (Romans 8:25) Have you been ashamed to take a servant role? Have you thought that you're too good to be a servant? Are you better than the Holy Spirit, God's divine helper?

I want you to learn a lesson, one of the greatest lessons I've ever learned about theology and Christian service: that is that God has tremendous authority that He wants to give to you. God has unlimited power that He wants to anoint you with. Jesus said, “*All [authority]—“all power”—“is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and [make disciples]...and, lo, I am with you.*” (Matthew 28:18–20) How much power and authority are the people of God supposed to have? The Bible says, “*The people [who] know their God shall...do exploits.*” (Daniel 11:32) But most of us don't have that power. Most of us do not have that authority. Most of us are living lives completely devoid of power and authority. And why is it? I'll tell you why. We are not willing to take the role of a servant. There can be no power until you're willing to submit to authority.

Now, listen. *You will never be over until you learn to be under.* There was a certain nobleman who said to Jesus, “My servant is sick, Jesus. But you do not need to come to my house to heal my servant. All you need to do, Jesus, is speak the word.” And then he explained. He said, “For I, too, am a man set under authority. And I say to this man, ‘Go,’ and he goes. And I say to this man, ‘Come,’ and he comes.” And when Jesus heard that, Jesus stepped back and marveled, and Jesus said, “I've not seen such great faith in all of Israel.” (Luke 7:6–9) This man was a Gentile, but he had a great insight into how the kingdom of heaven works. Are you listening? What was it that this Gentile army officer, this centurion, saw? He was in the army, and he said, “I am under authority.” Let's say that he was a captain. And so, being a captain, he had a major and a colonel and a general over him. And, being a captain, he had lieutenants and sergeants and privates under him. You see, because he was under, he could be over. But the moment he stopped being under, at that moment, he's no longer over. As a matter of fact, he was court-martialed. He was put in the prison. Listen. What's he saying? He said, “I know how you work, Jesus. I've watched you work. I know, because I too, like you, am a man under authority.” He knew that even the Lord Jesus Christ, who was God, a very God, became a servant. And when Jesus Christ became a servant, the Bible says that “*God...highly exalted him, and [gave] him a name [that] is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow...and every*

tongue should confess.” (Philippians 2:9–11) Jesus had tremendous authority. Why? Because He was under, He was over.

Now, notice this verse—look at it: *“And Abraham said to his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had.”* (Genesis 24:2) A servant who rules—do you see it? I mean, Abraham could trust this man. This man had a spirit of service. This man had a submissive spirit. And when Abraham looked at this one, this one he could trust, he gave him everything. Do you know why you don’t have more? God can’t trust you with more.

When you take your kids out and teach them to drive—I’ve taught four to drive—I want to ask you a question: What’s the first thing you show them? Not the ignition switch. If you’ve got good sense, certainly not the accelerator. The brake, amen? You say, “That’s the thing that stops it. That’s the brake. That is the brake. Right there, that thing—put your foot on it. That’s what will stop it.” Now, listen, friend. Before you teach a child to use the accelerator, you’d better teach him to use the brake. And the more he learns how to use the brake, the more qualified he is to use the accelerator.

Now, listen. God wants to release tremendous power to you. But unless you know how to use the brakes, unless you know the restraint of the Spirit, you’ll never know the release of the Spirit. Do you understand what I’m saying? Until you’re willing to be under, you can never be over.

Here was a servant, and he had all that Abraham had. And, my dear friend, that servant illustrates the Holy Spirit, who is the helper of God. And if the Holy Spirit can take the servant’s role, if the Lord Jesus Christ can take the servant’s role, so must we. And so here is the commission of the Spirit. The Spirit is the One commissioned to help the children of God to bring back a bride for Isaac. So servanthood is not demeaning. Christ Jesus Himself is called “the servant of the Lord.”

III. The Courtship of the Bride

Now the third thing I want you to see: not only the concern of the father; not only the commission of the Spirit; but, thirdly, I want you to see the courtship of the bride. Now it’s interesting to me that Abraham and Eliezer are talking about a bride when she doesn’t know anything about it. She’s over there somewhere in a far country, and they’re talking about her. They’re making plans for her. It’s all in the heart and mind of Abraham before she hears anything about it. What does that remind us of? Well, it reminds me of another verse in Ephesians chapter 1, verse 4. And the Bible says, *“He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world.”* (Ephesians 1:4) That’s so great! Before God ever swung this planet into space, before God ever scooped out the oceans and heaped up the mountains and flung out the stars, we were in the heart and mind of God. Isn’t that wonderful? Here’s Rebekah over there—she didn’t know

anything about it. And here's Eliezer, and here is Abraham, and they're talking, and, doubtless, Isaac was there listening. And the three of them are taking eternal counsel that there's going to be a bride for Isaac.

Do you know that's the reason the Bible says, *"We love him, because he first loved us"* (1 John 4:19)? Friend, before you were born, you were known in the heart and mind of God. God has chosen you. And I want to tell you why you love Him. You love Him because He first loved you. That's why. It didn't originate with you. It wasn't your idea.

Do you know why Joyce loves me? You do, don't you? Nod your head this way. She's not nodding yet. Oh, okay. She loves me. I'll tell you why she loves me: because I first loved her. She was sitting there in the sixth grade, and I sat behind her and off to the side. I sat to the left of her, and she sat up there. And I kept watching her. She didn't even know I existed, I don't think, but I knew she existed. And so I walked by her desk in the sixth grade and dropped a love note by her desk. She picked it up and read it, and then she looked over at me and smiled. She still has that note. She loves me because I first loved her and took the initiative. Of course, that was the sixth grade. We didn't get serious until the next year. But I want you to know—I want you to know, dear friend—that God the Father took the initiative—God the Father took the initiative—and sent the servant, the Holy Spirit, to bring back the bride for His Son.

And what was the work of this servant?

A. Her Convincer

First of all, he had to convince this girl. Look in verse 34. I don't have time to read so much material. Skip down with me to verse 34, and we find here that this servant of Abraham starts to introduce himself to her and to tell her some things—verse 34: *"And he said, 'I am Abraham's servant.'" And she's wondering, "Who is this man?" "And the LORD hath blessed my master greatly; and he is become great: and he hath given him flocks, and herds, and silver, and gold, and menservants, and maidservants, and camels, and asses. And Sarah my master's wife bare a son to my master when she was old: and unto him hath he given all that he hath."* (Genesis 24:34–35)

Now, notice what he did. Look in verse 35. What's the very first thing he does to convince her? Does he spend a lot of time talking about himself? Not at all! That's not his office work. And, incidentally, you beware of any movement that has the Spirit for a figurehead, for the Holy Spirit doesn't speak of Himself. Jesus said, "He'll testify of me. He'll take the things of mine and show them." (John 15:26) And immediately after this servant is introduced, do you know what he does? He starts to brag on Abraham. Look in verse 35. He says, "Listen, Abraham is so rich," and then he starts to brag on Isaac. He says, "Isaac was born of a miracle. Why, Isaac is the miraculous son. Why, he was born when Sarah was old." (Genesis 24:35–36) And, actually, if you knew the context, you'd know that she was actually dead in her womb. And it's a prophecy, and a type,

and a picture of the virgin birth.

And then he goes on to say, “But not only is the father rich; the son is rich. For all that the father has belongs to the son.” (Genesis 24:36) Do you see it? And this is what this servant is doing. He’s saying, “Oh, how rich, how great, how good, how wise is Abraham! How miraculous, how wonderful, how strong, how loving, how wealthy is Isaac!” And he spends all of that time talking about the riches of the father, talking about the resources of the son, for that is exactly, precisely, what the Holy Spirit is doing in the world in this day and in this age. And, oh, God, help me today through the Holy Spirit to show you how great our God is and how wonderful is His blessed Son, the Lord Jesus Christ! Jesus said, in John 15, *“But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.”* (John 15:26) Just as Eliezer proceeded from Abraham, the Holy Spirit proceeds from God the Father. And just as Eliezer talked about Isaac, so the Holy Spirit talks about Jesus. Oh, what a powerful work He did!

Look, if you will, please, in verse 58. Look at it—this same chapter. The moment of truth has come. *“And they called Rebekah, and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man?”*—and she wilted. Listen—*“Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go.”* (Genesis 24:58) Now, you girls, you ladies, how many of you would have gone? I mean, put yourself back in Rebekah’s time. She meets a stranger; she’s never seen him before. He introduces himself, and he starts a story. He says, “Look, I represent a man who is very rich, and that man has a son who’s very handsome. And he’s also very rich, and that rich man has sent me to go find a bride for his son. And I have determined that you’re the one. And I want you, if you will, to go in and tell your father and your mother and your brothers and sisters goodbye. And I want you to come and go with me to marry this man.” How many of you would have gone? I mean, a man you’ve never seen—all you had was just exactly what he told you, no more and no less. I want to tell you one thing, friend. Eliezer was a super salesman. I mean, he really was—to get a girl to go with a man she had never met to marry a man she had never seen. I mean, she said, “I’m going”—“I am going.”

That is exactly, precisely, what the Holy Spirit has done in my heart. You see, the Holy Spirit of God has convinced me that I want to be a part of the Bride of Christ. Peter said, *“Whom having not seen, ye love;”—“whom having not seen, ye love;”—we love Him—“in whom, though now [we] see him not, yet believing, [we] rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”* Let me give you the whole verse: *“Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”* (1 Peter 1:8) You see, he was her convincer.

B. Her Counselor

But not only was he her convincer; he was her counselor. Look, if you will, in verse 61 of

this same chapter. And it says here, *“And Rebekah arose, and her damsels, and they rode upon the camels, and followed the man.”* (Genesis 24:61) I mean, he just said, “Come on. I’m going to take you to him.”

Friend, listen. I want to tell you what the dear Holy Spirit did to a boy named Adrian Rogers. Not only did He come into my heart and convince me of the riches of the Father and the resources of the Son; not only did He make me say, “I will receive Jesus, sight unseen; I love Him; I trust Him,” but then He said, “All right now, come with me; I’m going to bring you to Him.” That is, I have begun to follow my counselor—my counselor, my paraclete, the One called along by my side to lead me to the way everlasting, who is the dear Holy Spirit of God. The Bible says, in John chapter 16, beginning in verses 12 through 14, that He, the Holy Spirit, will take the things of Jesus and will show them unto us. (John 16:13) And, you see, Eliezer was wise. He knew that little ol’ Rebekah couldn’t find her way all by herself. He didn’t say, “Now, if you want Isaac, he’s out there somewhere. Go on—go on back home and see if you can find him.” Oh no, no, no! He stayed by her side all the way. And I want to tell you, there’s someone standing in this pulpit with me this morning: it’s the dear Holy Spirit of God. There’s someone dwelling in my heart this morning: it’s the dear Holy Spirit of God. And He who became my convincer has now become my counselor. And, constantly, day after day, He is leading me along the way.

C. **Her Comforter**

Now, thirdly, he was also her convincer, her counselor; he was also her comforter. All along the way he stood by her, and he kept giving her the riches that belonged to Isaac. Look, if you will, in verse 10. I want to tell you that, when this Eliezer started out, he loaded himself down. *“And the servant took ten camels...”*—now, look, he’s just going after one gal—*“And [he] took ten camels of the camels of his master...”*—friend, that’s like taking ten semi-trucks in this day just to go on a vacation—*“And the servant took ten camels of the camels of his master, and departed; for all the goods of his master were in his hand: and he arose, and went to Mesopotamia.”* (Genesis 24:10) I mean, he loaded those camels down.

You say, “What were they loaded down with?” Riches, rubies, diamonds, emeralds, gold, and silver, among everything else. You say, “How do you know?” Well, I just want to show you how I know. Look in verse 53 of this same chapter: *“And the servant brought forth jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and gave them to Rebekah.”* (Genesis 24:53) What is the job of the precious Holy Spirit of God? Oh, dear friend, the job of the precious Holy Spirit of God is to take the things of Christ and to make them mine—to show them to me. He was her convincer. He was her counselor. He was her comforter. And all along the way he would see her, when, perhaps, the fear would come in her heart. Her chin would start to quiver. The tears would well up in her

eyes, and she would get to thinking and asking, “Is there really an Isaac? Is he really that rich? Is really that strong? Is he really that kind?” And this dear Eliezer would open a little box, and in it he’d take some pearls, and he’d put them around her neck. And he’d say, “Here, Rebekah. This is from Isaac. He just wanted you to have it. Now, wipe those tears from your eyes.”

That’s what the Holy Spirit is doing today, dear friend. All along the road He’s just dropping these jewels into our hearts, isn’t He? I say, isn’t He? Isn’t He in your heart? Isn’t it wonderful how the dear One who was our convincer has become our companion? And the One who’s become our companion has become our counselor, and the One who’s become our counselor has become our comforter, staying by our side, bringing us to meet the Heavenly Bridegroom.

IV. The Coming of the Groom

And so you’ve seen the concern of the Father. And so you’ve seen the commission of the Spirit. And so you’ve seen the courtship of the bride. Now I want you to see the coming of the groom. Look, if you will, in verse 63: “*And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide.*” (Genesis 24:63) At the close of the day, in the twilight hours of the day, in the glowing of the day, here is handsome Isaac out there at the edge of the field, and he’s coming to meditate—I believe, led of the Spirit of God at that precise moment. And, incidentally, all you guys, I want to ask you, what do you think Isaac is thinking about right now? If you knew that your father had sent his most trusted servant with ten camels full of wealth to seek a bride, and you knew at any moment they’d be coming back, what do you think you’d be thinking about? You’d be thinking about the bride. Listen. When the Bible says he’s out there meditating, what’s he thinking about? Oh, he’s thinking about Rebekah. He’s thinking about that time when he will have her in his arms, that one that he can love, honor, cherish, and protect. And he’s thinking about her.

And he comes there at the edge of the field, but only so far, because I think the picture here is beautiful. You see, the Lord Jesus is going to come from heaven, but He’s not going to come all the way to the earth when He comes for His bride, but we’re going to meet Him in the air. For the Bible says, “We are to be brought to Him.” (1 Thessalonians 4:17) You see, the Church is to be presented to the Lord Jesus Christ.

And, as a matter of fact, look, if you will here, in this chapter, in verse 7. I think it’s quite clear. The Bible says, in verse 7, “*And thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence.*” (Genesis 24:7) That is, the wife is to be brought to the son—she’s to be brought to him. And you just take this wife unto Isaac. And so here is Eliezer, and he’s bringing her unto Isaac. Isaac comes part of the way, and the bride comes the rest of the way. Does that remind you of anything? Friend, I’ll tell you what it reminds me of.

First Thessalonians chapter 4, verse 16: *“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with a voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”* (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17)

I believe that we’re living in the eventide of this age. Now I believe the Lord Jesus is ready to step out at the edge of that field. I believe, even now, He’s meditating on His Church. And I believe, before long, we’re going to finish our journey, and we’re going to come and see Him.

V. The Consummation of the Marriage

One last thing I want you to see: not only the coming of the groom, but I want you to see the consummation of the marriage. How beautiful the Scripture concludes this story— one of the most beautiful stories in all of the Bible! I want you to see how it concludes here, and I’m reading here the last part of this chapter. And we read here in verse 64: *“And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel. For she had said unto the servant, What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant had said, It is my master.”* (Genesis 24:64–65) Now Jesus warned of false Christs and prophets, and Jesus said, *“If it were possible, they [would] deceive the very elect.”* (Matthew 24:24) But do you know why it’s not possible? Because Eliezer is there to say, “That’s him.” Amen? “That’s him.”

Oh, bless God, I’ll know Him when I see Him, because that divine Eliezer in me is going to say, “Yes, that’s the One I’ve been telling you about.” And she knew him because he had done that work. And she can hardly wait. And the camels are too slow, and she gets down off that camel and she runs to meet this one. And then, notice, she took a veil and covered herself. And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done. And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah’s tent and took Rebekah, and she became his wife. And as the tent flap closes, if a modern storyteller were telling it, he would say, “And they lived happily ever after.” Friend, that’s the consummation.

If you think the courtship is wonderful, I mean, if you love Him now and haven’t seen Him, what are you going to do when you see Him? What are you going to do when you meet Him face to face? What are you going to do when there’s the consummation, when there is the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, when we become one with our blessed Lord? What a moment it’s going to be!

*Oh, the soul-thrilling rapture when I see His blessed face,
And the luster of His kindly beaming eye;
How my full heart will praise Him for the mercy, love, and grace
That prepare for me a mansion in the sky.*

—FANNY J. CROSBY

Oh, the consummation of the marriage! Did you know that, had this little girl Rebekah said, “I don’t want him,” that was her prerogative. Even though God chose her, she had to choose Isaac. Suppose she’d said, “No, I’ll not go with you. No, I don’t believe you. No, I don’t want to be the bride of Isaac.” That was her prerogative. But I don’t believe we’d even find her name mentioned in Holy Scripture. Friend, I want to tell you something. She is enshrined in the Word of God, and she is in heaven above, because she was a believer in the Word of God. “The one that does the will of God abides forever.” (1 John 2:17) Have you believed in Jesus? Have you trusted Jesus?

Conclusion

Do you know, as a teenage boy down in West Palm Beach, Florida, under deep conviction of sin, I had already gone forward in the church service, but I was not absolutely certain I was saved. I didn’t know whether I was lost and the Holy Spirit was trying to bring me under conviction, or whether I was saved and the devil was trying to make me doubt, but I stopped on the corner of 39th Street and Calvin Avenue one night after I’d walked Joyce home, and I prayed, and I looked straight up into the heavens. I wasn’t being irreverent, because I bow my head most of the time when I pray. But on this night, I just looked straight into the stars, and I looked into the face of God, and I said, “God, I don’t know whether I’m lost and the Holy Spirit is trying to bring me under conviction, or whether I’m saved and the devil is trying to make me doubt. But I know one thing. I’m miserable, and I don’t have any peace, and it hasn’t yet quite been settled.” And so I prayed a prayer like this. I said, “O God, right now, with all of my heart, once and for all, now and forever, with as much as in me is, I trust you to save me. I don’t look for feeling. I don’t ask for any signs. You said, *‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and...be saved.’* (Acts 16:31) And I believe. Thank you for saving me.” And a river of peace started to flow through my heart.

And that same river is flowing right now—right now. *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”* (Acts 16:31) “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish.” (John 3:16) The Father is seeking a bride for His Son. Jesus is incomplete without you. Come to Him, because you are incomplete without Him.

Success Is Not an Accident

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: January 9, 2005

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 24

“And he said O Lord God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham.”

GENESIS 24:12

Outline

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Introduction

Take your Bibles and find Genesis chapter 24. I want to talk to you tonight about success.

What is a success? Somebody said, “You’re successful if you get invited to the White House and the Oval Office.” Somebody said, “Oh, no, that’s not success. Success is if you’re invited to the Oval Office, and you’re having a conversation with the President, and that red telephone that signals an emergency rings, and the President is so engrossed with his conversation with you that he just lets it ring. Then you’re really important.” Somebody said, “No, that’s not important. That’s not success. If you’re in the Oval Office, and the phone rings, and he does pick it up, and he says, ‘Here, it’s for you,’ then you know that you are successful.” Well, not necessarily so. That might be important, it might be notoriety; but it is not success.

What is success? Well, when we define it, we need to understand that there are all kinds of things that are called success that are not. So make certain that it is real

success that you get. I told you this morning that failure is succeeding at the wrong thing. Success is finding and doing the will of God.

Now we have a story here in the Bible, in Genesis chapter 24. It's a story you may or may not be familiar with. But Isaac, who is a picture of Jesus in the Old Testament, needed a bride. And so Abraham, who is a picture of God, wants to bring a bride to Isaac. Now, you know, the Church is the Bride of Christ. Well, Abraham took his servant Eliezer and sent Eliezer to find a bride for Isaac. *Eliezer* means "the helper of God" or "God is my helper," and Eliezer represents the Holy Spirit. Abraham represents God the Father. Isaac represents God the Son. Eliezer represents God the Holy Spirit. And Rebekah, the bride that will be brought to Isaac, represents the Church of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now I want us to take this story and use it as a template and a matrix to show you what success is. Five times in this chapter we read the word *good success* or the word *good speed*. Some translations give it "success." The King James calls it "good speed." But success is saying yes to God's best.

Now I want to give you some success factors tonight, and I pray God He'll write them upon your heart, because I want to tell you something. This is not something from a book of business, though it may be businesslike. This is not pop psychology. This is divine, revealed truth about having God's speed, having good success.

I. If You Want Success, You Must Seek Spiritual Direction

Number one: If you want success, you must seek spiritual direction. Look in Genesis 24, verses 1 through 4: *"And Abraham was old, and well stricken in age: and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things. And Abraham said to his elder servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh: and I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell: but thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac."* (Genesis 24:1–4)

Now Eliezer receives a commission from the Lord. It is very clear that there is spiritual direction here. Now Eliezer, at this point, has a goal. And I trust, I pray, that you will have a goal, that you will get a direction from God for your life and for your service. Now, in order for it to be a goal, it has to be specific. It has to be something you can focus on. No ifs, ands, and buts, or doubts about it, Eliezer knew specifically what he was to do. He was to seek a bride for Isaac.

Now every person in this congregation needs the same kind of spiritual goal. You need to hear from God. What does God want you to do? Yogi Berra, that eminent philosopher and theologian, said this: "You've got to be careful if you don't know where

you're going, because you might get there." Beware of vague goals. If you have a vague goal, you're probably not going to do much in life.

Tiger Woods is a great golfer, but I can beat him. But how could I beat Tiger Woods playing golf? Just blindfold him. You see, if he doesn't know where he's aiming, what he's shooting for, I don't care how good he is, he does not have a specific goal if he's blindfolded.

Now, rather than being a sort of a wandering generality, you need to be a meaningful specific. If you're not, you're going to be like a ship without a rudder, without a chart, without a compass on a dark and stormy night. And if you want to succeed, then you must plan. And if you don't plan, you plan to fail.

Now Eliezer, obviously, was a very important man. But mothers need goals. Students need goals. Business people need goals. Athletes need goals. Doctors and lawyers need goals to find out what God wants you to do with your life. Don't just wander through your life.

How can you tell if your goal is a God-given goal? How can you tell? Well, is it God-approved? Can you find in the Word of God something that ramifies your goal? Has it got a proof? Number two: Does it create the necessary excitement for fulfillment? My goal is to be a godly pastor, among other kinds of goals—but that's one goal. I can tell you this much: I am as excited tonight about serving Jesus Christ as I've ever been. It's not gotten old. It is not dull. It is not boring. It is not onerous. Sometimes I get tired in the work, but I've never gotten tired of the work.

Now God may not call you to be a pastor, or God may not call you to seek out a bride for Isaac, but God has something He wants to do with your life. Is it God-given and God-approved? Does it create enough excitement for its fulfillment? Does it demand and is it worthy of your very best?

Somebody gave me a book for Christmas: *The New Book of Guinness World Records*. You know, it's amazing what people do to make a world record. I read in *The New Book of Guinness World Records* where one man ground up to powder a Cessna light aircraft and through the years ate it! A man ate an airplane! He ate an airplane! One man ate an airplane! Can you imagine him getting to heaven, if he gets there? "What did you do with your life?" "I ate an airplane." So what? So what?

Does it demand and is it worthy of your best? Can you pray over it and ask God for the fulfillment? Friend, if you can't pray over it and ask God's blessing upon it, it is not from God. Is your goal specific enough that you can put it on paper? And are your goals balanced?

Now I said that one of my goals is to be a godly pastor. But that's not all. Another of my goals is to be a godly husband. Another is to be a godly father. You see, your goals have to be specific, but they have to be balanced.

I heard of a football player. The dean called the coach in to remonstrate with the coach about the football player. He said, “This athlete of yours has made four F’s and one D. What do you have to say about that?” The coach said, “I think he’s concentrating too much on one subject.”

Now what you have to do is to be balanced in your goals.

II. If You Want Success, You Must Use Serious Discernment

And so, number one—listen: Get spiritual direction. Number two: Use serious discernment. Don’t just be slaphappy about this thing. Ask yourself some questions. Where am I now in my life? And make an honest evaluation. Don’t just go from one television program, or one news item, to another, one party to another, one paycheck to another. Step back and evaluate.

Now, you know, if somebody were to call you tonight and say, “Look, we just got into town. We want to come by and see you. We’ve never been in Memphis before. Tell us how to get to your house,” I know what you would say. You would ask them a question: “Where are you now?” “Where are you now?”

You see, everybody has to have an evaluation. If you don’t know where you are now, there’s no way that you can be guided to get to where you need to be. It was easy for Eliezer to figure out where he was at this particular time. There was no wife for Isaac. Time was running out. And he had to evaluate the situation.

Make, friend, a serious discernment. Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can. Make a serious discernment.

III. If You Want Success, You Must Exercise Steadfast Dependence

Number three: Exercise steadfast dependence. Look in verses 5 through 7: “And the servant said unto him,”—that is, Eliezer said to Abraham—“*Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land: must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest?*” That is, he said, “Look, if she won’t come with me, will I take Isaac to her?” “*And Abraham said unto him, Beware thou that thou bring not my son thither again. The LORD God of heaven, which took me from my father’s house, from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land; he shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence.*” (Genesis 24:5–7)

Now what he’s doing now, he is depending upon the Lord. He says, “What if it doesn’t work?” Abraham says, “Look, God is going to help you to do this thing. God is going to see you through.” Now you fortify that dependence through the Word of God. It’s very clear that Eliezer had a word from God. Abraham said, “Look, God swore unto me about this thing. I have the Word of God.”

Now, if your success cannot be measured and rooted in the Bible, it is not true success. You have to get a word from God. Now you're not going to open the Bible and it's going to say, "Move to Cleveland," but you're going to find out that you must submit yourself to whatever you do. And there are plenty of general rules that are still biblical rules that God will guide you with.

Now I love what God said to Joshua—and you might put this in your margin—Joshua 1:8: *"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous,"*—now, listen—*"and then thou shalt have good success."* (Joshua 1:8) That's it! There's no success apart from the Word of God. You need to saturate your mind, your heart; marinate the Bible into your very being. You fortify this discernment and this desire and this dependence through the Word of God and then through prayer.

Now, you see, if you have this direction, or you feel that you have this direction, then pray about it. Notice Genesis chapter 24 and verse 12: *"And he said"*—that is, Eliezer said—*"O LORD God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day,"*—literally, "send me success. God, I pray for success"—*"and shew kindness unto my master Abraham."* (Genesis 24:12)

Now, let me tell you about your goals. Your prayer reveals your desire. How often do you pray about your goals? I can tell you just mentioning the goals that I've mentioned already—and I have others—I pray over and over and over and over again about my ministry. I pray about my family, that God will make me a good and a loving husband. I pray, and Joyce and I pray together, for our children. You see, if you don't pray about something, you don't believe in God, or you really don't desire it. Prayer reveals your desire. Prayer reveals your dependence. Now sometimes you ask God for something, and He won't give it to you right away, because God is trying to see if you're really depending upon Him. Prayer reveals your devotion.

Why did Eliezer want success? Not for his sake. He says it here clearly: "for my master's sake." When you pray, friend, you pray in the will of God and for the glory of God. And so, cultivate this strong dependence.

IV. If You Want Success, You Must Cultivate Strong Desires

And then, number four: Cultivate strong desires. Look, if you will, in verse 7: *"The LORD God of heaven, which took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, which spake unto me, and that sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land; he shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence."* (Genesis 24:7)

Now, where does this desire come from? Well, you have to ask yourself, why do I

want this thing? What is the reward? What is the payback? Now you may say, “Well, I don’t believe in serving God for a reward.” I do, because it’s so biblical. Jesus said, *“Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.”* (Revelation 22:12) You say, “I don’t believe in bribing people for being good.” There’s a difference between a bribe and a reward. A bribe is an inducement to do evil; a reward is a recognition for doing good. And so you ask yourself, why do I want this? What is the motivation? That doesn’t mean your motivation has to be carnal. Your motivation can be to glorify God. That is my motivation, and that’s where my joy comes from.

Here Eliezer is saying, “Now, look. Why do I want this? Well, number one, my master will be pleased; number two, there will be a bride for Isaac; number three, there will be joy, and God will be glorified. If you settle the why, God will show you the how. When you say, “O God, I want this for your glory,” then God is going to enable you to do what you do, and you cultivate a strong desire. And the only way that you can cultivate a strong spiritual desire is to have that God-given direction, soaked in the Word of God.

V. If You Want Success, You Must Establish Specific Direction

Number five: You need to establish specific direction—specific direction. It’s not enough for you to just have a glittering generality. You need to begin to make plans. That’s what Eliezer did. Look now in verses 10 through 14: *“And the servant took ten camels of the camels of his master, and departed; for all the goods of his master were in his hand: and he arose, and went to Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor. And he made his camels to kneel down without”—or “outside”—“the city by a well of water at the time of the evening, even the time that women go out to draw water. And he said O LORD God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed”—that is, “success”—“this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham”—now, notice he wanted it for his master, not for himself—“shew kindness unto my master Abraham. Behold, I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water: and let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master.”* (Genesis 24:10–14)

Now what he is doing now is getting very specific. I mean, he’s talking about a well of water. He’s talking about his camels kneeling down. He’s talking about a girl coming up and saying, “Give me a drink of water.” And he says, “Now, look. If this girl gives me water and waters my camels at the same time, then I will believe that this is the one.” Now where he got this plan, I really don’t know. What prompted him to say what he said, I do not know. But I know that he said it, and I know that he had a plan.

Again, listen. You establish a specific direction. This man had some difficulty. You think about it. He was going to meet a girl that did not know him, tell her about a man she had never met, and ask her to go with him to marry that man. So he had these problems, but he had a plan.

You say, “Pastor, I have problems.” Well, do tell. If you’re in business, it’s your problems that constitute your job. If there were not problems for you to solve, there wouldn’t be a job for you. And if you had small problems, somebody making a whole lot less than you make would be able to handle that job. Thank God for your problems. When I first started out in ministry, I thought I’d get all my problems behind me and then I’d start my ministry. I learned that my problems are my ministry.

Here was a man who had some problems to face. But what he did, he established specific direction. That’s the reason I asked you early on: Are your goals such that you could write them down? Perhaps put dates by them. You establish a plan after you diagnosis your problem. Now he thought of what he had to do. He had a plan. You’d be amazed what kind of plan you can come up with if you think.

I heard about a man who stopped a pretty girl along the road. He was going to the county fair. He had a basket in one hand, he had a pig under his arm, and he had a chicken in the other hand. He stopped this pretty girl and said, “Can you tell me how to get to the county fair? She said, “Yes, if you’ll go down this road one-half mile and turn left one-half mile at the next road, you’ll come to the county fair. He said, “Couldn’t I just cut through the woods and make it shorter? She said, “Yes, you could, but you might get lost.” He said, “Well, you could go with me and show me the way.” She said, “Oh, no!” He said, “Why not?” She said, “You might get me out there in the middle of the woods and try to kiss me.” “Now,” he said, “how could I do that with a chicken in one hand, a basket in the other hand, and a pig under my arm? How could I do that?” She said, “Well, you could put the chicken on the ground, and you could put the basket over the chicken. And I could hold that silly old pig!” There’s a way! She had to make a plan.

I mean, you really need to put something on the calendar. The Bible is not against planning. The Bible says, “*Let all things be done decently and in order.*” (1 Corinthians 14:40) Now, you begin. You say, “How do I know what kind of a plan to write down?” Well, you may not know, but write some kind of a plan down. Get started.

Here’s what Eliezer said. Look, if you will, in verse 21: “*And the man wondering at her held his peace,*”—that is, Eliezer is looking at her, and he doesn’t say anything—“*to wit whether the LORD had made his journey prosperous or not.*” (Genesis 24:21) That is, he said, “Lord, is this your way?” You know, it’s hard to steer a ship that’s not moving. And if you’re waiting till you have everything buttoned down, you’re not going to be very successful in life. You say, “Lord, this is what I think. This is what seems good to me. I’ve been praying. I’ve been in your Word. I’ve heard your voice. Now, Lord, if I’m headed the

wrong way, if I did not understand, then, Lord, guide me.”

VI. If You Want Success, You Must Practice Strict Discipline

Now, number six: Practice strict discipline. I’m preaching to myself right now. I want you to see how this man disciplined his life.

A. He Disciplined His Decisions

First of all, he disciplined his decisions. I’ve just read that scripture. He held his peace, to wit, to understand whether or not the Lord had made his journey prosperous or not. He didn’t jump to a conclusion. Look, if you will, in verse 49: *“And now if ye will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me: and if not, tell me;”*—he’s talking to Rebekah’s parents—*“that I may turn again to the right hand, or to the left.”* (Genesis 24:49) He’s not just headstrong. He’s saying, “God, is this your will? Lord, show me. Or should I turn this way or should I turn that way?” He disciplines his decisions. He’s not jumping at conclusions.

B. He Disciplined His Appetite

He disciplines his appetite. When he gets there to her family, they want him to eat. But notice in verse 33: *“And there was set [food] before him to eat: but he said, I will not eat, until I have told mine errand. And he said, Speak on.”* (Genesis 24:33) Now, to him, success was more important than eating.

C. He Disciplined His Time

Not only did he discipline his decisions, and his appetite; he disciplined his time. Look, if you will, in verse 56: *“And he”—Eliezer—“said unto them, Hinder me not, seeing the LORD hath prospered my way; send me away that I may go to my master.”* (Genesis 24:56) They wanted him to stay a while. He said, “I don’t have time for that. Don’t hinder me.”

Now, don’t let anything slow you down when you’re serving the Lord. I used to pastor a church in Florida, in Fort Pierce, where there was no outside office. You could just walk in off the street into my study. And I studied and prepared sermons there. I study at home now. And if you come now to the lovely office that the church has provided, you would come, first of all, through a secretary into my office. But I would have people just walk in off the street to talk to me. It was not altogether bad, but I had some who would come there and sit down and talk with me at whim, and take a half an hour, an hour. And it was kind of embarrassing, because I wanted to say, “Out! Out!” I thought I’d get me a sign and put it on the wall that said, “If you don’t have anything to do, please don’t do it here.” I had one insurance salesman that would come by and want to drink coffee and just talk. I found out how to cure him. I got me a stack of hospital calls and soul winning calls and put them on my desk, and I said, “Jim, it’s good to see

you. Come, go with me to the hospital,” or, “Come, let’s go soul winning.” He stopped coming by my office at that time.

D. He Disciplined His Resources

Now, here’s what Eliezer did. He disciplined his decisions, he disciplined his appetite, he disciplined his time, and he disciplined his resources. Look in verse 53: *“And the servant brought forth jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and gave them to Rebekah: he gave also to her brother and to her mother precious things.”* (Genesis 24:53) Now Abraham had given him gifts, but he knew those gifts were not for himself. They had come from his master. They were to be used in bringing a bride to Isaac.

Now God has given you spiritual gifts. Every one of us is spiritually wealthy. And one of these days we’re going to have to give an account for what He has given to us. We all have rich spiritual gifts. And this man disciplined his resources. Now without discipline you’re not going to amount to very much. You need to ask yourself, if you’re not being successful, where do I need to grow personally? Somebody has well said, “If your professional life outpaces your personal life, you will have stress.” Now you can take that in a business sense, and it makes sense, but let me just rephrase it. If your personal life is behind your spiritual life, you’re going to have stress.

VII. If You Want Success, You Must Express Serious Devotion

Now, let me give you the last principle here for success, and that is: You must express serious devotion. If God is blessing you, give God thanks. When you begin to take the praise, then God has to stop using you. Look, if you will now, in verses 49 through 52. Now, here’s what Eliezer says to her parents and to her brothers: *“And now if ye will deal kindly and truly with my master,”—that is, with Abraham—“tell me: and if not, tell me; that I may turn to the right hand, or to the left. Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, The thing proceedeth from the LORD: we cannot speak unto thee bad or good. Behold, Rebekah is before thee, take her, and go, and let her be thy master’s son’s wife, as the LORD hath spoken. And it came to pass, that, when Abraham’s servant heard their words, he worshipped the LORD, bowing himself to the earth.”* (Genesis 24:49–52)

When your life is all summed up, or when this particular event, this goal, is fulfilled and matured, can you worship God? Can you express to Him serious devotion? What a joy to praise God!

A personal word, and I’m finished. In 1984, God laid something on my heart, and that is that we should move this ministry from midtown out here. When I first thought about it, it was mind-boggling. There was no way, really, humanly speaking, that we should even attempt such a thing. And don’t get mad at me, Joyce, when I tell the church this; but when I told Joyce about it, she said, “You’re crazy.” I was afraid to tell

anybody about it, in one sense of the word, because it seemed to be absurd. But God put it in my heart, and God put it in an encircling group of people's hearts, until you as a church, with virtual unanimity, said, "Let's do it!" And God brought us out here. And we have seen thousands and thousands of people come to faith in Jesus Christ. And God has given us a worldwide outreach and a program.

Do you think we ought to strut about that? Friend, let me tell you something. That was a vision that God fulfilled. It was a God thing. And because it was a God thing, to God be the glory. And I have bowed my head before the Lord. When God does it, then you express serious devotion.

Conclusion

God wants you to be successful. He really does! Don't spend all of your life trying to get to the top of the ladder and find that ladder leaning against the wrong wall. Jesus said, *"What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"* (Mark 8:35–37) George Bernard Shaw said this: "If you take too long in deciding what to do with your life, you will find you've already done it." It's time for each one of us to say, "Dear God, what do you want to do with my life?"

The Bride of Christ

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: Febraury 19, 1995

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 24

“But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac.”

GENESIS 24:4

Outline

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Introduction

Robert and Vickie, some time ago we had the joy of uniting the two of you in holy matrimony. And I know that you meant what you said with all of your hearts when you pledged your love and faithfulness one to the other. But in our married life and in our spiritual life, there comes a time when we want to say again and recommit what we meant the first time with all of our heart, and that's what we're going to give you the privilege of doing right now. And this is a re-committal of the vows that you've already made and already hold deeply in your heart. And, Robert, I'd like for you, first of all, to repeat these vows to Vickie:

“I, Robert, take thee, Vickie, to be my lawfully wedded wife, to have and to hold, from this day forward, in sickness as in health, in poverty as in wealth, to love, to honor, to cherish, and to protect, so long as we both shall live, and thereto I pledge thee my faithfulness.”

And Vickie, I want you to renew your vows to Robert, if you will:

“I, Vickie, take thee, Robert, to be my lawfully wedded husband, to have and to hold, from this day forward, in sickness as in health, in poverty as in wealth, to love, to honor,

to cherish, and to obey, so long as we both shall live, and thereto I pledge thee my faithfulness.”

And I thank God for that, and you’re both a wonderful example of what our Lord intended for a home to be. You may kiss your bride. God bless you.

Now you have seen a small part of a twentieth-century wedding, but marriage was instituted of God in the Garden of Eden. It was blessed by the Lord Jesus when He attended that wedding in Cana of Galilee. And Paul said that marriage is to be honorable among all men (Hebrews 13:4). And the wonderful thing about marriage and a wedding is this: that it typifies and shows here on earth what it means for the Church to love the Heavenly Bridegroom, the Lord Jesus Christ.

I would like for you to take your Bibles and turn, if you would, please, to Genesis chapter 24. And we’re going to see what marriage was like in the Bible. Then we’re going to understand, as we look in Genesis chapter 24, why the Church is called “the Bride of Christ.” Now God wants us to be saved, and God wants us to understand salvation. And because of that He has given to us in the Word of God many wonderful, wonderful examples, illustrations. The Bible students sometimes call these “types,” and what they are is Old Testament pictures, portraits, and prophecies of spiritual truth.

And one of the greatest of these is found in the story of how Abraham, the father of the faithful, one of the brightest stars in the Hebrew heaven, sought a bride for his son, Isaac. Now Isaac is an Old Testament picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, because he was the son of promise; he was the son of miraculous birth. You remember—he was born when it was literally and physically impossible for him to be born apart from a miracle from God. Even as our Lord was virgin birth, so Isaac miraculously born. And then you will remember that God told Abraham to take Isaac, the son of promise, the son of miracle, and offer him up for a burnt sacrifice on Mount Moriah. And in the heart and mind of Abraham, he offered his son—his only begotten, dearly beloved son—at that time on Mount Moriah. But you will remember how God again brought Isaac down from that mountain alive and well. And now Isaac typifies and pictures the resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And so in Isaac, in his birth, his life, his death, his typified resurrection, we see a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. But wait a minute; it’s not over yet. In Isaac, we see a bride for Isaac. And the Church, now, is found here, and you’re found in Genesis chapter 24. And I want you to see it—and very quickly and briefly, but I hope that God the Holy Spirit will seal it to your heart. I want you to learn some wonderful things.

I. The Concern of the Father

First of all, I want you to see, as we look at the detail that the Holy Spirit puts on the canvas, the concern of the father. Notice, if you will, verses 1 and 2: “*And Abraham was*

old, and well stricken in age: and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things. And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh: and I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell: but thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac" (Genesis 24:1–4). Underscore that. What was the concern of the father? The concern of the father, Abraham, was that Isaac have a bride.

What is the concern of the Heavenly Father? If Isaac is a picture of the Lord Jesus, what is the concern of the Heavenly Father? It is that His Son, the Lord Jesus, have a bride. Matthew 22:2: *"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son."* And so the Heavenly Father longs that there be a bride for the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Lord Jesus longs for His bride. In Ephesians, the Church is called "the fullness of Jesus" (Ephesians 1:23). That is, Jesus is incomplete without His bride. We need Him, and He needs us. So do you have the first thing? The concern of the father.

II. The Commissioning of the Servant

Here's the second thing I want you to notice: not only the concern of the father, but the commissioning of the servant. Look in verse 2: *"And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had"* (Genesis 24:2). This is not an ordinary servant; this is a very special servant. He ruled over everything that father Abraham had.

Now, what was the name of this servant? Well, you can find it Genesis chapter 15 and verse 2 (Genesis 15:2). His name is Eliezer. And do you know what that means? It means, "God's helper." And who does this typify? If Abraham speaks of God the Father, Isaac speaks of God the Son. The Church speaks of the Bride of Christ, and the bride, Rebekah the bride, speaks of the Church. Eliezer speaks of the Holy Spirit. His very name means, "the helper of God." And in Romans chapter 8 and verse 26, the Bible says of the Holy Spirit, *"The Spirit...helpeth our infirmities"* (Romans 8:26). And I want you to see that all of the power and the authority of the father is given to the servant.

Now, listen to this passage of Scripture in John 15, verse 26. Jesus said, *"But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me"* (John 15:26). Eliezer was given a job, a commission, and the commission was the commission to go and find a bride and testify to that bride about Isaac. The Holy Spirit has been sent to me and to you to testify to us about the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now the bride was in the heart and mind of Abraham before Rebekah knew anything

about it. And you were in the heart and mind of God the Father before you knew anything about it. Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 4 says, *“According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love”* (Ephesians 1:4). So we love Him because from heaven He came and sought us to be His holy Bride. We love Him because He first loved us.

Joyce loves me because I first loved her. That’s the truth. I saw her in the fourth grade, and I looked over across there. And finally, by the sixth grade, I’d gotten enough courage to drop a love note by her desk. And she picked up that note, and I watched her very carefully as she read it and looked back at the boy who had written that note. I took the initiative. So it is with God the Father—that He has taken the initiative and sent His servant to seek a bride.

III. The Courtship of the Bride

Now you see the concern of the father: he wants a bride for his son. You see the commission of the servant: he has gone to seek a bride for his son. That’s what the Holy Spirit does. Now, here’s the third thing: I want you to see the courtship of the bride. This man, Eliezer, who was given all of the wealth of Abraham at his disposal—he had ten camels loaded with treasures and goes off to Mesopotamia to seek a bride for Isaac. And I want you to see what he did.

A. He Was Her Convincer

First of all, he had to convince the bride. Look, if you will, in verse 34 of this chapter—just fast-forward to verse 34: *“And he”—he, there in the bride’s household—“said, I am Abraham’s servant. And the LORD hath blessed my master greatly; and he is become great: and he hath given him flocks, and herds, and silver, and gold, and menservants, and maidservants, and camels, and asses. And Sarah my master’s wife bare a son to my master when she was old: and unto him hath he given all that he hath”* (Genesis 24:34–36). What did the servant do? He testified of the father and the son. He said, “The father is vastly wealthy,” and he said, “The son is the heir of all things.” Doubtless, he told of that time when father and son went up Mount Moriah, the son carrying that wood upon his cross, even as Jesus climbed that same mountain bearing His cross. He told the whole story of how the son was willing to lay down his life in obedience to the father. He told that story, and, doubtless, tears came to Rebekah’s eyes as she learned of the greatness of the father, as she learned of the glories of the son, that he was heir of all things. Eliezer told that story.

And so the Holy Spirit of God has told me that story. Remember John 15, verse 26? *“When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me”* (John 15:26).

And what a wonderful work of testimony he did! Look in verse 58: *“And they called Rebekah, and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go”* (Genesis 24:58). Now I’m having to greatly shorten the story, but Eliezer goes into a strange land. He meets, by divine providence, the very special one that the father would select. And there he begins to talk to her about Abraham and Isaac, and he was one kind of a super persuader. Do you know what he did? Ladies, think about it. He found this young maiden. She had never met him before, but he convinced her to go away with a man that she had never met to marry a man she’d never seen. Rebekah said, “I’ll go”—“I’ll go.”

That’s exactly what the Holy Spirit has done for us. The Holy Spirit has so testified of the Lord Jesus Christ that having never even seen the Lord Jesus not in the flesh, having never even seen Him, just at the word of the Holy Spirit, what have we said? “I love Him. I will serve Him.” First Peter chapter 1, verse 8: *“Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory”* (1 Peter 1:8).

B. He Was Her Counselor

And not only was he her convincer; he was her counselor. Look, if you will, in verse 61: *“And Rebekah arose, and her damsels, and they rode upon the camels, and followed the man: and the servant took Rebekah, and went his way”* (Genesis 24:61). Now, what’s he doing? He’s saying, “Rebekah, we’re going to see the bridegroom. You come with me. I am going to guide you and counsel you.” And do you know what they were doing the whole time they were going to meet Isaac? He was telling her more and more about Isaac, and that’s what the Holy Spirit does. Jesus said, *“He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shew it unto you”* (John 16:14). She was not left on her own no more than you are left on your own when you receive the Lord Jesus. God doesn’t just save you and say, “Yes, I’ll follow the Lord Jesus” and then leave you. The dear Holy Spirit, who has been your convincer, becomes your counselor, amen?

C. He was Her Comforter

But not only was he her convincer, and not only was he her counselor; he was her comforter. Can you imagine this girl—most likely a teenager—going on a long trip, now, to a strange land? She’s never been there before. She’s with a man she’s never known before. She’s going to marry a man she’s never seen before. Perhaps every so often she gets to wondering, “Is there truly a man named Isaac? Is he as handsome, as strong, as good, as kind, as wealthy as this man says that he is? Did I make a mistake? Is it real? Is it true?” And Eliezer, with all of the fabulous wealth of Abraham at his disposal, maybe sees her chin begin to quiver a little bit. Maybe he sees a tear well up in her eyes just a little bit, and he reaches into that box of jewels, he brings out a

necklace, and he puts it around her neck. And he says, “This is from Isaac. He wanted you to have it. You’ll love Isaac.” Another time he’ll slip a ring on her finger and tell her one more thing about Isaac, and about Abraham, and about the home to where she’s going, and the promises that are *yea* and *Amen* (2 Corinthians 1:20).

And so this one, Eliezer, courts the bride. He is her convincer. He is her counselor. He is her comforter. Hasn’t the Holy Spirit done the same for us? You know He has. Say, “Amen.”

IV. The Coming of the Groom

Now I want you to notice not only the courtship of the bride, but I want you to notice the coming of the groom. Look, if you will now, in verse 63, and here’s where this excitement really begins: “*And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide*” (Genesis 24:63). At the close of the day there is Isaac, who pictures the Lord Jesus Christ, the son of promise, the son of miracle birth, the son typified in death and resurrection, the son who is waiting for a bride. He has done what he is to do. He has gone up on Mount Moriah. The father has now sent the servant to seek the bride. The bride has been convinced. The bride has been given a trousseau. She has been given jewels. She is on her way to meet the groom, and the groom comes out to the edge of the field. He doesn’t come all the way; he comes part of the way. He has been in the father’s house preparing a place for her. He comes to the edge of the field, and he’s meditating. Now I want to ask you a question. What is he thinking about? You don’t even have to guess. What would you be thinking about if somebody had gone to get a bride for you and you knew that before long he was coming to bring to you your bride?

Now, folks, Jesus, right now, is standing at the edge of the field. It’s late in the day, and He’s waiting for His Bride. You know, the Bible says that the groom will come part of the way, and then the bride will go to meet him. First Thessalonians chapter 4, verse 16: “*For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord*” (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17).

It was at eventide that Isaac came to the edge of that field, and I have a feeling that we’re living in the closing shadows of an age. And, oh, the Lord Jesus is there expecting His Bride, and we ought to be expecting that time to meet Him. And here’s the wonderful thing about it—look, if you will, in verse 64: “*And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel. For she had said unto the servant, What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant had said, It is my master*” (Genesis 24:64–65). There are many false Christs in the world today, but I’m going to tell you something: when you see Jesus, you’ll know Him. You know how you’ll

know Him? That One who's been putting jewels in your heart and in your hand all along the way, that One who has been your convincer, that One who has been your counselor, that One who has been your comforter—He's the One who'll say, "That's Him! That's Him!" And we'll rise to meet the Lord in the air, and we'll not be disappointed.

V. The Consummation of the Marriage

That brings me to the last thing before we take and renew our vows to our Lord and Savior this morning: not only the coming of the groom, but the consummation of the marriage. Look, if you will now, in verses 65 and following: *"For she had said unto the servant, What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant had said, It is my master: therefore she took a veil, and covered herself. And the servant told Isaac all things that he had done. And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death"* (Genesis 24:65–67).

I want you to see the story that comes to a climax. I want you to see the bride, the groom, as they enter together into the tent. And as the flap on the tent closes and the two are together and become one in the fullest sense, it only speaks of that strange, wonderful, and beautiful union when we will go to meet our Lord, and be with Him, and be like Him, and know Him spiritually in the most intimate of all relationships—to be one with our Lord. Friend, what a day it will be when we meet Jesus!

*Oh, the soul-thrilling rapture when I view His blessèd face,
And the luster of His kindly beaming eye;
How my full heart will praise Him for His mercy, love and grace,
That prepare for me a mansion in the sky.*

—FRANCES J. CROSBY

Didn't Jesus say, *"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also"* (John 14:1–3)?

Conclusion

Think about this. They asked Rebekah this question: "Will you go with this man?" The choice was hers. It was not forced upon her. She could have said *no*. Suppose she had said, "I will not go." She never would have been heard of again. She could have said *no*, but she said *yes*. And, today, you have the opportunity, if you've never done so, to say, "Yes, I want Jesus. I want Him as my Lord and Savior. I, too, want to be saved." I believe,

*The Church's one foundation
Is Jesus Christ her Lord,
She is His new creation
By water and the Word.
From heaven He came and sought her
To be His holy bride;
With His own blood He bought her
And for her life He died.*
—SAMUEL J. STONE

We're going to take some vows to the Lord Jesus. Would you get the vows that have been given to you? I want you to look at them, please. Hopefully, you've already seen them. But as this song is being sung I want you to prepare your heart for the vows that you're about to make.

And when He comes, I want to be found faithful. The Bible says that "friendship with the world is warfare against our Lord" (James 4:4). We need to be pure. We need to be clean. We need to be yielded and obedient to Jesus and to His Church. Paul said, in 2 Corinthians chapter 11 and verse 2, "*For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a [pure] virgin to Christ*" (2 Corinthians 11:2). That's what I want to be, and that's what you'll want to be.

Would you stand? You have the vows, and I'm going to ask you not to make these vows unless you mean them, because that would be mockery. But I have spoken to you and preached to you the last six Sundays about some factors of faithfulness. We've talked about faithfulness in worship, faithfulness in fellowship, faithfulness in evangelism, faithfulness in stewardship, and faithfulness in ministry. And that's what makes the Church, the Bride of Christ, what she is. And when we pledge our faithfulness to our Lord, we're pledging that we, His Bride, and this, His Church, corporately and as individuals, we'll be faithful to Him. I will give you the phrase, and if you can mean it from your heart, I want you to repeat after me fervently, sincerely, and boldly what this vow says:

"Jesus, my Heavenly Bridegroom, I promise to love you supremely. You are my Savior, Redeemer, and sovereign Lord. In love and mercy, you sought me. With your own blood you saved me. Through your sacrificial death I have life, and through your life I have hope. You will complete and perfect me. I am eternally secure, for nothing shall separate me from your love. Lord Jesus, I promise to grow in my knowledge of you through the study of the Word. I promise to exalt you in worship, for you alone are worthy. I promise to be faithful in my Christian family in loving fellowship. I promise to send out your light and truth to a lost and dying world. I promise to gladly yield to you my time, talent, and resources. I promise to minister to others in the power of your Holy

Spirit. Now, Lord Jesus, I present myself to you as a living sacrifice, that your will might be done through me.”

And now, people, we’re going to say what we’ve said individually as a church, as this expression of the Body of Christ here. And if you’re visiting with us, if you feel the spirit of this and would like to say it in your own heart, just in the spirit of what we’re saying as a local church, we invite you to join with us: “We, as the Body of Christ at Bellevue Baptist Church, present our lives to you, that your power might be shown through us. And as the Bride of Christ we look to that glorious day when you will present us to yourself holy and blameless, that your eternal purpose might be fulfilled in us. This covenant is sealed by your precious blood to the praise of your glory forever.”

Now, would you bow your heads, and silently, but fervently, with your prayer, will you seal this covenant that you’ve just made? Would you ask God to be the strength of this covenant? Would you ask Him to bring it to your mind and help you to be all to Jesus that you ought to be? He is your Heavenly Bridegroom. He died for you. He has given His all to you. And now, you worship Him, and praise Him, and exalt Him for just a moment.

The Romance of Redemption

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: February 16, 1986

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 24

“And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah’s tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother’s death.”

GENESIS 24:67

Outline

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Introduction

Would you take your Bibles, please, today, and turn with me to Genesis chapter 24? Now those of you who are Bible students know right away we’re in a very beautiful and sacred section of God’s Word. I want to speak to you today on this subject: “The Romance of Redemption.”

One of the things that has amazed me every time I see someone do it is to watch an artist paint a portrait. Now I’ve not sat through the entire painting of an artist who is a really skilled artist and watched him paint a portrait. But sometimes even in county fairs or somewhere I’ve been amazed at how an artist with a few strokes can pick up the likeness of an individual. Now anybody can paint another person if they have a little artistic ability. But to capture the real likeness, to capture the real spirit, to paint the portrait of a person so that you see not only the likeness but the spirit and even the character of that person coming through, I believe, is almost a divine gift. Now, if you think, however, that is difficult, how would you like to paint a portrait of a person without ever having first seen that person? Now, dear friend, that’s what we have here in Genesis chapter 24: we have a portrait of the Lord Jesus Christ that was painted in

words centuries before Jesus Christ appeared here on this earth.

What a divine, wonderful confirmation of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God we see in Genesis chapter 24, a portrait of the Lord Jesus Christ who is, indeed, the Son of God.

Now He is prophesied, typified, delineated, and described here in Isaac. Isaac is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. Isaac was the son of Abraham. He was a son that was born of a miracle. He was the son of promise. He was the son of prophecy, the son of miracle birth. Isaac, you will remember, in Genesis chapter 22, was sacrificed on Mount Moriah, and he was raised from the dead there—now, not literally, but figuratively, he was sacrificed, and he was raised from the dead. He prefigures—he typifies—the Lord Jesus Christ. And now, in Genesis chapter 24, we’re going to see a bride for Isaac. We’re going to see how God the Father has sought a bride for His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, by studying how Abraham sought a bride for his son, Isaac.

So I have entitled the message today “The Romance of Redemption.” We’ve all been thinking about love, because of the Valentine Day weekend, and I thought it might be well if we could see the greatest love story ever written.

I. The Concern of the Father

Now the very first thing I want you to see, as we look at this marvelously wonderful chapter in the Word of God, is what I’m going to call the concern of the father. Look, if you will, in verses 1 through 4: “*And Abraham was old, and well stricken in age: and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things. And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh: and I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell:*”—but now, notice verse 4—“*but thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac.*” (Genesis 24:1–4) Now, what is the great desire of Abraham in the passage of Scripture? The great desire of Abraham is that Isaac would have a bride. And if Isaac represents the Lord Jesus Christ, Abraham represents God the Father.

Now, let me ask you another question. What do you think today is the great desire of our Heavenly Father? I’ll tell you what it is, my dear friend. It is that the Lord Jesus Christ shall have a bride. Matthew chapter 22 and verse 2: “*The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son.*” (Matthew 22:2) Jesus said, “That’s what it’s all about. You want to know what the kingdom of heaven is like? It’s like a king making a marriage for his son.” Now, you see, God the Father desires His Son to have a bride, and God the Son desires that bride. Do you remember there in John chapter 17 where the Lord Jesus prayed to the Father and He said, “*Father, I [pray for*

them], whom thou hast given me, [that they may] be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory” (John 17:24)? The great passionate heart of Jesus Christ longs for His bride.

Now, folks, I’m going to say something reverently, but it will startle you. Jesus Christ is incomplete without His Church. I am incomplete without Joyce. Joyce fulfills me. Joyce completes me. It is not by happenstance that we call our husbands and our wives “the other half” or “the better half.” And the Bible teaches that a wife or a husband is to complete their mate. Now the Lord Jesus Christ—I say it reverently, but I believe I say it scripturally—is not yet complete, in this sense, without His bride.

Look, if you will, please, in Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 22. Now, just keep your Bibles open there to Genesis, but in Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 22, the Bible speaks of Christ, and it says, “[*And God*] hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.” (Ephesians 1:22–23) That is, the Church is the fullness of Jesus. Now, do you see that? Look at that word *fulness*. *Pleroma*—the word *pleroma*—means “that which completes.” You see, Jesus is not yet complete. There is a yearning, a longing, in the heart of the Lord Jesus, and He is praying, “Father, give them to me, that they may be with me.” (John 17:24)

Now, folks, put it down big, put it down plain, and put it down straight: if you want to know what God is up to in this day and this age, He’s calling out a bride for His Son. And if you want to be a part of the greatest activity on earth, you ought to pray that God will make you a soul winner.

Now I’m going to tell you something else, dear friend. Every time you bring a soul to Jesus Christ, the bride gets that much closer to being complete and ready to be presented to the Son. There’s no activity like soul winning. And no matter what else you may do, if you’re not witnessing for the Lord Jesus, you’re not right with God. And I’m convinced, with a sad and a broken heart, that the majority of the members of this church are not witnessing and not soul winning. And may God help us!

A little boy in school was talking to his teacher, and he said to his teacher, “I ain’t going.” The teacher was an English teacher. Right away she didn’t like that, and she said, “No! I am not going. You are not going. They are not going.” He said, “It looks to me like there ain’t nobody going.”

Now, dear friend, that’s the way I feel when I look at the church sometimes. It just looks to me like most of us are not going, most of us are not witnessing, and most of us are not bringing people to Jesus Christ. And people are so hungry to know Jesus. People are so hungry to know Jesus.

Joyce and I took a vacation cruise. I was a Bible teacher down on a cruise ship down in the Caribbean not so very long ago. In every life a little rain must fall. And I was

down there teaching the Bible, and I thank God for that time I had to get away with my bride and have some fellowship. We stopped in the Bahamas, and were walking up to the ship—a beautiful big white cruise ship. A little boy was there on the wharf. He came up to me—I suppose he was about ten or eleven years of age—and he said to me, “Mister, I’ll sing you a song for a quarter.” I said, “You’ve got a deal.” And I reached in my pocket: I didn’t have a quarter. I said, “All right, the only thing I’ve got is a dollar, so it had better be a good song.” So he said, “All right.” And so, Brother Jim, he sang me a dollar song. And I said, “Now, son, before I give you this dollar, I want to tell you something,” and I shared with him about the Lord Jesus Christ, and told him how much God loved him and how Jesus had died for his sin. And I said, “Now, son, I want to give you this dollar, but before it can be yours, you’ve got to receive it.” And I said, “God wants to give you eternal life, but,” I said, “you know, you’ve got to receive it. God loves you, but you have to, by faith, believe God means what He says and receive God’s gift.”

And so he did, and we prayed. And he brought his little buddy over there, and the little buddy prayed to receive Christ. And I thought, “How wonderful that those little boys need Jesus!” And then I walked up the gangplank of that big, beautiful ship and got on there, and I was met by the executive officer on that ship in his uniform. He said, “I need to talk to you.” He had heard me speak, and he poured out his heart—a broken heart full of trouble. Just like a little child, that important man who can captain a ship bowed his head and asked Christ to come into his heart. A little boy on the outside the ship, the big shot on the inside of the ship: both of them met together in their hunger for Jesus.

Now I want to tell you something, friend. No matter where you go and where you walk, friends all around you are hungry to know the Lord Jesus. The great compassionate heart of God the Father longs for a bride for His Son, and the great heart of the Lord Jesus says, “I am incomplete without my bride, the ones that fill me to the full.” And so, would we pray that God would make us a part of this wonderful romance of redemption!

II. The Commission of the Spirit

But the second thing I want you to see is not only the concern of the Father, but I’d like for you to see what I’m going to call the commission of the Spirit. Look in verse 2: *“And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh: and I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell: but thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac.”* (Genesis 24:2–4) Now the father sent his servant to seek a bride. This servant pictures the Holy Spirit of God. Abraham pictures God the Father. Isaac pictures God the Son. And the servant pictures

God the Holy Spirit.

Now we're not told the name of the servant here, but we are told the name of the servant in Genesis chapter 15 and verse 2, and there the Bible tells us that that servant was called—Abraham called him—*“the [heir] of my house...Eliezer of Damascus.”* (Genesis 15:2) Now the word *heir* literally means there “the steward of my house.” That is, he is a man—“Eliezer is a trusted servant, and he has all of my wealth. He is the steward of my wealth. He is the heir of my house—Eliezer.”

Now you know, or should know, that *EI* in the Old Testament is one of the names of God. For example, God, the Almighty God, is called *Elohim*, or God is called *EI Shaddai*, or God is called so many words, names that begin with *EI*. And so *EI* is one of the names of God. This servant's name is Eliezer, which means “the servant of God, the helper of God.” As we see in Romans 8, the Spirit *“helpeth our infirmities.”* (Romans 8:26) And so God the Father, wanting a bride for His Son, sends the Holy Spirit. And what is the office work of the Holy Spirit, this servant of God the Father? The Holy Spirit is come into the world to seek a bride for the Heavenly Isaac, the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. The Choice of the Bride

Now the third thing I want you to see is not only the concern of the Father, not only the commission of the servant, but I would like for you to see, thirdly, what I'm going to call the choice of the bride. Look, if you will now, in verse 4: *“But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac.”* (Genesis 24:4) And then, skip over, if you will, to verse 14. Eliezer is seeking leadership, and this is what he says: *“And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she that thou hast appointed”*—just underscore that—*“for thy servant Isaac.”* (Genesis 24:14)

Now there was an appointed bride. There was a bride that was conceived in the heart and mind of Abraham, the father. This bride was chosen before she knew anything about it. There she is: free, unconcerned, unknowing, never had heard anything about it. But in the heart and mind of Abraham, and in the heart and mind of Eliezer, and in the heart and mind of Isaac—that trinity of persons so long ago—they had set their purpose, they had set their affection, and they were working together for one purpose: that Isaac would have a bride. And before she knew anything about it, it was in the heart and mind of the father, the son, and the servant.

Now, dear friend, I want to tell you that is a marvelous picture of the salvation that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. For the Bible tells us, in Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 4, *“According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world.”* (Ephesians 1:4) *“We love him, because he first loved us.”* (1 John 4:19) We choose Him

because He first chose us.

Did you know that Joyce loves me because I first loved her? That's true. I set my eyes upon Joyce in the sixth grade. I looked over across the desk. I sat here, and she sat right over there. I looked at her and tried to study. And I looked at her some more and tried to study, and I forgot to study. And I wrote a love note, and walked by her desk and dropped that love note by her desk. She read that note and looked back to see who had written it. And she loves me because I first loved her.

Now we didn't really get serious until the seventh grade, but I'm telling you, folks, she's the only girl I've ever dated. I told people, you know, I didn't even kiss my wife before we were married. She wasn't my wife before we were married. You figure that out. But she loved me because I first loved her.

God loves us first, and, therefore, we're able to return that love. For God has made the overture, and God has sent the message, saying, "I have chosen you. I love you. I have set my affection upon you."

IV. The Courtship of the Spirit

Now, think not only of the choice of the bride, but think, if you will, of the courtship of the Spirit. Notice how Eliezer brought this bride to Isaac.

A. He Was Her Convincer

First of all, he had to be her convincer. When he found this woman—and we're going to skip a lot of material here—he had to convince her concerning Abraham and Isaac. Now, remember, she'd never heard of Abraham; she had never heard of Isaac. And so he begins to talk to her. Notice in verse 34: "*And he said, I am Abraham's servant. And the LORD hath blessed my master greatly; and he is become great: and he hath given him flocks, and herds, and silver, and gold, and menservants, and maidservants, and camels, and asses.*" (Genesis 24:34–35) Now, that is—listen—"The one that I represent is eminently powerful and wealthy."

Now, not only does he testify of the father, but he also testifies of the son. Now, watch in verse 36: "*And Sarah my master's wife bare a son to my master when she was old:*"—now what he said, if you'll look at it, is, "He was born of a miracle. He is a miracle baby, born to my master when she was old." That is, "It was a miracle"—"*and unto him hath he given all that he hath.*" (Genesis 24:36) That is, all that the father has belongs to the son, who was born of a miracle. And all I'm doing is, I am just testifying; I'm telling you—I am telling you—of the father's riches—verse 35. I am telling you of the son's resources, in verse 36, and I am testifying of these two.

Does that remind you of the New Testament? John chapter 15 and verse 26: "*But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.*" (John 15:26) That's

what the Holy Spirit does: He testifies. He is sent by the Father to testify of the Son.

And what a powerful work he did as her convincer! Notice he asked her, in verse 58—look at it, if you will, in verse 58—*“And they called Rebekah, and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go.”* (Genesis 24:58) Now you think of that—that unclaimed blessing. In the choir, you think of that. You girls that are not yet married, can you imagine meeting a man that you have never known who talks you into going to marry a man you have never seen? That’s persuasion, isn’t it? That is convincing, isn’t it? Jesus said, *“And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.”* (John 16:8) What a convincer he was! And she said, “All right, I will go.” That’s what Peter is talking about when he says, in 1 Peter chapter 1 and verse 8, *“Whom having not seen, ye love.”* (1 Peter 1:8) I’ve never seen Jesus, but I know Him. I love Him. I have given my heart to Him. One day I will see Him. Listen: *“Whom having not seen, ye love.”*

B. He Was Her Counselor

But not only was he her convincer; he was also her counselor. He’s not finished yet. He didn’t send her to Isaac; he brought her to Isaac. Look in verse 61: *“And Rebekah arose, and her damsels, and they rode upon the camels, and followed the man”—now, notice this—“and the servant took Rebekah, and went his way.”* (Genesis 24:61) That’s one of the reasons I believe in the security of the believer, dear friend. Here is Eliezer, and he takes this girl. And it is his job; she is in his hand. The father and mother turned her over and said, “Now, look. You’d better take care of her.” Abraham is saying, “You’d better take care of her.” Isaac is saying, “You’d better take care of her.” You see, here he becomes her counselor; he’s by her side. And all that time, do you know what he is doing? He’s telling her about his master and his master’s son. For John chapter 16 and verse 13, speaking of the Holy Spirit, says, *“He shall not speak of himself...he shall receive of [me].”* (John 16:13–14) “He shall testify of me,” the Lord Jesus said.

And all of this time he is telling her... She couldn’t find her own way, but he is constantly with her—not testifying of himself. He’s not saying, “What a wonderful servant I am!” He’s saying, “What a wonderful master I serve! And what a wonderful person Isaac is!” And this is the work of the Holy Spirit of God. I’ve told you before, and I’ll tell you again: You beware of any movement that has the Holy Spirit for a figurehead. The Holy Spirit does not speak of Himself; He testifies of the Lord Jesus Christ.

C. He Was Her Comforter

Now, watch. He was her convincer, he was her counselor, and he was also her comforter. He is called the Comforter in John 15 and verse 26: *“But when the Comforter is come.”* (John 15:26) Now, look, if you will, in verse 61 again, and the Bible says that *“they followed the man, and they rode upon the camels.”* (Genesis 24:61) Well, what

camels were these? Well, go back to verse 10. I want to show you something—Genesis chapter 24 and verse 10: *“And the servant took ten camels of the camels of his master, and departed; for all the goods of his master were in his hand.”* (Genesis 24:10)

Now Abraham was one of the wealthiest men of all history. Now, when you’re going to get a teenage girl to be a bride—folks, pay attention—you don’t need ten camels. The idea is that these camels were loaded; they’re groaning with wealth. Ten camels and all of the goods of Abraham—that’s what he’s emphasizing—were in Eliezer’s hand. He’s doing an overkill, folks. He’s just wanting to show how rich his master is. And so he goes now with ten camels full of treasures.

Well, what’s she doing with these treasures? What were they for? Well, look, if you will, in verse 53 of this same chapter here—Genesis chapter 24 and verse 53: *“And the servant brought forth jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and gave them to Rebekah: he gave also to her brother and to her mother precious things.”* (Genesis 24:53) Oh, listen. Do you know what happened? You could just use a little imagination, girls. You know, they’re riding along, and after a while, she gets to thinking, “I wonder, is there really an Abraham? And if there is, is he really that rich? And Isaac—is he really that handsome? Is he really that kind? Is he really that majestic? Is this just a story that this person has made up? Am I a fool?”

Maybe she had doubts. Maybe she had fears. I believe anyone would, don’t you? I mean, think about it. And he was a wise man. That’s the reason why Abraham had him for such a trusted servant. And he’d look over at her and see her chin start to quiver a little bit; see maybe a tear moisten the corner of her eye. He knew the doubt she was having. And he’d just reach into that chest of jewels and put a necklace around her neck, and say, “This is from Isaac. He wanted you to have it. You’ll love Isaac.” After a while, he’d slip a ring on her finger: “Hey, that’s from Isaac. Isaac is so wonderful.” And all along the road he would be sharing the precious things of his master.

Friend, that’s what the Holy Spirit of God does for us. Did you know that? Oh, when the doubt comes, when the fear comes, when the difficulties come, when we wonder, “Is there really anything to it? Am I just a colossal fool?” thank God for the Heavenly Eliezer. Thank God for the One who drops these treasures into our heart and tells us He is our convincer. Dear friend, He is the One who is our counselor, who brings us to Isaac. He is the One who is our comforter, who keeps reminding us of the Heavenly Bridegroom, Isaac. Thank God for that.

V. The Coming of the Groom

And then I want you to notice not only the courtship of the Spirit, but I want you to notice the coming of the groom. Notice, if you will now, in verse 23 of this same chapter. What a wonderful chapter it is! Genesis chapter 24 and verse 63—notice what is happening

here: *“And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide.”* (Genesis 24:63)

Now I’ve asked the girls to use their imagination. Let me ask you men to use your imagination. If you knew that your father had sent his servant to bring your bride, what would you be thinking about this time? Well, you don’t have to tell me what I’d have been thinking about. I know what I would have been thinking about. I’d have been thinking about my bride, the one who is coming. He’s out there at the edge of the field, and he is meditating. And he’s at the edge of the *“field at the eventide”*—underscore that—*“and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, the camels were coming.”* (Genesis 24:63)

Now, friend, you have to understand the literary form here. You have to understand that this is one of the most potent, one of the most exciting, episodes and verses in all of the Bible. Here they come. He has been praying. He has been longing. He has been looking. He has been waiting. She has been anticipating. She’s been learning. And now that electrifying moment comes when they meet face to face.

Now the Bible says he’s at the edge of the field. He can only go so far, because you see in the early part of this chapter the servant was to bring the bride to him. Now he comes out in the edge of the field to meet her. But they meet there. You see, that fulfills the type, for the Bible teaches that the Lord Jesus doesn’t come all the way to this earth to get us. No, no, no, no! We are caught up to meet the Lord in the air at the Rapture of the Church. (1 Thessalonians 4:17) When He comes to the edge of the field at the eventide—that is, at the end of this age, when the shadows of this age are growing long—at that time known to God alone, Jesus Christ, our Heavenly Isaac, shall step to the edge of the field. And, behold, the camels are coming. We will be caught up to meet the Lord Jesus in the air.

Now, what happens when that takes place? I want you to see how exciting it is. And verse 64: *“And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel.”* (Genesis 24:64) The camel is too slow, friend—too slow. You talk about a sales job that Eliezer had done: she jumps down off that camel, and she runs to him. Now, why did she run to him? Of all of the people out there, why did she run to him? Well, look in verse 65: *“For she had said unto the servant, What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us?”* (Genesis 24:65) Do you think that was by mistake? No, he’s coming to me. This whole thing is engineered. There’s a meeting there. *“What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant had said, It is my master.”* (Genesis 24:65)

Now, you listen to me, folks. Jesus said, “In the last days, there are going to be false prophets saying, ‘I am Christ.’” He said, “Don’t believe them. They’ll deceive many.” (Matthew 24:11) But, friend, when Jesus comes, we’ll know Him. Did you know that? The Holy Spirit will say, “That’s Him. That’s the One I’ve been telling you about. He is

my Master.” And every blood-bought child of God who has the convincing work of the Holy Spirit, the counseling work of the Holy Spirit, the comforting work of the Holy Spirit, and now the confirming work of the Holy Spirit, will say, “That’s Him.” And we, dear friend, as it were, will run to meet our Master.

VI. The Consummation of the Marriage

Now there’s the coming of the groom, and then, last of all, there’s the consummation of the marriage. Notice how it ends—this wonderful love story here. And the Bible says, *“Therefore she took a veil, and covered herself. And the servant told Isaac all things that he had done. And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah’s tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife.”* (Genesis 24:65–67) And as the tent flap closes and these two enter into the most intimate of all human relationships, it’s but a foregleam of that time when the Church becomes one with her Lord, *“whom having not seen, [we] love.”* (1 Peter 1:8) But one of these days, faith will turn to sight, hope will turn to reality, and we will become one with our Lord. I think it’s the greatest love story ever written. Thank God for the romance of redemption.

Conclusion

I want to ask you one last question. I said that Rebekah was chosen. Are you listening? What if she had said no? What if she had said, “I will not go with this man”? She could have said that, because she had a will of her own. She would have been a forgotten woman; we never would have heard her name. But, thank God, she said yes and is enshrined in our hearts and in the halls of heaven forever.

Now God has commissioned to me today to ask you a question. Are you ready for it? My Heavenly Father has said to me, “Adrian, go preach. Tell people about Jesus. I want them to be Jesus’ bride. Tell them, Adrian, how wonderful Jesus is. And then, tell them, Adrian, that He who loves you is coming back for you one day.” Will you receive Jesus as your Savior and seek to make His will yours? “Tell the people, Adrian, that whosoever will may come.”

The Romance of Redemption

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: August 24, 1980

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 24:1–4

“Take a wife unto my son Isaac.”
GENESIS 24:4

Outline

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- I. The Purpose of the Father
 - II. The Predetermination of the Bride
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Introduction

Genesis chapter 24. You will remember, if you've been attending here for the last several weeks, that we are in a series of messages, and we're calling them "Portraits of Christ in the Old Testament"—"Portraits of Christ in the Old Testament." But we've told you that all of the Bible is about Jesus. The Old Testament says that somebody is coming. The Gospels say that somebody has come. And the Epistles and the Revelation say that somebody is coming again. And that somebody is the Lord Jesus Christ. All of the Bible is about Christ. Jesus said, in the Book of John, "Search the Scripture," and at that time He was talking about the Old Testament, because the New Testament had not yet been written. "*Search the scriptures;*"—He said—"*for...they are they which testify of me*" (John 5:39). And so when you read the Old Testament, somewhere standing in the shadows you're going to find Jesus.

Now it's an interesting thing that these Old Testament prophets spoke of Jesus and painted portraits of Jesus before He had ever come upon this earth. How would you like to paint a portrait of someone you'd never seen? That's exactly what these Old Testament prophets did. By the inspiration of the Holy Spirit they painted portraits of Jesus, the One that they had never seen.

Now we've already seen last week, in Genesis chapter 22, how Isaac, the son of

Abraham, was a type, a picture, a prophecy, a portrait of the Lord Jesus Christ. And I don't have time to re-preach that message, but I want to tell you that in Genesis chapter 22 we saw that Isaac pictured Christ because of his miraculous birth that told us of Jesus' virgin birth. Isaac pictured Christ because of his marvelous life that reminded us of Jesus' virtuous life. Isaac pictured Christ because of his death there on Mount Moriah, which pictured Jesus' sacrificial death. Isaac died, figuratively, there on Mount Moriah. At least he was offered in the heart and mind of Abraham. And then we said that Isaac pictured the Lord Jesus Christ because, in a figure, he was raised from the dead. And there the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ was pictured. And then, when Isaac went to receive his bride, there was a picture of the Lord Jesus coming again, the visible return of the Lord Jesus.

And so there in Genesis chapter 22 you were with us. We saw the virgin birth of Jesus. We saw the virtuous life of Jesus. We saw the vicarious death of Jesus. We saw the victorious resurrection of Jesus. And we saw the visible return of the Lord Jesus. But we didn't get a chance to finish all of that message last week, because it goes from Genesis chapter 22 on to Genesis chapter 24, where we are today. And we're going to be talking now about Isaac as he receives his bride, because it is a picture and a type and a prophecy of the Lord Jesus Christ receiving the Church, for the Church is the bride of Christ, and what I'm going to call today "The Romance of Redemption"—"The Romance of Redemption."

Here you're going to see what someone called the world's greatest love story. It tells the love of the Lord Jesus Christ for His Church, and how God from eternity past has planned and prophesied and ordained that His Son shall have a bride. The Son of God will have a bride. And the bride of the Son of God is the Church, the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now I want us to read here in Genesis 24, beginning in verse 1: *"And Abraham was old, and well stricken in age: and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things. And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh: and I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell: but thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac"* (Genesis 24:1–4). Now, just underscore that: *"Take a wife unto my son Isaac."*

I. The Purpose of the Father

The first of four thoughts that I want you to see this morning is the purpose of the father—the purpose of the father. What was the purpose of Abraham? And remember, in all of this typology, in all of this picture, Abraham is a picture of Almighty God,

because He is the father of the son of miracle birth. Abraham, the father of Isaac, is a picture of God, our Father. And so, what is the great desire of father Abraham? The great desire of father Abraham is a bride for his son. Verse 4 again. I want to emphasize it very clearly. He tells the servant, “Go and bring a bride to my son. Go into that far country and bring back the bride.” Now, what is the great desire of our Heavenly Father? What is the great heartbeat, the throb, the emotion that pulsates through the marvelous heart of Almighty God? I want to tell you that God, in this day, in this age, is doing one thing: He is bringing a bride to His Son, the Lord Jesus. That’s what it’s all about.

You read there in Matthew chapter 22 where the Lord Jesus gave a parable about God the Father. And the Lord Jesus gave this parable, and Matthew chapter 22, verse 2, gives us the heart of the parable: *“The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son”* (Matthew 22:2). And Jesus went on to show us in that parable that the king is Almighty God. “The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king that made a marriage for his son.” And so the Lord Jesus is receiving a gift from heaven, and that gift is His bride.

Jesus, when He was praying, in John the seventeenth chapter, the twenty-fourth verse, thanked the Father for the bride that was given Him. He said, *“Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me”* (John 17:24). He says, “Father, I just thank you for the bride that you have given me.”

Now, why does the Father seek a bride? Well, why did Abraham seek a bride for Isaac? Well, Abraham knew that Isaac needed a bride, to complete him, to make him whole. You know, in Genesis, God said, “It is not good that man should be alone. I will make a fitting help for him” (Genesis 2:18); that is, “I will make someone to complete him, to make him perfectly whole.” Have you ever heard a man say, “I’m just half a man without her,” referring to his wife? Or a wife say that, “I just can’t quite function without him”?

You see, there’s something about marriage, when we are married, that the partner just makes us a whole person, and we’re just sort of half a person without him. Now I don’t want you to think that I’m being blasphemous when I say what I’m about to say—until you understand what I’m about to say. Jesus, without the Church, is incomplete—Jesus, without the Church, is incomplete. Turn for just a moment to Ephesians chapter 1. I didn’t say Jesus was imperfect or that there’s anything lacking in His nature. But I’m saying there’s something about the plan and the scheme of God that make the Lord Jesus Christ unfulfilled without the Church.

In Ephesians chapter 1, for just a moment, I want you to look with me in verses 22 and 23. Here we’re talking about the Church, and the Bible says God *“hath put all things*

under his feet,”—that is, under the feet of Jesus—*“and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,”*—now Jesus is the head of the Church. And then, notice how the Bible describes the Church—*“which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all”* (Ephesians 1:22–23). Now the Church is the fullness of Him. That is what it says. Look here. “He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the Church.” The Church, which is His body; the Church, which is *“the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”* That word *fulness* means, “that which makes full,” or “that which completes.” It is the Church that fulfills Christ. It is the Church that completes Christ. It is the Church, therefore, that fills a great longing, a void, in the heart and mind of Christ.

Christ is the great lover, and He needs someone to love. What good is it being a lover without having someone to love? And, dear friend, He has set His affections on us, and He loves us. And just as a man would be incomplete and unfulfilled without his bride, so the Lord Jesus Christ is incomplete and unfulfilled without us. And we are incomplete and we are unfulfilled without Him. And so the Father’s desire, the great desire of the Father, the purpose of the Father, is to seek a bride for His Son.

And I want you to continue to look and see whom the Father sends. Look again in verse 2, if you will. We’re in Genesis 24, verse 2: *“And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh: and I will make thee swear”*—that what?—“you will go get a bride for my son.”

Now, whom did Abraham send to seek the bride? He sent the eldest servant who ruled over all that he had. What was the name of this servant? Well, you’ll not find it mentioned here in Genesis chapter 24, but you will find the name of that servant mentioned in Genesis chapter 15 and verse 2. And there in Genesis chapter 15, verse 2, you’ll find out that his name is Eliezer—Eliezer. Now, what does the name Eliezer mean? Well, the first two letters, *El*, tell us that the first part of that name means “God”—“God.” Have you ever heard of God spoken of as Elohim? *El*, the same first two letters. It is the name—one of the Old Testament names—for God. Eliezer. And what does the last part of that name mean? It means, “the servant, the helper” of God.

Now, here is a servant, who is sent, who has a very unusual name. He is God’s helper—God’s helper. And what does he represent? He speaks to me of the dear Holy Spirit sent by the Father into the world to seek a bride for the Son. You see, the Spirit is called the helper of God also. Have you ever read there in Romans chapter 8 and verse 26 where the Bible says, *“the Spirit...helpeth our infirmities”* (Romans 8:26)? You see, that’s what the Holy Spirit is. He’s the heavenly helper! *“The Spirit...helpeth our infirmities.”*

You say, “Well, it kind of bothers me to think of the Holy Spirit as a servant.” It doesn’t bother me to think of the Holy Spirit as a servant. Do you know what the Lord Jesus Christ is called? The servant of Jehovah. To be a servant does not demean one.

To be a servant elevates one. Jesus said, “He who would be the greatest among you, let him be your servant” (Matthew 23:11). The Holy Spirit is the helper, the Eliezer from above, sent by God the Father into this world to seek a bride for the Son. And so He is the One whom God has sent.

And so we see here, first of all, in the first episode, the purpose of the Father. God is bringing all of His purposes into one great purpose in this day, in this age. And that is to seek, to call out, a bride for His Son. And that bride is the Church. The Bible calls the Church in the New Testament over and over again the bride of Christ.

II. The Predetermination of the Bride

Now the second thing I want you to notice: not only the purpose of the Father, but I want you to notice the predetermination of the bride. The bride here was in the heart and mind of Abraham before the bride knew anything about it. Notice in verse 4. He speaks of *“a wife unto my son Isaac.”* *“Thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac.”* While they were talking, and while they were planning, and while they were taking counsel together, here comes the bride from a far country, and she didn’t know a thing about it. They were talking about her behind her back. There she was, not knowing, not dreaming, not understanding, that somewhere two very important persons were holding a conversation about her. In the heart and mind of God she had already been chosen.

If you’ll skip on down to verse 14 of this chapter, you’re going to find something very interesting: *“And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also:”*—now all of that I’ll not try to explain right now, but get to this main point—*“let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac”* (Genesis 24:14).

Now the point is this: that the woman was appointed. That’s the point. You see, in the heart and mind of God there was a specific girl. She didn’t know anything about it. She was talked about behind her back. They were planning for her. And the Bible brings it into sharper focus in verse 14 that she was divinely appointed. And therefore she becomes all the more beautifully a picture of the Church.

You might turn to Ephesians chapter 1, verse 4, and put that in your margin, if you like, because Ephesians 1, verse 4, speaks of us. And the Bible says, *“According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love”* (Ephesians 1:4). Oh, before He laid the foundation of this world, in the secret council halls of the Almighty, there was a conference held, and there was a bride chosen. He was talking about us behind our back, and He set His affection on us. Isn’t it wonderful that we were chosen in Him before the foundation of the world?

Now that doesn't mean that we didn't have any choice about it. But we choose Him because He first chose us. Later on you're going to see that this bride decided that she would be the bride. And she condescended to be the bride, and she agreed to be the bride. But she chose Isaac because Isaac first chose her.

Do you know why Joyce loves me? You say, "I have wondered." Well, let me tell you. Joyce loves me because I first loved her. That's right. In the fourth grade I put my eyes upon her, and I walked by her desk. She didn't even know that I existed, I don't think. She might have seen me sitting in the back of the room throwing spitballs, but I don't think she knew that I was there. And in the fourth grade I walked by her desk and dropped a love note. That's right! Boy, you're looking at the first of the great lovers! And in the fourth grade I dropped a love note by her desk, and she picked it up and read it, and I watched as she looked over there at me. And something started working right there in the fourth grade. She loves me because I first loved her. Of course, neither one of us really knew what love was at that time, but it grew to love.

I want to tell you that the Heavenly Father had His eyes on you a long time before you had your eyes on Him. You were in the heart and mind and the bosom of Almighty God.

III. The Program of the Servant

Now the third thing I want you to notice: not only the purpose of the Father to seek a bride for His Son, and not only the predetermination of the bride in the heart and mind of Abraham before she knew anything about it, but I want you to notice thirdly now the program of the servant. Notice here that the servant was sent by the Father to seek a bride for the son. And remember the servant, whose name is Eliezer, is the helper of God.

I want you to notice with me, if you will today, three things about the program of this servant as it is related to the bride. Incidentally, the bride's name is Rebekah, and we'll meet her in just a moment. But here was the servant now who went off to the far country. And there by some providential happenings he meets the young woman. And I wish I had time this morning to tell you all of this marvelously intriguing story, but I have not the time, except to say it was providential, that God watched over it, that God guided it all the way. And he finally comes to meet this Rebekah. And then he starts to tell her about Isaac.

Now the three things I'll just tell you ahead of time, and then we'll look at them, that this servant did with reference to Rebekah were these. First, he was her convincer. He had to convince her about Isaac. And then, not only was he her convincer, he was also her counselor. He had to teach her about Isaac. Not only was he her counselor, he was also her comforter. He was the one who stayed beside her to guide her to Isaac and just

to give her comfort along the way. Now I want you to see how Eliezer did that with this beautiful lady and this girl named Rebekah.

A. He Was Her Convincer

First of all, he was her convincer. Look, if you will, in verse 34. He is talking, and he says, the servant, *“I am Abraham’s servant. And the LORD hath blessed by master greatly; and he is become great: and he hath given him flocks, and herds, and silver, and gold, and menservants, and maidservants, and camels, and asses.”* Now he goes on to say, *“And Sarah my master’s wife bare a son to my master when she was old: and unto him hath he given all that he hath”* (Genesis 24:34–36).

Now the first thing that he does, he starts to convince her. And how does he start to convince her that she ought to be Isaac’s bride? Well, he starts bragging. That’s right! He’s just a big ol’ braggart. He starts bragging. And do you know what he brags about? He brags about Abraham, and he brags about Isaac. He talks about the riches of Abraham, and he talks about the resources of Isaac. In verse 35, he’s talking about Abraham’s riches. He just says, “Listen. My master is blessed! He’s great! He’s got it all! He’s just got flocks! He’s got herds! He’s got silver! He’s got gold! He’s got servants! He’s got it all!” He talked about the riches of Abraham, and then he talked about the resources of Isaac, because all that the father has belongs to the son. Don’t you see it? He says, “And he had a son.” He could have said, “He was a son of miracle birth, a son of prophecy, a son of promise, a son of hope, and the Father has given all things to the son!” Man, that’s what he talked about! That’s what this servant did! He started doing a sales job. And, mister, he did a good one! He didn’t speak of himself. He testified, as he ought, about Abraham and about Isaac.

Now, does this remind you of the dear Holy Spirit of God? Well, it ought to. Just put there in your margin John chapter 15 and verse 26, and see what the Bible says that the Holy Spirit is going to do when He comes: *“But when the Comforter...”*—that is, the *paraclete*, the one who represents another—*“when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me”* (John 15:26). That’s what the Holy Spirit does.

I want to tell you why I love the Lord Jesus Christ: because God sent His Holy Spirit to me to testify about Him, amen? That’s why you love the Father. That’s why you love the Son: because of the Spirit. And listen. You talk about a powerful testimonial job! Do you know what kind of a job he did on Rebekah? Here’s what he did. He was so powerful, he was so convincing, that he talked this young, beautiful lady to go with him, a man she’d never met before until this time, to marry a man she’d never even seen. Now, girls, that’s a pretty good sales job. You just say *amen* to that.

Suppose some man came up to you, you’d never met him before, and he starts

talking to you, and in just a little while, just through the power of persuasion, just by talking about the riches of his master, and just by talking about the resources of the master's son, he persuades you to leave father, mother, houses, land, all that you have, go with a man you've never met, to marry a man you've never seen. I want to tell you, that's persuasion, isn't it? That really is! That's exactly what the Holy Spirit has done in my heart and in your heart.

Some people come to hear a preacher preach, and they say, "Well, he's a manipulator; he's a real persuader." Friend, let me tell you something. Anything I can talk you into somebody else can talk you out of. Just write it down. I'm not interested in manipulating you. I pray when I preach that it will never happen. That's the reason that I must be filled with the Holy Spirit when I preach. "All is vain unless the Spirit of the Holy One comes down." You see, sure, I'm the human instrument, but behind the human instrument is the power, the authority, of Almighty God. And the Bible says, "*We are...witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him*" (Acts 5:32). I'm so grateful that it's not my job to convince you that Jesus is Lord. I'm so glad it's not my job to explain it to you, to make you understand it. I cannot. I can preach truth, but only He can impart truth. And thank God He does.

I'm not dependent upon what I'm able to do. Sometimes people come and they sit down and listen to a preacher, and they almost get into a mental argument with that preacher. They say, "That's what he says." But the Holy Spirit is the great convincer. She was convinced, because she said, "I will go with this man."

B. He Was Her Counselor

Well, not only was she convinced; he was her counselor after she was convinced. Look, if you will, in verse 61 of this same chapter. And we read here, "*And Rebekah arose, and her damsels, and they rode upon the camels, and followed the man: and the servant took Rebekah, and went his way*" (Genesis 24:61). Now, in verse 58, she makes up her mind: "*And they called Rebekah, and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go*" (Genesis 24:58).

Now she was divinely chosen, but she made up her own mind. Isn't that wonderful? Somebody says, "I can't understand the predetermination, the foreordination, of God, and the free will of man." I don't either. Praise God! But I know it's so. I know it's so. She was chosen, but she decided. That's just the way it is, friend. And you don't have to explain it. Somebody said, "Like the Holy Trinity—you can't explain the Trinity. Explain it, you lose your mind. Deny it, you lose your soul," amen? Just thank God for some things that you don't have to completely understand. But here was a bride. It was in the heart and mind of the Father. But then she just decides; she makes up her own mind. She says, "I will go."

And then, when she goes, she goes with a man who is to become her companion. He is her counselor. You see, his job was not finished when she said, “I will go.” He must teach her now more and more about Isaac—more and more about Isaac.

See what the Holy Spirit does. Turn with me to John chapter 16 for just a moment, and let’s begin reading in verse 12. Now, folks, I don’t know about you, whether you’re enjoying this or not—and I’m not just fishing for a compliment, because it wouldn’t be me that you’re complimenting—but I want to tell you, I enjoy this kind of a study. I really do. It just blesses my heart. And I believe it’s something that we’re commanded to do, for none other than Jesus said, “Search the Scriptures, for these are they which testify of me.” That is, “Search the Old Testament, and find me in the Old Testament.” And Jesus wouldn’t have told us to do that if there had not been a blessing to our lives.

Now, turn with me to John 16 and verse 12. I want you to see what the Holy Spirit has to say: *“I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.”* But then, notice the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the heavenly helper: *“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you...”*—now, you see, this Holy Spirit now became Rebekah’s guide—*“he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself;”—* that is, He’s not going to be the originator of what He says—*“but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you”* (John 16:12–15).

Now, be very careful. Abraham was rich, right? And then the Bible says that Abraham gave all that he had to his son, right? But now, watch it. All that the Son has is in the hands of the Spirit—all that the Son has. Look at it again: *“All things that the Father hath are mine:”—*verse 15—*“therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.”* You see, the Father’s riches belong to the Son, and the Son’s riches are in the hands of the Spirit. That’s the reason that we’re going to find out that when this servant, as you read this chapter, when he met Rebekah, the first thing he did was to put earrings on her, put bracelets on her. You see, he went with ten camel loads of treasure. I mean, he’s just weighted down. He’s loaded down. He’s got it all. And he keeps giving her these nuggets. He keeps giving her these gems. He keeps giving her these rubies, these diamonds, these golden ornaments. He keeps loading her with all of these things. He just keeps giving her treasure after treasure after treasure. And she’s receiving these things.

And the Holy Spirit doesn’t speak of Himself. He doesn’t glorify Himself. All He talks about is Jesus. This Eliezer, he didn’t speak about himself. He didn’t say, “Look what a good servant I am!” “Oh,” he says, “Isaac is so handsome! Isaac is so kind! Isaac is so rich! Isaac is so wise! Isaac has a marvelous future! All of the hopes of the Father are in

this one named Isaac!”

Friend, today we hear a lot about the Holy Spirit. And there are a lot of people talking about the Holy Spirit, I think, who don't quite understand the Holy Spirit. I thank God for the deep work that the Holy Spirit is doing and has done in my heart and in my life, but I want to say this with all reverence, and I hope you'll understand what I'm about to say. You be aware of any movement that has the Holy Spirit for a figurehead. There are a lot of movements today that have the Holy Spirit as only a figurehead. There are some assemblies, and some people, some churches, some denominations, some groups that seem today to emphasize the Holy Spirit more than they emphasize the Son.

Now the Holy Spirit is here to glorify the Son. When you see the Holy Spirit, you do not see Him leading the parade, but you see Him standing on the sidelines pointing to Jesus and saying, “There is God's Son.” Do you understand what I'm saying? You see, He does not speak of Himself. That does not mean that He is any less than God the Son, than God the Father. But His divine office work is not to speak of Himself, not to be the originator of His own thoughts. But He is the heavenly helper to point out, to glorify, the heavenly Isaac. It is His job to seek a bride for the Son. And thank God that He is doing it.

And so he was her counselor. He was telling her over and over and over again more about Isaac. And, dear friend, the Holy Spirit, after He has become your convincer, wants to become your counselor. He wants to teach you all things. He wants you today to learn some new truth. He wants to put some new nugget into your heart that you might learn more and more about your heavenly Isaac.

C. He Was Her Comforter

Now the third thing I want you to notice about him: he was also her comforter. Verse 61 says that he went with her. And also look, if you will here, and it says, “*And they rode upon the camels*” (Genesis 24:61). Now, what camels are these? Well, if you look in verse 10, there were ten of them. You see, when the servant started out, the Bible says that Abraham said to him, “Look, you've got one job. Don't fail it. Go bring back a bride for my son.” And then the Bible says this servant was just the steward over everything that Abraham had. All of the treasures of Abraham are placed in the hands of the servant. And then he takes ten camels. Ten, in the Bible, is the number of completeness—ten camels. And these camels are groaning with treasure. All of the provisions, everything that they need, are loaded on these camels. And when Eliezer starts back with Rebekah, he starts back with ten camel loads of provision and an entourage of servants. And the point of the matter is this: that he is there to provide for her. He is there to meet her every need. “*The Spirit [himself] helpeth our infirmities*”

(Romans 8:26).

Now I can imagine, as they're riding along there on those camels going to meet Isaac, it was a long, hot, dusty journey. Sure, there were disappointments. Sure, there were times when she was tired. And I'm sure there were times when a fear would come. Perhaps her chin would quiver a little. Perhaps he'd see a tear in the corner of her eye as she thought about father and mother, and houses and lands, and all that she'd forsaken. Perhaps she wondered, "Is there really an Isaac? I mean, is he really going to be as handsome as this man says? Will he really love me? Have I just been fooled? Has somebody just misrepresented the facts?" And this ol' Eliezer, he was so wise. He'd look over there and see her. He'd reach down into that basket of jewels that he'd have and bring out some necklace, put it around her neck, and say, "This is from Isaac. He just wanted you to have it. He's so wonderful. You'll love him so much." And all along the road, all along the way, he would be dropping jewels of grace and glory into her heart.

That's what the Holy Spirit does. You see, He's the Convincer. Yes, He is. And He's the Counselor. He teaches all things. And He is the Comforter. Turn to John 14, and I want you to see here, beginning in verse 16, Jesus said, *"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you"* (John 14:16–18).

And who is the Holy Spirit? He is the vice-regent of Jesus. He is the other Jesus. He is the representative of Jesus. He is the One who makes Jesus real to us. And He brings the comfort, the consolations, the grace of the Lord Jesus to our heart. And so here we see the program of the Spirit.

IV. The Presentation of the Groom

Now, let's come to the close of this simple, little message, but a sweet message from the Word of God. I want you to go back with me now to Genesis 24 and see the presentation of the groom. Notice that she's going now to meet Isaac, a man that she'd never seen before. And the Bible says, *"Whom having not seen, ye love...[and] rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory"* (1 Peter 1:8). The scene is at the end of day. I begin reading in verse 63 here—Genesis 24 and verse 63: *"And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide: and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, the camels were coming. And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel. For she had said unto the servant, What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant had said, It is my master: therefore she took a vail, and covered herself. And the servant told Isaac all things that he had done. And*

Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death" (Genesis 24:63–67).

I want you to get the scene now. Here is the picture. The sun is westering; the sun is setting. And there's Isaac, picturing the heavenly bridegroom. He's out at the close of the day. He's in the edge of a field. He's gone out. And the Bible says he's in deep thought. He's meditating. What's he thinking about? What do you think he's thinking about, when he knows that servant has gone to get him a bride? I'll tell you what he's thinking about. He's thinking about his bride. He's thinking about the one he loves. He's waiting to see her. He's waiting to hold her. He's waiting to embrace her.

And there she's coming. And what do you think she's thinking about? It's been a long, hot trip, and she's been hearing about Isaac, Isaac. And then, suddenly, at the close of the day, at the end of the time, there while the sun is setting, she sees him standing there.

Now, notice, he cannot go to her land, for the father said that he was not to go back. It is very, very plain, if you want to study it. And I'm running out of time, so I'm not going to be able to retrace my steps, but if you read 7 and 8, you'll find that Abraham said to the servant, "Now, don't you take my son back there to get the bride. You bring a bride for my son." That's what he said: "Don't you take my son there; you bring her to him." And the bride had to come to him. And they lived happily ever after together.

Conclusion

What does that remind you of? Well, friend, doesn't it remind you of 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, beginning in verse 16? *"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall we caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord"* (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17). You see, the Lord comes to the edge of the field right out there in space. And then we, who are from this old world are caught up to meet our heavenly Isaac, to meet Him in the air. And there we'll meet our Lord. And there in the skies will be the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. And this thing called the Christian faith will reach its consummation when faith turns to sight, when hope turns to reality, and when love goes on and on and on.

*Oh, the soul thrilling rapture when I view His blessed face,
And the luster of His kindly beaming eyes;
How my full heart will praise Him for His mercy, love and grace,
That prepare for me a mansion in the sky.*

Through the gates to the city in a robe of spotless white,

*He will lead me where no tears will ever fall;
In the glad song of ages I shall mingle with delight;
But I long to meet my Savior first of all.*

—FANNY J. CROSBY

We're going to meet Him; The Bible says when we see Him, we'll know Him, for Eliezer will say, "That's Him! That's Him!" Praise His name!

Super Success

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: January 26, 1992

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 24:1–56

“And he said, O LORD God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham.”

GENESIS 24:12

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Introduction

Turn in God’s Word to Genesis chapter 24, and look up here. May I tell you that it is, my dear friend, fourth down and goal to go. Down number one: God looked down and saw the sons of men, and *“there [was] none righteous, no, not one”* (Romans 3:10). Down

number two: Jesus Christ came down out of heaven, born of a virgin, became a man. Down number three: He laid down His life for you and for me. Down number four: He's coming down soon to take us home to heaven, and goal to go. I'm so excited about that, dear friend. And I'd rather be here tonight than in the Super Bowl, and God knows I mean it. I'd rather be here tonight in the house of God with God's dear people. What a thrill—what a joy—to be here tonight! And I want to speak to you tonight on this subject: “Super Success”—“Super Success.”

Look, if you will, please, in chapter 24 and verse 12: “*And he said...*”—and the *he* refers to Eliezer, Abraham's servant—“*And he said, O LORD God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham*” (Genesis 24:12). Now the word “*good speed*” is translated “*success*” in the New International Version of the Bible, and it is used at least five times in this chapter. Now I want to tell you tonight from God's Word—and not just a pep talk, but I believe a theologically sound message—how to have the success that God wants you to have. And what is success? It's not necessarily being famous, not necessarily being wealthy or healthy, but success is the progressive realization of the goal of God for your life. The Apostle Paul said, “That I might lay hold upon that for which God has laid hold upon me” (Philippians 3:12).

Now in the background for this twenty-fourth chapter of Genesis that we're going to be in, Abraham has sent Eliezer to seek out a bride for Isaac. Isaac is a type or picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. The bride is a picture of the Church. Abraham is a picture of God the Father. And Eliezer is a picture of the Holy Spirit. And so therefore it's really a picture of how the Church, led by the Holy Spirit, is to seek a bride for God the Father and how the Church is indeed a bride—at least, a bride for God the Son—sent by God the Father to seek a bride for God the Son. And we all know that, but I want us to go back and look at this passage again from a different viewpoint. And I want to give you tonight six principles for super success.

Now at first you may say, “Pastor, this is just something that is connived in your heart and in your mind.” But I believe if you'll stay with me, you'll say, “No, God put this twenty-fourth chapter of Genesis there to show us how a faithful servant can have success and how you can be successful”—that is, how you can have the progressive realization of the will of God in your life.”

I. Fix Your Focus

Principle number one: You need, my dear friend, to fix your focus. Jot it down, and look, if you will, in the first four verses: “*And Abraham was old, and well stricken in age: and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things. And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh:*

and I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell: but thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac" (Genesis 24:1–4). Now here was Eliezer, and he fixed his focus on a goal that was very, very specific. And, friend, I have learned, and am learning, the power of specific goals. I'm reminded what that eminent philosopher and theologian Yogi Berra had to say. He said, "You've got to be very careful if you don't know where you're going, because you might get there."

Now what you have to do is to have a specific goal. And beware of vague goals. If you have vague goals, you're going to be like a ship without a rudder: you're not going to have anything to steer by. It's your goal that will enable you to steer. Most people I know don't plan to fail; they just don't plan anything. Everybody ought to have goals. Our church has just come through a tremendous, intensive time of planning. Our staff has just had an intensive time of planning. We gave to you the Master's Plan. We spent two solid days as a staff planning our work for the next year. We were trying to fix our focus. Mothers ought to have goals. Are you a mama? You, mama, ought to write down goals for your children and goals for your life. Students ought to have goals. You ought to have a notebook, and your goals ought to be written down. If you're an athlete, you ought to have goals for your athletic endeavors. If you're a medical doctor, you ought to have some goals for your practice. If you're a lawyer, a businessman, you ought to have goals.

Now, how can we tell whether these goals are God-given? Very obvious that Eliezer's goal was God-given. May I give you five tests, as you fix your focus, to find out whether or not your goal is a worthy goal?

A. Is It God-given and Specific?

First of all: Is it God-given and specific? Not a vague generality—but is it God-given, and is it specific?

B. Does It Create Excitement in You?

Number two: Does it create excitement in you? You see, the word *enthusiasm* literally means, "God in you" or "you in God." Is there something that excites you? I'm very excited—I really am. I'm excited about what we're doing as a church. I'm excited about my own life. The other day, before I decided to preach this message, I sat down and got out a pad, and again reviewed and went over some very specific goals that were in my life. And I can tell you I felt a fire that began to burn in my heart, and I believe those goals were God-given; therefore, they excited me.

C. Does It Demand Your Very Best?

Number three: Does it demand your very best? If it doesn't demand your best, I don't

believe it's of God. Does it demand the very best there is of you?

D. Is It the Kind of Goal You Can Pray Over?

Number four: Is it the kind of a goal that you can pray over and ask God to help you to reach it? As one of the great tests as to whether or not it is God-given, can you ask God's blessings in the fulfillment?

E. Is It Specific Enough That You Can Write It Down and Chart Your Progress?

Number five: Is it specific enough that you could write it down and know when you have achieved that goal? Can you put it on paper? Now I'm saying that you ought to be goal-oriented, and your goals ought to be balanced.

I heard about an athlete who was playing on the football team, and the dean came to the coach and said, "You've got to do something about that athlete." He said, "He made four F's and one D last time. Coach, what do you think about that?" The coach said, "Well, I guess he's concentrating too much on one subject."

You've got to have goals for every area of your life. You need—you need—to have goals for your body—how much you're going to weigh at a certain time. You need to have goals for your mind. What sort of books are you going to read? What are you going to learn? You need to have goals in your spirit. What are you going to do in your quiet time? What are you going to do about your soul winning? What are you going to do financially? You need to have goals for your family. And you need to have goals in every area of your life. So, number one, my dear friend: Fix your focus.

II. Face the Facts

Number two: Face the facts. Where are you now? I mean, if you need to get some place, you need to find out where you are at this particular time.

The other night, Joyce and I were going to a New Year's party, and very frankly, we were going over to Bob Fargarson's house for a New Year's prayer meeting to pray in the New Year. And Bob Fargarson lives in a place that I get confused every time I go to see him. I get lost there going to try to find where he lives. And so after Joyce and I had circled the block for three or four times, I took my car phone and I called Bob's house. I said, "Bob, please help me. I need to get to your house." Well, do you know what he asked me? Of course you do! "Where are you now?" Because if I couldn't tell him where I was then, he couldn't tell me how to get where I need to be.

Now, friend, in your spiritual life, on any achievement, first of all, you have to ask yourself, "Where are you now?" and make an honest evaluation.

Now, here's what Eliezer did. He knew that there was no wife for Isaac. He knew that time was running out. And he knew that there had to be this particular achievement.

III. Fortify Your Faith

So, number one: Fix your focus; find out what goal God has for you—or goals. Number two: Face the facts—and see not only where you need to be, but where you are. I got on the scales here about six months ago, and I saw I was where I didn't need to be. And so I set a goal, and I said, "This is where I need to get: from *here* to *here*." And I could go and get on the scale every morning, and make a measurement, and see whether I was gaining or losing. But you have to face the facts. And, folks, it's tough to face the facts. I did not want to get on that scale. I didn't want to do it. There have been some mornings lately I haven't wanted to do it. But you have to face the facts. Number three: After you fix your focus, and after you face the facts, then you need to fortify your faith. You see, look, if you will, beginning in verse 5: *"And the servant said unto him, Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land: must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest? And Abraham said unto him, Beware that thou bring not my son thither again. The LORD God of heaven, which took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land; he shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence"* (Genesis 24:5–7).

Now, what do you do to fortify your faith? Well, Eliezer did three things to fortify his faith after he fixed his goal and faced his facts.

A. Fortify Your Faith with Scripture

Number one: He fortified his faith with Scripture. He's saying to himself, "You know, what if this thing can't be done? I mean, you want me to go get a wife for your son Isaac." And Abraham gave him a verse of Scripture. Listen. Abraham gave him a promise from God. Look at it in verse 7: *"The LORD God of heaven, which took me from my father's house,"*—Abraham is speaking now—*"and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me,"*—here's the Word of God—*"and that sware unto me,"*—here's the promise of God—*"saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land; he shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence"* (Genesis 24:7).

Now if you want to be and have super success, it's got to be built on the Word of God, a promise from God. Eliezer is a little queasy about this whole thing until he gets a promise from God. And that gave him great confidence. If you want to have success, you focus not on your problems, but on God's promises. And Joshua chapter 1 and verse 8 says this: *"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success"* (Joshua 1:8).

B. Fortify Your Faith with Meditation

So, number one: You fortify your faith by Scripture. Number two: You fortify your faith by meditating on Scripture. Don't just get a promise, but get that promise down in your heart, and meditate on it time after time after time after time again. See what it will mean when you reach those goals. I mean, think about what it will mean to this church when we reach the Master's Plan that we have taken as a church. I meditate on that, and I think about it frequently. I think about the things that I want in my heart and my life. If I believe that God has given me promises out of the Word of God, I turn them over and over and over in my mind. A lot of times I'll go to sleep with one of these promises in my mind, meditating on it day and night, because, you see, dear friend, it's when you meditate on those promises that the fire begins to burn. It's very, very, very important that you ask yourself why and not how. Ask yourself why before you ask yourself how, because if you settle the *why*, God will show you the *how*. I believe that with all of my heart. Just find out what is this that God has promised. "Why do I want it? Am I really interested in it for the glory of God?" Once you know it is God's will, for God's glory, and that you are in this thing a by a command of God, then God will show you the *how*.

C. Fortify Your Faith with Prayer

The third way, of course, that you fortify your faith is by Scripture, and meditation, and prayer. Look in verse 12—here's Eliezer, and he's praying: "*And he said O LORD God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me success send me good speed*" (Genesis 24:12). Do you have goals—again, I want to ask—that you can pray over? Did you know one of the ways that you can determine whether or not your goal is a God-given goal? I've said this already. Do you have a desire to pray over it? It's prayer that fortifies your faith. I'll tell you what your prayer life will reveal about you.

1. Prayer Reveals Your Desire

It will reveal your desire. You see, listen. If you don't pray over your goals, it's proof to me that either you don't believe in prayer or you really don't desire the goal—either you don't believe in prayer or you don't desire the goal.

2. Prayer Reveals Your Dependence

Not only does prayer show your desire; it shows your dependence. I mean, if you really believe that you cannot do it without God, you're going to do what Eliezer did: you're going to pray and say, "God, give me success."

3. Prayer Reveals Your Direction

And, you see, it's going to reveal the direction that you're going in—what you pray about. Now Jesus said, in Mark chapter 11 and verse 24, "*Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them*" (Mark 11:24). Now that's the third step.

IV. Find Your Function

First of all: Fix your focus. Number two: Face your facts. Number three: Fortify your faith. Number four: Find your function. “Now, pastor, what do you mean by that?” I mean, you need to get a plan in your mind that you can function by. Look in verse 10: *“And the servant took ten camels of the camels of his master, and departed; for all the goods of his master were in his hand: and he arose, and went to Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor. And he made his camels to kneel down without the city by a well of water at the time of evening, even the time that women go out to draw water. And he said O LORD God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham. Behold, I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water: and let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master”* (Genesis 24:10–14). It’s very obvious that what he is doing now is formulating a function—he’s formulating a function. He’s saying, “Now, how can I get my hands on this?”

And how do you formulate a function?

A. Diagnose the Problem

Well, first of all, you look and see what the problems are. I mean, he had to find the right girl. He had to convince this girl to go with him. He had to convince her parents to let her go. He had to take care of all of the details. Now when you have a goal in mind, you need to see what are the problems, what are the roadblocks. The roadblocks don’t mean that it’s not God’s will for you. Paul said, “There’s an effectual door open to us, and there are many adversaries” (1 Corinthians 16:9). I told you when we gave you the Master’s Plan that *the door to the room of opportunity swings on the hinges of opposition*. This man, as he’s formulating his function, he saw all of these problems, and they were real problems. Don’t worry about your problems; thank God for your problems. As a matter of fact, problems are opportunities in reverse.

It’s your problems, really, that constitute your job. Does your job have problems? Well, good, because if your job didn’t have any problems, they wouldn’t need you, or somebody else could do it for less pay than you’re getting. It’s your ability to meet and solve problems that constitutes your job. I used to think, as a pastor, one of these days I’d get all my problems behind me and then my ministry would begin. And then I discovered that the problems are my ministry—they are my ministry.

B. Design a Plan

So what you do—listen—as you formulate your function, first of all, you diagnose the

problems. And then, in the light of those problems, you design a plan. You design a plan to overcome those problems. And so he says, “I’m going to find the right girl. I’m going to find it by the way that she volunteers to water the camels. I’m going to get invited to her home. I’m going to share the promise. Then, I’m going to pop the question. And then, I’m going to bring back Rebekah for Isaac.” That’s why we as a staff spent two days, and the two days were just the culmination of months of planning for this coming year. And you can thank God for your staff. I tell you, you have a wonderful, wonderful staff—we do, here. I’m taking myself out of it, because I sat in amazement as I listened to these servants of God as they prayerfully planned and looked at the problems. You see, there are no problems, really, too big to solve; there are just people who are not wise enough and godly enough to solve them.

I heard about a man one time, who was going to the county fair, and he had a pig under one arm and a chicken under the other arm, and under his elbow he was balancing a basket. And he stopped a girl and asked her, “Can you tell me how to get to the county fair?” “Well,” she said, “if you’ll go down here a mile, and turn left at the corner of the woods, and go another mile, you’ll get to the county fair. But,” she said, “you could take a short cut through the woods and get there much sooner, but you might get lost.” And he said, “Well, would you walk through the woods with me and show me the way?” “Oh,” she said, “no, I couldn’t do that.” He said, “Why not?” “Well,” she said, “you might get me out there in the middle of those woods and try and kiss me.” “Now,” he said, “don’t be silly. How could I do that? I’ve got a chicken under this arm, I’ve got a pig in this hand, and I’m balancing this basket.” “Well,” she said, “you could put the chicken on the ground, put the basket over the chicken.” She said, “I could hold that silly old pig.”

First of all, you diagnose the problem. And, secondly, you design a plan. That’s exactly what Eliezer did. Now, friend, it’s not unspiritual to plan. I believe the Master’s Plan that God gave us is of God. It’s a very technical plan. Someone has well said, “To fail to plan is to plan to fail.” God is not against organization. First Corinthians chapter 14 and verse 40: *“Let [everything] be done decently and in order”* (1 Corinthians 14:40).

V. Firm Up Your Faithfulness

Number five: After you have formulated a function, after you’ve said, “Here’s how I’m going to get it done”—first of all, you get it from God, you fix your focus; then, you face the facts; then, you fortify your faith; and then, you formulate a function—then, what do you do? Here’s where most of us fail: You firm up your faithfulness. Now, my dear friend, the plan is not primarily the best; it is your best. I want you to see how Eliezer was disciplined. And this is the part that spoke to my heart as I studied it. I want you to see how he disciplined every area of his life, how he firmed up his faithfulness.

A. Discipline Your Decisions

For example, he disciplined his decisions. Look, if you will, in verse 21: *“And the man wondering at her held his peace, to wit whether the LORD had made his journey prosperous or not”* (Genesis 24:21). He didn’t just jump out. He didn’t just say, “I’m going to do this.” He’s waiting, trying to find the will of God. “Is that the woman?” He disciplined his decisions.

B. Discipline Your Appetite

He disciplined his appetite. Look, if you will, in verse 33: *“And there was set meat”—or, “food”—“before him to eat: but he said, I will not eat, until I have told mine errand”* (Genesis 24:33). That is, they said, “Eliezer, sit down and have some food.” He said, “No, thank you. I’m about the master’s business.” Many of us—and I say, “us”—have not learned to discipline our physical appetite, or appetite for amusement, or whatever it is.

C. Discipline Your Speech

Here was a man who began to firm up his faithfulness. His decisions were disciplined. His appetite was disciplined. His speech was disciplined. Notice as he begins to talk to the family—look in verse 49—and I’m going to skip some material—here’s Eliezer, and he says, *“Now if ye will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me: and if not, tell me; that I may turn to the right hand, or to the left”* (Genesis 24:49). Do you see what a negotiator he was? He’s not going in there demanding; he’s not going in there bullying his way around. Here’s a man who is a servant of God, whose speech is always seasoned with salt (Colossians 4:6).

D. Discipline Your Time

And he disciplines his time. Look, if you will, in verse 56: *“And he said unto them, Hinder me not, seeing the LORD hath prospered my way; send me away that I may go to my master”* (Genesis 24:56). They wanted him to spend some time with them. He said, “I’m sorry. Don’t hinder me. I don’t have any time to waste.”

Now, you see—listen—if you want to have super success, you’re going to have to firm up your faithfulness. You’re going to have to discipline your decisions, your appetite, your use of time. Again, I was challenged as I looked at this scripture. I studied it about three or four weeks ago, and it spoke to my heart—and speaks to my heart again tonight. And I have to ask myself, “Adrian, where do you need to grow personally?” Do you know what I want for you? I want you to have a pastor that is a growing pastor. I want to be growing in the Lord Jesus Christ, and I want you to grow. And I pray. I wrote in my prayer notebook, “Adrian, you need more discipline in your life.” Somewhere I read this, and it hit me right between the eyes—and here’s what it

says: “If your professional life outpaces your personal life, you will have stress”—“If your professional life outpaces your personal life, you will have stress.”

Firm up your faithfulness. Discipline your decisions. Discipline your appetites. Discipline your speech. Discipline your time. I know this much: If this church grows, I must grow. We have to ask ourselves this question, “What kind of traits—character qualities—habits, and knowledge must I have if I’m going to reach the goals that God wants me to have?” Firm up your faithfulness.

It costs. I mean, there’s a price to pay. Look, if you will, in verse 53: *“And the servant brought forth jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and gave them to Rebekah: he gave also to her brother and to her mother precious things”* (Genesis 24:53). Now Abraham had given to Eliezer gifts. And Eliezer took those gifts, and he did not hold them for himself, but he gave them in order to get the job done. God has given to every one of us spiritual gifts, but those spiritual gifts are not to be hoarded; they’re to be used. There’s a price that has to be paid. *Great* goals *demand a* great price. And the way that you give is a test of your desire and of your faith. Are you willing to pay the price? Jim Elliot said—who died a martyr for Jesus, killed by those Auca Indians—he said, “A man is no fool to give what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.”

VI. Form Your Friendships

Now, here is the last of these principles that are here: not only must you fix your focus, and face the facts, and fortify your faith, and formulate your function, and firm up your faithfulness; but listen, folks: you must form your friendships. Look, if you will, in verses 49 and following of this same chapter. He’s talking here with kinfolks now, and he says, *“And now if ye will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me: and if not, tell me; that I may turn to the right hand, or to the left. Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, The thing proceedeth from the LORD: we cannot speak unto thee bad or good. Behold, Rebekah is before thee, take her, and go, and let her be thy master’s son’s wife, as the LORD hath spoken. And it came to pass, that, when Abraham’s servant heard their words, he worshipped the LORD, bowing himself to the earth”* (Genesis 24:49–52). Eliezer had enough sense to know that, even though his goals were God-given, he needed to cooperate with other people.

God puts us together with other people. None of us can do it by ourselves. I need you, and you need me; and we need one another. If you would be successful, you’ve got to learn to be a people person. Successful people almost always are. It’s very obvious that Eliezer learned to get along with Rebekah’s family, and they helped him on his way. Success is hardly ever, if it is ever, a one-man show. You need to ask yourself this question: “Am I a people person? Am I a cooperative person? Do I know how to enlist people? Do I know how to share?”

I look at Jim Whitmire over here, our minister of music, and I wonder how he'll be able to put on this Easter pageant. But I'll tell you how he'll do it. He will enlist hundreds of people to help him. He'll have a goal in his heart. He'll believe it's a God-given goal, but he can't do it by himself. And so he will enlist others to help him. That's the reason God has put us together here as a church: I can help you, and you can help me, and we'll help one another.

Conclusion

But, you see, all of us together, in all of our lives, when you get down to the bottom line, what are we all about? All of us have been commissioned by the Father to get a bride for the Son, to bring souls to the Lord Jesus. And we need to fix our focus. We need to face our facts. We need to fortify our faith. We need to formulate our function. We need to firm up our faithfulness. And we need to form our friendships. And I believe that God will give us super success.

Fine Principles of Prosperity

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: January 2, 2000

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 24:56

“And he said unto them, Hinder me not, seeing the Lord hath prospered my way; send me away that I may go to my master.”

GENESIS 24:56

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Introduction

Would you be finding in the Word of God the book of Genesis. That's the first book in the Bible, obviously. And fast-forward over, if you would, to chapter 24. And then, when you get into chapter 24, go down to verse 56, and I'm going to read that verse. Then, later on, we'll get into the entire chapter. We're talking to you about prosperity and five principles of prosperity. Notice in this verse that I'm referencing here: *“And he said unto*

them, Hinder me not, seeing the LORD hath prospered my way.” (Genesis 24:56) How would you like for God to do that for you? How would you like to be able to say, “Listen, God has prospered my way”?

Now the Bible teaches clearly and plainly that God takes pleasure in the prosperity of His servants. (Psalms 35:27) And the first psalm in the Bible, Psalm 1, speaks of the man who is like a tree planted by the rivers of water, and that psalm ends with a gigantically glorious promise. Listen to it. Don’t try to water it down. It says this: “*And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.*” (Psalms 1:3) So, don’t tell me that God doesn’t want you to prosper. God takes pleasure in the prosperity of His servants. Our problem is that many of us don’t understand what real prosperity is. And so we’re going to talk about genuine prosperity and give you five principles for prosperity.

Somebody handed me the other day a note that talked about the top ten things that you won’t have to worry about in the next millennium—you won’t in the new millennium. Do you want to know what the top ten things are that you won’t have to worry about? Number ten: The Bible will still have the answers. Number nine: Prayer will still work. Number eight: The Holy Spirit will still move. Number seven: God will still inhabit the praises of His people. Number six: There will still be God-anointed preaching. Number five: There will still be the singing of praise. Number four: God will still pour out blessings on His people. Number three: There will be room at the cross for His children. Number two: Jesus loves you. Number one: Jesus still saves. Amen? No matter what happens in the future, we can rest on those things. Our God and His truth will never pass away.

Now, in this chapter, in Genesis chapter 24, we’re going to read a statement often. Five times the word *good speed*, if you have the King James, as I have, will appear in this chapter—the word *good speed*. Other translations give it in a more modern or up-to-date rendering. One translation translates it continually “success.” It may be translated “good speed,” “success,” or “prosperity,” whatever you want, but it means that God’s hand is upon you, God is with you, helping you to do those things He wants you to do. Are you ready for these five principles of prosperity? They’re going to come out of this chapter.

And let me give the background for the chapter. Abraham is the father of the Jewish nation. He has a son of promise. That son’s name is Isaac. Isaac, in the Bible, is a type, or a figure, an illustration, of the Lord Jesus, who is to come, because both of these sons were sons of promise, sons of miracle birth, and sons of sacrifice, and so forth. We don’t have time to get into that, but just put it in your mind that Isaac is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now Isaac needs a bride, and the desire of the father, Abraham, is to get a bride for his son Isaac. Do you know what the desire of our Heavenly Father is? A bride for His Son Jesus. And the Church is the Bride of Christ. Now, guys, I don’t know

whether you like the feeling or not, but you, too, are a bride. We are the bride of the Lord Jesus Christ. And what is the desire of the Father? Well, the Father wants a bride for His Son. Now this is the background of this.

And so Abraham chooses his most trusted servant, whose name is Eliezer, and he sends him off on a mission to get a bride for his son. And he comes back with a beautiful girl named Rebekah. Now Abraham typifies and pictures God the Father, Isaac pictures God the Son, and Eliezer pictures God the Holy Spirit. Well, what is the purpose, what is the office work, what is the motivation, and the high privilege, and responsibility of God the Holy Spirit? To seek a bride for Jesus. And so the Holy Spirit is working here today, just calling out a bride for the Lord Jesus Christ. And so Eliezer is going now to seek a bride for Isaac. Now that is the background. And God prospered Eliezer, and God gave Eliezer good speed. God gave Eliezer prosperity. As he said, *“The LORD hath prospered [me in] my way.”* (Genesis 24:56)

Now we can look at that, and we can find five principles of prosperity. Are you with me so far?

I. Establish Your Cause

Principle number one: Establish your cause. Put it down in your notes, or put it down certainly in your mind: Establish your cause. Now you’ve got to have something that motivates you, something that drives you. Every person needs a cause, a reason, a God-given goal and purpose for his life. Read now the first four verses: *“And Abraham was old, and well stricken in age: and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things. And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh: and I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of...earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell. But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac.”* (Genesis 24:1–4) Now, clearly, beyond any stutter, stammer, or apology, Eliezer had a cause; he had a mandate.

Question: Do you have a cause? I mean, do you? Are you just drawing your breath and drawing your salary, fighting to live and living to fight, and you don’t have a cause through life? You’re just enduring life. Have a cause in your life! You need goals in your life.

A. Beware of Vague Goals

And beware of vague goals. Most folks could not write down what they intend to do, what they want to do, what they feel God has called them to do. Rather than being a definite specific, they are just sort of a wandering generality.

Tiger Woods is supposed to be a great golfer, is that right? I understand, the greatest in the world. But I can beat Tiger Woods playing golf, if you let me set the

conditions. Now, listen. If Tiger Woods is the world's best golfer, I'm sure that I would at least be in the running for the world's worst. But I can beat him, if you'll let me establish the conditions. All I'd do is just take Tiger Woods, and I'll blindfold him, first of all. And then I'd turn him around about fifteen times and keep the blindfold on, and I can beat him—I can beat him—because he wouldn't even know which way the pin is, you see. Now, I mean, the best golfer, if he's blindfolded and can't see the goal, he's not going to make it. If I can beat Tiger Woods when he can't see the goal, how are you even going to succeed if you don't even have a goal, much less, one that you cannot see?

You've got to have some goals in your life, and they've got to be specific. If you don't have that, you're like a ship at sea on a dark night without a rudder, without a chart, and without a compass. Most people don't plan to fail; they just don't plan anything. Well, you say, "Sure, you're a pastor. You ought to have some goals." Mothers ought to have goals. Teachers ought to have goals. Students ought to have goals. Athletes ought to have goals. Medical doctors ought to have a goal in their life. And a church, in general, ought to have goals. Is your goal, your cause, specific enough you could put it on paper this morning? Suppose I were to just pass out paper this morning and say, "All right, write it down." What are you all about? What motivates you? I mean, what are you trying to do? Number one: You must establish your cause.

B. Beware of Unworthy Goals

Beware of vague goals. And even more—listen carefully—beware of unworthy goals. I mean, what is success? What is success? Many people have the wrong idea of success.

Somebody said, "You know that you're important and successful if you're invited to the White House for a conference." Somebody said, "No, that's not success. You're successful if you're invited to the White House for a conference, and you're in the Oval Office, and that red phone rings, and the President is so interested talking to you he doesn't even answer the red phone, the emergency phone." Somebody said, "No, that's not success. Success is, you're in the Oval Office, you're talking to the President, the red phone rings, he does pick it up, and he says, 'Here—it's for you!'" Now that, in the eyes of the world, is success.

But not necessarily so. You can be important, and not successful. You can be rich, and not successful. You can be notorious, and not successful. You can have power, and not be successful. What is success? Listen very carefully. One definition of failure is succeeding in the wrong thing. That is failure: if you are succeeding in the wrong thing. A wise man has said, "Whatever a man does without God, in that thing he will do one of two things: either he will fail miserably or succeed more miserably." Are you listening? Failure is often success at the wrong thing.

Now I've said that you need to have a specific goal. But do you have a worthy goal?

Really, do you have a worthy goal? May I ask you to ask yourself some questions this morning?

1. Is It God-given?

Is your goal—is your cause—is it God-given? Is it? I mean, the thing that moves you, is it God-given?

2. Does It Create in You Enough Motivation Necessary for Its Fulfillment?

Number two: Does it create in you enough motivation necessary for its fulfillment? It's not a worthy goal if it doesn't motivate you enough to fulfill it.

3. Does the Cause That You Serve Demand of You Your Very Best?

Number three: Does the cause that you serve demand of you your very best? Is there anything that demands of you every inch, every nerve, every ounce, every sinew, every corpuscle of your body to say, "This one thing I do"?

4. In the Cause That You Have, Can You Pray and Ask God to Help You Fulfill It?

Number four: In the cause that you have, can you pray and ask God to help you fulfill it? I mean, the thing that melts your butter, the thing that motivates you, the thing that drives you, can you honestly get on your knees and say, "Almighty God, in the name of Jesus, in the authority of Jesus, help me to do this thing"?

Beware, friend, of vague goals. Beware of unworthy goals. Many folks in this auditorium this morning are listening to radio station WIIFM—*What's In It For Me*—rather than wanting to do the will of God. Beware, I say, beware of vague goals. Beware of unworthy goals.

C. Beware of Unbalanced Goals

And listen, precious friend. Beware of unbalanced goals. You need to have goals for every area of your life, not just for one area; not just physically, not just financially, not just domestically, not just spiritually, but your entire life needs to be a life of balance. That's why God gave you two legs.

There's an old story of the school college dean who came to the football coach and said, "Your star athlete—I want to tell you about him. Here's his report card. He's got four F's and a D. What do you have to say about that?" The coach said, "Well, looks to me like he's concentrating too much on one subject." Your goals need to be balanced.

Now what we're saying is this: you have to establish a cause. There were no ifs, ands, and buts about it, Eliezer knew what he was about. He knew what his cause was. Establish your cause.

Now I said goals for every area of life. I thought about this as I prepared this message. Let me tell you what I have, for example, as goals, or causes, for this church as the pastor

of the church. Do you want to know the ten things that are on my heart about Bellevue Baptist Church? All right, I can give them to you in specificity. Number one: That this church will have a godly pastor—that this church will have a godly pastor. Number two: That we will have a congregation that is totally committed to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Number three: That our congregation will be growing in Christ’s likeness. Number four: That this congregation will learn to worship—and I mean truly worship so as to give God the glory. Number five: That our membership will discover, develop, and deploy their spiritual gifts, and that all of you will be put to work for Jesus Christ. Number six: That our congregation will learn to care for the needy and the hurting, the weak, the forgotten, the lost, the last, the least, and we’ll be a people of compassion. Next, that our congregation will disciple and discipline its membership. Next, that we will be a church that will strengthen the family. I’m telling you, if families are not restored, there is no future for America. And we’ll put an emphasis upon the family. Next, that we’ll be a congregation reaching out to evangelize those around us with a worldwide missionary vision. Next, that we will be a congregation that will work with and reach out to other congregations in sharing, and in fellowship, and in cooperation. That’s what I want for Bellevue Baptist Church.

Now, see, I could give you that. I could write that down. I could say, “That’s what I want.” Now that’s just one area. But I could pray about those things. I could give you Scripture for those things. I could ask God to help me. And that moves me to my very being to see that those things are done. *“Is there not a cause?”* (1 Samuel 17:29),” David said.

May I ask you some questions about what you’re doing right now? I want to ask you three questions. If you get to where you’re going—and everybody’s going somewhere—if you get to where you’re going, where will you be? You think about it. You’re headed somewhere. Everybody is headed somewhere. If you get to where you are going—and I’m not just talking about heaven or hell; I’m talking about what we call “in this life”—if you get to where you’re headed, where will you be? Second question: If you accomplish your goals, what will you have? What will you have? And then, when you consider what you will have—here’s the big question—are the things you are living for worth Jesus dying for? When you get to where you’re going, where will you be? When you achieve what you want to achieve, what will you have? And are the things you’re living for worth Jesus Christ dying for?

II. Examine Your Condition

Principle number one, therefore, is: Establish your cause. Number two—principle number two is this: Examine your condition. Now this is what Eliezer had to do. He knew what his cause was, and then he had to see where he was right now. Look, if you

will, beginning in verse 5: “*And the servant said unto him, Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me into this land: must I needs bring thy son...unto the land from whence thou camest?*”—in other words, “If Rebekah won’t come back with me, will I take Isaac to Rebekah?”—“*And Abraham said unto him, Beware thou that thou bring not my son thither again.*” “No, you can’t take Isaac back to where I came from. You’ve got to bring Rebekah here.” “*The LORD God of heaven, which took me from my father’s house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that swear unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land; he shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence. And if the woman will not be willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this my oath: only bring not my son thither again,*” (Genesis 24:5–8) and so forth. I could read this more, but what is obvious is this: that Eliezer says, “Look. This is a problem. You’re asking me to go to a land, meet a girl that I’ve never met, establish a relationship with her, convince her to come and marry a man she’s never met, and to leave father, mother, houses, lands, brother, and sisters, and come with me. That is my job? That’s what I’ve got to do?”

A. Take an Honest Inventory

Now those were the conditions. Folks, you have to see where you are this morning; not where you want to be, not where you wish you were. Take an honest inventory and see where you are right now, this moment.

If you were to call me on the phone—or maybe you’re from out of the city—and you were to call me on the phone and say, “Adrian”—maybe it’s an old friend—“Adrian, we’re in town. We want to come by and see you. How do we get to your house?” what is the first question I would ask them? “Where are you now? Where are you now?” Because I cannot give them directions to get to my house unless I can first of all help them to establish where they are right now. And you can’t get to where you need to be until you understand where you are. That’s very obvious. And we need to take an inventory of ourselves and to find out where we are.

B. Diagnose Your Problems

Now you, therefore, you need to diagnose your problems. Here was Eliezer. He had to find the right girl. He had to convince her. He had to convince her parents. He had to take care of all the details. And in your life, it’s not just enough to establish your cause; you have to ask yourself, “What is standing between me and that cause? What are the obstacles? What are the roadblocks?” Now the roadblocks don’t mean that God is not with you. Eliezer had difficulties. It didn’t mean that God was not with him. Paul said, “There’s an open door set before us, and there are many adversaries.” (1 Corinthians 16:9) And *the door to the room of opportunity swings on the hinges of opposition*. And, really, problems are just opportunities in reverse. Did you know that?

If you're in business, and you say, "My business has problems," thank God your business has problems. You have a job. You say, "My job has problems." Thank God your job has problems. If there were no problems, you wouldn't have a job. Did you know that? Do you think people pay you for doing nothing? The greater the difficulty on your job, and your corresponding ability to solve those difficulties and overcome those difficulties, that determines your worthwhileness to the organization.

There's a man sitting right there. I hadn't planned to say this. But didn't we have a great time lighting the crosses? Wasn't that a blessing? Praise the Lord! Well, you think all of that just happened? No, friend. Incredible difficulties were there to be overcome. Now that was in the will of God, but here was one man, Bobby Lewis and other people—I don't want to give Bobby all the credit—but people behind the surface working to make that happen. And the ability of that man to see problems, anticipate problems, solve problems, and get it done is what constitutes his job. And listen. If your job didn't have any problems, somebody—or if it had few problems—somebody with a lot less ability than you and a lot less pay than you're getting would do that job. It is your ability to meet and solve problems that constitutes your job. So quit griping about your problems. No. See where you are, and look at yourself, and design a plan to meet those problems.

If you'll begin in this chapter, in verse 10, and see that Eliezer saw his problems, and then he got a plan: "*And the servant took ten camels of the camels of his master, and departed; for all the goods of his master were in his hand: and he arose, and went to Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor,*" (Genesis 24:10) and so forth and so forth. He had a plan. He was going to find the right girl. Then he was going to get invited to her home. And then he was going to share the promises of God with her. Then he's going to pop the question. And then he's going to ask her parents for permission. And then he's going to bring her back to Isaac.

Now there's nothing wrong with planning. Planning is not unspiritual. Planning is very spiritual. God planned my redemption before He made the world. I was in the heart and mind of God. The Lord said, "*Which [man], intending to build a tower, [doesn't sit] down first, and [count] the cost...?*" (Luke 14:28) You make plans. I've already told you, *to fail to plan is a plan to fail.*

This church makes plans. Do you think everything just happens around here—just happens? No, when you see something happen, I can tell you, many times there are years and months of intensive planning—planning that is soaked in prayer. And then we see it happen because people learn to plan. And difficulties don't mean, again, that it can't be done.

A man asked a girl, "How do I get to the county fair?" She was a beautiful girl. The man had a pig in one arm, a chicken in the other arm, and a basket. He was going to

the fair. And the girl said, "Well, you go down here a mile, and turn left, and go another mile, you'll come to the county fair." He said, "Couldn't I just take a shortcut through the woods?" She said, "Well, yes, but you might get lost in the woods." "Well," he said, "couldn't you go with me through the woods and guide me through those woods?" She said, "No, I couldn't do that." He said, "Why not?" "Well," she said, "you might get me out there in the middle of the woods and try to kiss me." He said, "Now, listen. How could I do that? I've got this pig in one arm, a basket, and a chicken. That would be impossible." "Ah," she said, "I don't think so." She said, "You could put the chicken on the ground, and put that basket over that chicken, and I could hold that silly old pig!"

Difficulty doesn't mean it can't be done. No, you have to see what your condition is, and know, again, that the door to the room of opportunity swings on the hinges of opposition.

III. Encourage Your Confidence

Number three—number three: Encourage your confidence. You know, many of us just think we can't do it. We don't think that God wants us to prosper. But encourage your confidence. Now, how do you encourage your confidence?

A. The Promise Factor

Number one: There's the promise factor. Get a promise from the Word of God. Look, if you will, beginning about verse 5: "*And the servant said unto him, Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land: must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest?*" Now, notice this: "*And Abraham said unto him, Beware thou that thou bring not my son thither again. The LORD God of heaven, which took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land; he shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence.*" (Genesis 24:5–7) Do you know what he is saying? "Hey, this is based on the Word of God. We have got a promise from the Word of God."

You want to encourage your confidence? Get in the Word of God. Read the Scriptures. Saturate your soul with the Scripture. You want a promise for a new millennium? Listen to Joshua chapter 1, verse 8: "*This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written...for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.*" (Joshua 1:8) What we see right here is an illustration of that wonderful promise in Joshua 1, verse 8. And so we're talking about encouraging your confidence. And there's the promise factor. Wait before God until you get a promise, and let that promise somehow come out of the Word of God.

B. The Profit Factor

And then, not only is there the promise factor, but here's another way to encourage your confidence: there is the profit factor. Now I said that some people are tuned to radio station WIIFM—*What's In It For Me*. But there is a sense in which you need to ask, "What's in it for me?" in the right sense. You need to ask yourself this question: "Where's the payoff? What is the bottom line? Why am I doing this?" And real motivation comes from proper motives. And when your motives are right, then it's an amazing thing.

You see, what was Eliezer's motive? What was his reward? What was the profit factor? Well, number one: His master Abraham would be pleased. Number two: There would be a bride for Isaac. Number three: God would be glorified, and, therefore, Eliezer could have the joy. You see, we all serve for a reward. It's not wrong to serve for a reward if your reward is to hear Jesus say, "Well done, good and faithful servant"—if your reward is for the glory of God. Listen. Once you see what the profit is, what the payoff is, what the bottom line is, what really counts of a worthy goal—once you get that established, you determine the *why* and God will show you the *how*. I believe that with all of my heart. You determine the why: Why am I doing this? What is the promise factor? Do I have a basis in the Word of God? What is the profit factor? Am I doing this for the glory of God? Bottom line: Is my whole life built around bringing a bride to Jesus? I mean, is that why I am doing this? Is everything else contributing to this one thing? There's the profit factor.

C. The Prayer Factor

And then, last of all—we're just talking about encouraging your confidence—there's the prayer factor. When you pray over what you want to do, then you're going to find out that you're encouraged as you pray. Notice—go down to verse 12: "*And he said*"—here, this is Eliezer, and he's praying—"*O LORD God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed.*" (Genesis 24:12) Translate that "send me prosperity; send me, O my God, success." That's the reason that you've got to have a worthy goal, a goal that you can pray over. And when you pray, the Spirit of God comes into you to encourage you, to motivate you, to drive you. And you're not doing it alone; you and God are doing it together. And you say with the apostle Paul, "*I can do all things through God [who strengthens] me.*" (Philippians 4:13)

Get those things together now. We're talking about encouraging your confidence. There's the promise factor. There's the profit factor. There is the prayer factor. And, by the way, if you're not praying about your cause, do you know what it shows me? Either that you know that your cause is not God-given or that you're not really depending upon God for the fulfillment of it. You've got to have a desire when you pray. Mark 11, verse

24—Jesus said, “*I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.*” (Mark 11:24) You’ll encourage your confidence through prayer.

IV. Enforce Your Character

Now, number four: You must enforce your character. You’re not going to drift into success—I can tell you that much. As you read this story, it’s very, very obvious that this man was a man who enforced his character. What I mean is he disciplined his life.

A. Discipline Your Decisions

He disciplined his decisions. Look in verse 21: “*And the man wondering at her held his peace, to wit whether the LORD had made his journey prosperous or not.*” (Genesis 24:21) He’s looking at Rebekah. And I wish I could tell you the background for this, but this verse is sufficient right now. He’s looking at her, and he’s saying, “I wonder, is she the one?” He’s not making a snap judgment now. He’s wanting God to affirm this. Here’s a man that’s disciplined. He’s not just getting on a horse and riding off in all directions.

B. Discipline Your Appetite

He disciplined his appetite. Look, if you will, in verse 33. In the midst of all of this, they’re trying to get this servant to eat. “*And there was set meat*”—food—“*before him to eat: but he said, I will not eat, until I have told mine errand.*” (Genesis 24:33) There are times when we have to set aside food, television, ballgames, vacations—whatever. There’s no cheap way. There’s no easy way. There’s no lazy way. He disciplined his appetite.

C. Discipline Your Time

He disciplined his time. Look, if you will, in verse 56. They’re trying to slow him down a little bit: “*And he said unto them, Hinder me not, seeing the LORD hath prospered my way.*” (Genesis 24:56) Don’t waste your time. Boy, I’d get under conviction about this one. I’ve preached that *there is enough time in every day to do gracefully everything God wants us to do*. Don’t you dare insult God by saying you don’t have enough time. Do you think God would tell you to do something and then not give you enough time to do it? There’s enough time in every day to do gracefully everything that God wants you to do. And here’s this man, he says, “Look. No, I’m not going to turn to the right hand; I’m not going to turn to the left.” “*Hinder me not...the LORD hath prospered [me in] my way.*” Don’t waste, don’t squander, your time.

Now all of this I’m just simply saying is that you have to enforce your character. There’s no cheap way, no easy way, no lazy way. And so you have to ask yourself this question on the threshold of this new millennium: Where do you need to grow? Where

do I need to grow personally? You remember when we said, “Examine your condition” and looked at those obstacles? Part of that may be something in your character, some lack of discipline. Ask yourself, “Where do I need to grow?” A wise man has said, “When your professional life outpaces your personal life, you will have stress, and you will bring stress to other people”—“When your professional life outpaces your personal life, you will have stress, and you’ll bring stress to other people.”

Do you know what I’m convinced of about Bellevue Baptist Church? If I want this church to continue to grow, I must continue to grow—I must continue to grow. I can’t pull over and park. Prosperity and success is not *the* best. It is *my* best. It is *your* best. And so I need to enforce my character.

And this means that I must pay the price. Look, if you will, in verse 53 of this same chapter: “*And the servant brought forth jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and gave them to Rebekah: he gave also to her brother and her mother precious things.*” (Genesis 24:53) Now, listen to this. Abraham said to Eliezer, “Look, I’m going to load you down with gifts.” He took these camels laden with treasure and sent him off to do something. That is, he did not send him off to get the job done without equipping him and without giving him gifts.

Now, when God the Father wants to use Adrian Rogers to bring a bride for the Lord Jesus Christ, do you think He told me to do that and didn’t give me the time or didn’t give me the giftedness to do that? No, He’s given every one of us spiritual gifts, has He not? He’s given me some. He’s given you some. But God the Father has given us gifts, and these gifts are tools, not toys. What they’re to be used for—everything that God has given us is to be used for the glory of God the Father, and we must be willing to release that. We must count the cost and pay the cost. There are a lot who are squandering the God-given gifts that they have, and they’re giving away so much and getting so little. We need to give all for the Lord Jesus Christ. Enforce your character.

V. Enlist Your Comrades

Last of all: Enlist your comrades—enlist your comrades. Eliezer, when he went to get a bride—and I don’t have time to even open the Scripture. I just want to suggest that you read at about verse 49, and go on. Read the whole chapter when you get home—he knew that this was not a one-man show. He knew that in order to get this done, he had to get her father, her mother, her brothers to cooperate. He knew that he needed to get helpers to get the thing done. You can’t do it by yourself. When people are prosperous doing the things of God, do you know what God does? God makes us dependent one on another.

That’s the reason that we have a church. The eye can’t say to the hand, “I have no need of thee.” The ear can’t say to the foot, “I have no need of thee.” (1 Corinthians

12:21) I need that man right there. That man is a right-hand man to me. Thank God for Mark Dougharty. Do you think that Bellevue Baptist Church is a one-man operation? We'd be out of business overnight. God puts us together. You find people who think they don't need one another, and I'm telling you, they will not succeed. Ask yourself this question: Am I a cooperative person? Have I learned to enlist others? Have I learned to depend upon others? Have I learned to delegate? Have I learned to cooperate? My heart almost jumps out of my throat as I look at this congregation and think what can be done if we would all do it together. A single snowflake isn't much, but you get enough of them together, they can stop traffic. I mean, that's together. God brings us together.

Conclusion

Now that's the end of the message. Those are five principles of prosperity. They're found right from the Word of God. Just make certain that it's not fool's gold. Just make certain that it is real prosperity that you get.

Now the bottom line is this. The bottom line—men are interested in the bottom line. In the Bible, the Lord Jesus Christ told of a rich man. His barns were filled. The Dow Jones and NASDAQ were topping the record. And this man, Jesus said, he got in his hammock, and got him a glass of lemonade, and he built bigger barns to store everything. Now you realize this is the Adrian version. But he got in his hammock, and he stretched out. And a big smile went ear to ear, and he said, "Soul, eat, drink, and be merry." And God said unto him, "*Thou fool*"—"thou fool"—"*this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?*" (Luke 12:20) That, my friend, was a successful fool.

Remember what *success is: the progressive realization of the will of God for your life. Failure is succeeding at the wrong thing*. Soon, and very soon—soon, and very soon; I mean, soon, and very soon—sooner than you think, we're going to stand before God. And when you die, you're going to leave behind everything you have, and you're going to take with you everything that you are. And then you'll find out whether or not you've been prosperous. Do you agree with that? I hope you do.

Victory over the Flesh

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: June 28, 1981

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 25:19–24

“And the Lord said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger.”

GENESIS 25:23

Outline

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A. Esau Represents the Flesh

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Introduction

Take your Bibles, please, and turn to Genesis chapter 25. I want us to begin reading in verse 19. We're preaching through the book of Genesis—Genesis 25:19: *“These are the generations of Isaac, Abraham’s son: Abraham begat Isaac: and Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padanaram, the sister to Laban the Syrian. And Isaac intreated the LORD for his wife, because she was barren: and the LORD was intreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived. And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to enquire of the LORD. And the LORD said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger. And when her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb.”* (Genesis 25:19–24)

You have three enemies—three enemies: the world, the flesh, and the devil. The world is that value system that’s out there. We call that the external foe. The flesh is that old Adamic nature. We call that the internal foe. The devil: we know who he is, for he is the infernal foe. We all have three enemies that are warring against us. Today, we’re going to talk about that internal foe, the flesh; and we’re going to be talking about victory

over the flesh, as we study our lesson today on Jacob and Esau, these two twins. This is the first mention of twins in all of the Bible.

Now, remember that we've been talking about Bible characters, and we've come to those characters Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And these are wonderful pictures of the things of God. For we remember that Abraham pictures for us, in what we call *typology*, God the Father. He is a picture, a type, a prophecy of God the Father. Isaac, who was born miraculously; Isaac, who was offered on Mount Moriah; Isaac, who, in a type, was raised from the dead, is absolutely, in my estimation, a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. And then, you remember, the last time we studied together, we studied about how Abraham sent his servant Eliezer to seek a bride for Isaac. And that's a picture of God the Father sending the Holy Spirit into the world to seek a bride for His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And you remember who the bride was? What was her name? Rebekah. Now, if Abraham pictures God the Father, and Isaac pictures God the Son, and Eliezer the servant pictures God the Holy Spirit, then whom does the bride picture? Well, Rebekah pictures the Church. The Church is the Bride of Christ.

And so we're going to learn something now about the children of Rebekah, because I believe there are still some spiritual lessons to be learned in this train of thought. And in these verses that we have before us, in verse 20, I want you to see what I call a blissful wedding; and then, in verse 21, I want you to see a barren womb; and then, in the next verse, I want you to see a bitter war. And we're going to see those three things, all right: a blissful wedding, a barren womb, and a bitter war.

I. A Blissful Wedding

First of all, let's notice a blissful wedding. Look in verse 20: "*And Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to wife.*" (Genesis 25:20) Now, remember, Isaac took Rebekah to be his wife, and that is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ receiving us to be His very own, because we are married to the Lord Jesus. And how exciting it is! Listen, friend. If you're not excited about the Lord Jesus Christ, I don't believe that you really understand what has happened to you when Jesus took you.

You know, I read about a little boy who wrote a biography on Benjamin Franklin. And this is what he said. He said, "Benjamin Franklin was born in Boston. He went to Philadelphia, met a woman and married her, and then discovered what electricity was."

Well, friend, when you find the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, you're going to find something very electrifying.

*The Church's one foundation
Is Jesus Christ her Lord,
She is His new creation
By water and the Word.*

*From heaven He came and sought her
To be His holy bride;*

And then the writer says,

*With His own blood He bought her
and for her life He died.*

—SAMUEL J. STONE

That's what the hymnal says, and that is what the Bible confirms: that with His own blood He bought us. And we are now His bride: bone of His bone, and flesh of His flesh.

And the exciting thing is this: that, when a girl marries a man, this man says to her, in effect, "To you I give all of my worldly goods. With all of my earthly goods I now thee endow. We are one, and we have a joint bank account." Have you ever thought of having a joint bank account with the Lord Jesus? Have you ever thought that, every time that the gospel is preached, Jesus Christ is proposing to you, and Jesus Christ is asking you to be His bride? It's as though Jesus Christ is standing here and saying, "I, Jesus, take thee, sinner, before God and these witnesses to be my loving bride. I take thee and I offer myself to be thy Savior and thy bridegroom, in poverty and in wealth; in sickness and in health; in faithfulness and in waywardness; never to be separated, and with all my heavenly goods I thee endow." Have you ever thought about that? We're heirs of God, and joint heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ; we are one, part and parcel, with the Lord Jesus Christ.

What a marvelous figure, therefore, a wedding is of the relationship that we have with the Lord Jesus! I say today, when the gospel is preached, Jesus is saying, "I do" to you. Have you ever said an everlasting "I do" to Him? Listen, friend. The moment you say, "Lord Jesus, I receive you as you receive me," that moment a spiritual wedding takes place, and you become one with your Lord.

II. A Barren Womb

And so there was a blissful wedding. But then, there was a barren womb. Look, if you will, in verse 21 here of this same chapter: "*And Isaac intreated the LORD for his wife, because she was barren.*" (Genesis 25:21) Now Isaac married her, but Isaac wanted fruitfulness. Isaac wanted children. And here was Rebekah, who was barren. She could have no children. And the fault was not with Isaac; the fault was, in this particular instance, with Rebekah. And so he's praying for her. And the Lord heard Isaac, and she conceived in her womb.

And I tell you, dear friend, it's not only that we should be married to the Lord Jesus; we ought to be fruitful for the Lord Jesus. And I believe that the Lord Jesus is praying for us. I believe that the Lord Jesus is interceding to the Father for us, and He is interceding that we might be fruitful in Him. For the Bible says, and Jesus said, in John 15:4, "*Abide*

in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.” (John 15:4) And then, Peter talked about some principles of the Christian life, and Peter said, in 2 Peter 1:8, *“For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that you shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* (2 Peter 1:8) And then, I want you to turn to this one—Romans 7:4. I want you to look at this—Romans 7:4: *“Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another,”*—all right, no longer are we to be married to the Old Testament law. Who are we to be married to now? Well, we die to the law that we might be married to another—*“even to him who is raised from the dead,”*—we’re to be married to the Lord Jesus Christ. He was raised from the dead. And what should be the result of our marriage to the Lord Jesus Christ?—*“that we should bring forth fruit unto God.”* (Romans 7:4) You see, it’s one thing to have faith in Christ. It is another thing to have fruit through Christ.

And so, here is Rebekah. There was a blissful wedding. But then, there was a barren womb. And so Isaac, who pictures the Lord Jesus, entreats for her. He intercedes for her that she might be fruitful. And, oh, dear friend, God today wants you to be fruitful. Are you fruitful? Leonard Ravenhill said this: “Oh, the reproach of our barren altars! Has the Holy Ghost delight in our electric organs, carpeted aisles, and new decorations, if the crib is empty? Never! Oh, that the deathlike stillness of the sanctuary could be shattered by the blessed cry of newborn babes.” Oh, friend, what matters if we have all of these accouterments, but no one is being saved?

You see, when we’re married to Christ, when the Church is the Bride of Christ, the barren womb is a reproach. And you go through the Bible, and you can think of the women who were barren who cried out to God and said, “O God, give me children!”

I think of Rachel. Rachel prayed to the Lord, and Rachel said, “God, give me children, or I die.” (Genesis 30:1) And Rachel was heard of the Lord, and God gave her Joseph. And Joseph was the one that delivered the nation. I think of Manoah’s wife who prayed and said, “O God, I must have a child,” and God heard her prayer and removed her barrenness and God gave to her Samson, another mighty deliverer of Israel. (Judges 13:1–24) I think of Hannah, a smitten soul, and she was sobbing in the sanctuary and crying to God so much that Eli the prophet thought that she was drunk and mocked her. But she would not let go, and she kept on praying and crying to God, and God heard her, and God let her bear Samuel, God’s prophet, God’s mighty man. (1 Samuel 1) I think of the widow Ruth who was married, and Ruth, after she married, cried out to God and said, “God, I want a child,” and God heard her prayer and gave her Obed, who begat Jesse, who was the father of David, from whose line the Lord Jesus Christ came. (Ruth 4:13–22) I think of Elisabeth, who could not have children. And Elisabeth cried out to God and said, “God, I want a child,” and God gave to sweet

Elisabeth John the Baptist. (Luke 1:5–25) And all of these prayed and said, “God, I don’t want to be barren. I don’t want to be unfruitful. I want to be fruitful for you.” And God gave them children that blessed the world.

And that’s exactly what God wants in the spiritual sense for us. God wants us to have the spirit of Rachel who will say, “O God, give me children, or I die.” Have you agonized for lost souls? Are you wanting to reproduce yourself? Or are you content to be barren? Are you content to be sterile? Are you content to live a life of fruitlessness, when Jesus says that we’re to be fruitful, when Peter says that we’re to be fruitful, when Isaac entreated for Rebekah that her womb be not barren? There are some of you who cannot help it if you cannot have children physically. But I tell you, God wants us to have spiritual children. God wants us to reproduce fruit. And, as the Bride of Christ, Christ wants His bride to be a fruitful bride.

III. A Bitter War

And so, first of all, we see a blissful wedding. Then, we see a barren womb. But then, we see a bitter war. Continue to look here, if you will, in this twenty-fifth chapter, and look, if you will, in verse 22: *“And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to enquire of the LORD.”* (Genesis 25:22) There was a war going on inside of her. Can you imagine a little pregnant lady, and she’s feeling these two children fight? I mean, inside of her! Here are these two children. They’re struggling one with the other. She says, “Now, this is strange. I’ve asked God, and I’ve wanted to be fruitful. And now I’ve conceived. And now there’s a war going on.” She’s feeling a battle within.

Well, she does a very wise thing. She goes to God. And that’s always a wise thing to do: go to God to find out why. *“And she went to enquire of the LORD. And the LORD said unto her,”*—in verse 23—*“Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger.”* (Genesis 25:23) Now, that’s in reverse. Generally, the elder is the one who has the ascendancy. Generally, the elder is the one who is the ruler, the boss in the home. But the Bible says here that it’s the younger who is going to have the ascendancy. It is the younger who is to be the ruler. And it is the elder who is to serve the other.

Well, of course, here our Lord was prophesying about the descendants of these two sons. And, incidentally, these two sons’ names, I suppose you already know. I’ve already told you, but I want to tell you again: Jacob and Esau. Esau was the elder; Jacob was the younger. And both of them were progenitors of a great people. Jacob was the progenitor of the Jews, the Israelites. And, as a matter of fact, his name was later changed to Israel. And he had twelve sons, the twelve tribes of Israel. And Esau

was progenitor of the Edomites. And there was a struggle between the Edomites and the Israelis on down through the ages. And so, that was one explanation. The war had already begun in Rebekah's womb. Here's the war that is going on.

But to me there is also a deeper symbolical lesson here if we're letting Rebekah represent the Church. You see, every one of us, when we come to the place where we want to be fruitful for God, after we've been married to the Lord Jesus Christ, and after the Lord intercedes for us as He does, and it looks like we're about to be fruitful, suddenly we find within us a battle going on. There's a struggle. It is an inner battle.

Now, friend, if you've never felt that inner battle, if you've never felt that inner struggle, I wonder if you know the Lord Jesus that I know. For the Bible tells us, in the book of Galatians chapter 5, verse 17, that the "flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. These two are contrary one to the other." (Galatians 5:17) And we're going to find out that Esau represents a principle in the Bible that we call the principle of "the flesh." And we're going to find out that Jacob represents a principle in the Bible that we call "the spirit." And you're going to find out that the flesh and the spirit are in a constant battle. And you're going to do battle with the flesh and the spirit all the days of your life, so you might as well listen. You'd better pay attention, because there is in you, as the Bride of Christ, a Jacob and an Esau.

There is an old nature, that old nature that we have. And then, when we're born again, we receive a brand new nature. But in our new nature are the instincts and proclivities of that old nature along with the instincts and proclivities of our new nature. I'm not saying that we have two natures once we get saved, but I'm saying that the new nature that we have has a higher instinct and a lower instinct. There is a Jacob, and there is an Esau. And so, Esau, as we're going to see, represents the flesh. And when I say "the flesh," I don't mean the skin and the bone. I'm talking about that old Adamic proclivity, that old Adamic leaning toward sin, that is in any of us, and that is in all of us; and that we have this war going on.

A. Esau Represents the Flesh

Now, why do I say that Esau represents the flesh? Well, let's just look and see. First of all, he was the elder. Look, if you will, in verse 25: "*And the first came out red, all over like an hairy garment; and they called his name Esau.*" (Genesis 25:25) Now he wasn't a very pretty baby, I don't believe, when he was born, and he was born first. Now, you see, the flesh is first. "*That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.*" (John 3:6-7) So Esau is the firstborn; and the flesh comes, of course, before the spirit. We were lost before we got saved. And if you've never seen yourself lost, you've never been saved.

And, first of all, there is that old Adamic nature; that is, that which is firstborn. It is the Esau part of our nature. And then I want you to notice, not only was he the elder, but he

was a born loser. Look, if you will, in verse 23. The Bible says, *“And the elder shall serve the younger”* (Genesis 25:23)—the last part of verse 23. That is, Esau was destined to fail. And the flesh is always destined to fail. The flesh is a born loser. The flesh is a born loser.

And then I want you to notice a very interesting play on words here. Look, if you will, in verse 25. And the Bible says, *“And the first came out red.”* (Genesis 25:25) Now the word *red* is an interesting word. Do you know what the name *Adam* means? “Red.” I don’t know whether Eve just called him, “Hey, Red, come over here.” I don’t know that or not, but the name *Adam* means “red.” And here is a man who is definitely linked with Adam, even by name. And I believe here that the Holy Spirit has arranged a play on words to show us something of the Adamic nature that is typified by this man Esau.

And then I want you to see that he had an antipathy to the things of God. Notice, in verse 22, there is a battle royal going on in the womb of this woman: *“And the children struggled together within her.”* (Genesis 25:22) Could it be that Esau tried to murder Jacob in the womb? I don’t know. But here is a battle that’s going on within, even before they are born. There is a struggle, an inward battle. And old Esau, as we’re going to see, represents the flesh, and the things of the flesh, and that old carnal, wicked nature that’s in us.

Incidentally, you want to know what’s in that old man? Look, if you will, please, in Galatians 5. Let’s just turn to it for a moment—Galatians 5. Now, listen and see what the flesh is—Galatians 5:19: *“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings,”*—you say, “You haven’t mentioned me yet.” All right—*“and such like:”*—that got you. All right—*“of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”* (Galatians 5:19–21)

Now that’s the old Esau nature that’s in all of us. That’s the works of the flesh. And all of these things come out of the flesh. And many times we say, “The devil made me do it.” I want to tell you something, friend. If the devil were to die, you’d go on sinning. Do you know that? It’s a do-it-yourself job. You’ve got enough flesh in you to take care of you just fine and dandy. As a matter of fact, I don’t believe the devil’s all that proud of these things here. He’d rather you not do some of these things. You’re a shame and disgrace to the devil—some folks, really. I’m serious. I’m serious. The devil would much rather have you be a man of distinction sitting well dressed in church this morning, just unsaved. You know, the old drunkard in the gutter: he’s not even a good advertisement for the devil, is he? No. The devil wants you to be a man of distinction, separated from God. *He’d just as soon send you to hell from the pew as from the gutter.* But the works of the flesh are these kinds of things. And there’s an old Esau nature in all of us. And

there's a battle royal that goes on with us. And so, that's this man Esau.

B. **Jacob Represents the Spirit**

Now I want you to go back, if you will, and see about Jacob a little bit. And let's find out why Jacob typifies the spirit, or the things of God. Now I'm in Genesis 25. Now, look in verse 27, would you, please: *"And the boys grew: and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents."* (Genesis 25:27) Now, when the Bible says he was a plain man, that doesn't mean he lived in flat places, nor does it mean that he was nondescript. As a matter of fact, this word *plain* here is the word *tam*, and it is rendered in other places in the Bible "upright." It is rendered "perfect." It is rendered "undefiled." That is, he had a spiritual nature about him. He had a spiritual nature. That's what the word *plain* means. He had a spiritual nature about him.

Now we notice that Esau was a hunter, according to this verse. He was a man of the field. But Jacob dwelt in tents. He was a man of the fold. That is, he stayed at home. He did not have the killer instinct that the flesh had. You know, the flesh has a killer instinct in it. And also I want you to notice that he was a man whose passion was more to protect than it was to kill. Now he was not a perfect man, as we're going to see in a moment, but you're going to find out that, as God looked at these two twins, and God knew the proclivities of their heart, and God knew their natural instincts, and God knew what their way of life would be, we read something very, very strange.

And I want you to turn to Malachi now—Malachi the first chapter. Now Malachi is the last book in the Old Testament, so it's not all that hard to find. Just keep turning right till you get to Matthew, and then stop and go back a little. All right, Malachi 1. I'm going to read something here very strange about these twins who were anything but identical: *"The burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi. I have loved you, saith the LORD ..."*—now, who does God love? Israel. Now, what's another name for Israel? Jacob. Jacob's name was changed to Israel. Jacob and Israel are the same person. His children are spoken of as one person— as Israel. All right—*"I have loved you,"*—that is, Israel; that is, Jacob—*"saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness."* (Malachi 1:4) "I loved Jacob. I hated Esau." And then, verse 4 goes on to speak of the people of Esau, the descendants of Esau, who are the Edomites; and the last part of verse 4 describes those people as *"the people against whom the LORD hath indignation for ever."* (Malachi 1:4)

Now that's something. Forever God has indignation against these people. Now, when the Bible says, "I have loved Jacob," God's speaking, "and I have hated Esau," God here is not speaking of emotion. He's speaking of choice—of choice. That is, "I

have chosen Jacob. I have refused Esau.” Now, why? Was Jacob so wonderful? No. As a matter of fact, he wasn’t all that wonderful at all. As he was born, the Bible says, he came out of his mother’s womb grabbing on to Esau’s heel, trying to trip him up. He was a conniver from the time he was born. As a matter of fact, the Hebrew word *aqeb* means “heel.” And we get the name *Jacob* from *aqeb*, which means “heel.” He was a heel grabber. He was a supplanter. The name actually means “conniver, cheat, con man.” That’s what he was.

Well, you say, “Now, wait a minute. I can understand why Esau was such a bad fellow, but Jacob doesn’t sound much better.” But I’m going to show you there was a basic, fundamental difference between Jacob and Esau. And when you see that fundamental difference between these two, you’re going to find out why God said, “Jacob have I loved; Esau have I hated.” And in there I want you to discover, if you want God to smile upon you, if you want God to bless you, you’re going to have to understand what is the Jacob principle that God can bless, and what is the Esau principle that God has a perpetual indignation against from time immemorial. If you don’t understand that, friend, you’re not going to understand the things of God, because you’re going to find this battle going on within you. All of us have the battle, just as this mother had the battle so long ago. And you’d better be careful and see what happened and what you bring forth.

Now, go back, if you will, to Genesis 25, and we’re going to find an episode in the life of these two boys, and then it will so aptly describe the difference between the flesh and the spirit. I want to emphasize, when I say, “the flesh,” I’m not talking about the skin and the bones. There is nothing evil or vile about your body. Your body is a gift from God, and you’re to present it “*a living sacrifice*.” When the Bible says, “the flesh,” it is talking about the old nature. You understand that? Okay now, let’s continue to go, and look, if you will, here in this story, in verse 27: “*And the boys grew: and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents. And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob. And Jacob sod pottage:*”—that is, he cooked stew. I guess today we’d call it Brunswick Stew—“*and Esau came from the field, and he was faint:*”—he’d been out hunting all day long—“*and Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint: therefore was his name called Edom. And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright. And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me? And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he sware unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised his birthright.*” (Genesis 25:27–34)

Now you have to get the picture. Here is Esau, the man’s man, the hairy-chested

hunter, the man of the field. I mean, if we just looked at him outwardly, we would probably have chosen him, and said, "That's the man God can do something with." He is a broad, strapping, big old man who knows what he wants, a real go-getter. But he comes in from the field, and he's hungry. And he's worse than hungry. He's *hongry*. Have you ever been *hongry*? I mean, he's been out there all day long hunting. And just about the time he gets near the house, something is wafting its way through the air, and he gets a whiff of it. Old Jacob has been there stirring up this mess of stew. And he's got the pot bubbling and boiling. And Esau's nostrils start to dilate just a little bit. His mouth starts to drool just a little bit. And his stomach starts to growl. And he says, "Hi, Jake. Friend, listen. That sure does smell good. Let's you and I eat it." And Jacob says, "No, I'm cooking this for me." He says, "Look, we're brothers. Sell it to me." He says, "It's not for sale." "Oh," he says, "well, it is for sale. If you really want it, all it will cost you is your birthright."

Now, what was the birthright? The birthright was the spiritual blessing that belonged to the eldest son. It meant that he would get two-thirds of the inheritance. But it meant more than that. It meant that he would be the spiritual leader of the family. It would really mean that he would be the progenitor of the Messiah. He would be the inheritor of the promises that God is making to Abraham and to Isaac. And we would say, "Abraham, Isaac, and Esau," rather than "Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." And it just doesn't sound right, does it: Abraham, Isaac, and Esau? But that's the way it was at this particular time: Abraham, Isaac, and Esau. That was his birthright.

And Jacob said, "All right, you want some of my stew? Just swear to me that the birthright will be mine—though I don't deserve it, because I'm the younger son." They were twins, but still Esau was born just moments before Jacob was born. And do you know what Esau said? He said, "Man, what good is the birthright if I die? I'm about to die. You take it. Just give me that stew." And Jacob said, "A deal's a deal. Shake, brother." And they shook, and the deal was consummated.

Now, what kind of a character did this man Esau have? Pay attention, because there are a lot of them who are living in Memphis, Tennessee. Are you ready? He was a materialist, pure and simple. He was more interested in physical things than spiritual things. Do you know anybody like that? More interested in stew than the birthright. He was more interested in temporal things than he was eternal things. Do you know anyone like that? He was a man who was mastered by his appetite. "I want it, and I'll have it, regardless of the price." Do you know anybody like that? This city is filled with them. They're materialists. They are people against whom the Lord hath perpetual indignation. They are willing to sacrifice the permanent upon the altar of the immediate. And, oh, how cheaply they sell out!

Put in your margin Hebrews 12:16. God gives us a warning in Hebrews 12:16. It's a

warning against being an Esau-type of person. It's a warning against letting that Esau instinct master you. And the Bible says, in Hebrews 12:16, "*Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.*" Can you see the cutting irony and the sanctified sarcasm of the writer of the book of Hebrews? Can you see the way he puts it? "*For one morsel of meat.*" (Hebrews 12:16) It's as though the writer of the book of Hebrews cannot even believe that Esau would have sold out so cheaply.

Many of you are in danger of doing exactly the same thing. You'll sell Jesus Christ for a morsel of meat. Judas sold Him for thirty pieces of silver. There are some people listening to me right now who would give up coming to church before they would give up getting a new refrigerator. They're just that kind of materialists. I'll guarantee you, I know enough about human nature, I've been preaching long enough to know that, when I give this invitation to come down this aisle and give your heart to Jesus Christ, there's some man, some woman, some boy, some girl who says, "Well, if I go down there, I'll have to give up thus and such." I don't know what that morsel of meat is, but you sell your birthright for a morsel of meat. Did you know there are some people who say, "Well, you know, if I join the church, they're going to expect me to tithe." And so you worship that more than God: for a morsel of meat—for a morsel of meat. For one morsel of meat you sell your birthright. Mastered by your appetites. Ruled by your instincts. People who would sell Jesus Christ for the toys of this world.

Now, here's why God loved Jacob. Listen. As we study Jacob, we're going to find out that Jacob had some terrific faults. But here was his redeeming factor. Do you want to know what it was? Here it was. He had a heart for God. He wanted the birthright. He went about to get it the wrong way. But God looked past his deeds, and God saw his desires.

Conclusion

What are your desires today, weak as you are, frail as you are, ailing as you are? Down in your heart of hearts is there a desire to say, "O God, I want you—I want you?" You see, God did not love Jacob for what he was. God loved Jacob for what He knew He could make out of him, because he had the one thing that God looks for: a heart for God.

The eyes of the Lord are running to and fro in this congregation this morning. Some of you are Esaus and some of you are Jacobs. Some of you live for this world and this world alone. Some of you are materialists. And some of you, even though you're weak, you say, "O God, I do want you. God, I do want to know you. God, I do want to serve you." The flesh minds earthly things. The spirit minds spiritual things. Friend, do you have a heart for God today? Do you? I trust that you will. I trust that you will.

Years ago, I'm told, there was a fire in Oklahoma City, and an apartment house was blazing. And the fire trucks were there, and they were spraying the hoses on that building, and the embers were glowing, and the timbers were creaking, and the acrid, black smoke was pouring out. And the firemen had there a woman, and they were restraining that woman. And she was trying to tear loose. She was trying to get back into the flames, and they would not let her go. And she was saying, "But my baby! My baby! My baby's in there! I must go!" And they said, "Madam, no one can go. It's too late." She said, "Won't somebody go?" And one fireman said, "I will go. I'll try. Where is the baby?" And she described the bedroom in the apartment. And they put a ladder up to that apartment window. And this fireman, dressed in his protective clothing, said, "Spray the hoses on me." And they put those hoses upon that fireman, and they doused him down with water. And up that ladder he went. And they shot the water into the window to try to keep him as wet as possible. He went into the blinding, choking smoke. He made his way through that apartment. He pushed open the door, went into the nursery, and groped until he finally found the crib. He reached down into the crib and found that little bundle, picked it up, wrapped the blanket real securely around it, and came to the window. When he appeared in the window with that little bundle, they cheered. They sprayed the hoses upon him as he came down. The mother tore loose, took the bundle from his arms, and turned the blanket back, and said, "My God! That's not my baby! That's my baby's doll!"

I can't think of anything more tragic than that, unless it would be for a person to go through this life clinging to his bosom the toys of this world and to lose his own soul. "What should a man give in exchange for his soul? What should it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" (Matthew 16:26; Mark 8:36–37) Jacob, who had a heart for God; Esau, who sacrificed the permanent upon the altar of the immediate. Choose the Esau way, you'll die. Choose the Jacob way, you'll live. And every Christian has within him still a part of that Jacob and a part of that Esau; and we've got to say *no* to the flesh and *yes* to the spirit.

Failure Is Not Final

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: December 31, 1995

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 28:10–22

“And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.”

GENESIS 28:15

Outline

Introduction

- A. What Jacob Had Going Against Him
 - 1. The Family That Formed Him
 - 2. The Faults That Fettered Him
- B. What Jacob Had Going for Him
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 - 2. He Had a Spiritual Hunger
- I. God Loved Jacob with a Transforming Love
 - A. Jacob Has a Revelation of God
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 - B. Jacob Has a New Consciousness of God
 - C. Jacob Has a New Communion with God

Introduction

Be finding the book of Genesis chapter 28—Genesis chapter 28—and in a moment we’re going to begin reading in verse 10. But when you’ve found it, look up here.

I think all of us remember the stories that we used to learn when we were children. They were kind of childhood stories, nursery stories. They were all stories of people who had a transformation or things that had a transformation. We remember the story of the ugly duckling. Remember the ugly duckling that was really a swan and became a beautiful swan? We remember the story of Cinderella—as a matter of fact, I shared that story with my grandchildren here just recently—and Cinderella, who became the beautiful princess. We studied and read, when we were children, about frogs who became princes. Those are stories of transformation. Well, we have one like that today in God’s Word, only this one is a true one. It’s the story of a man who went through a transformation, a man who was in and of himself a failure. His name was Jacob.

Now, if your name is Jacob, you have a wonderful name, because Jacob is one of the brightest stars in the Hebrew heaven. And Jews today speak of God as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Jacob. Thank God for the name *Jacob*. And I'm not putting the name *Jacob* down, because it is a great and an honorable name. But I want to remind you it was not always that way. The name originally meant "con artist." It originally meant "cheat." It is a name that means "conniver, liar," because that's what this man was by nature.

A. What Jacob Had Going Against Him

If you look at Jacob, in his background—and we're going to get to the scripture in just a moment, but let me just kind of set it up for you in a moment—if you look at the background of this man Jacob, you'll find out he had so much going against him, you would say he'd never make it.

1. The Family That Formed Him

First of all, you think of the family that formed him. His father was Isaac, and Isaac loved God. But, really, Isaac was a very sensual man. He had a wrong set of values. The Bible says that Isaac's favorite son was not Jacob, but Jacob's twin brother, Esau. (Genesis 25:28) And then, here's the reason he loved Esau more than he loved Jacob. He loved Esau because Esau was a hunter and would bring to him venison, and he loved that savory venison; he loved that meat that Esau would bring. Now that's a big reason for putting one son above another son, isn't it? And over and over again it talks about old Isaac and how he loved that venison.

And then you think about his mother. His mother's name was Rebekah. And Rebekah's a beautiful name, but Rebekah herself was a schemer; she was a scheming woman. She helped old Jacob to deceive his father, Isaac. And we won't get into that, but just put it down that Jacob's father was a sensual man. Jacob's mother was a scheming woman. And Jacob's brother was a self-sufficient, self-centered lout. His name was Esau. He didn't care about the things of God at all. He was just a hairy-chested outdoorsman, and he was a man who was very selfish and, again, motivated by the things that are of the flesh. He was a sensual, self-centered brother. That's the kind of a family that he was raised up in.

Maybe that's something like your family. Maybe you say, "Pastor Rogers, I don't come from very good stuff." Well, neither did Jacob.

2. The Faults That Fettered Him

But you think not only of the family that formed him, but you think of the faults that fettered him. Here was a man, this man Jacob, who had a lot of internal problems. He was a schemer, a conniver, by nature. He was just crooked by nature. It was hard for him to do right. As I've told you, his name means "cheater" or "con artist," and he lived

up to it. By the way, he was a twin to his brother Esau. But if you had looked at the two and had to choose between them, which one would you have chosen? You probably would have chosen Esau rather than this man Jacob, even with Esau's many, many faults.

And so here's a man. Environment is against him. Heredity is against him. Age is against him. And he's moving through life from one failure to another. Now the reason I'm giving you the background is this: I want you to use this background as the black velvet so you can see God's grace in the life of Jacob, and hopefully you can see God's grace in your life.

B. What Jacob Had Going for Him

1. God Loved Him

Now Jacob had one redeeming factor, and it's the same one that you have, no matter what your background, no matter what your environment, no matter what your situation. What was the one redeeming factor that Jacob had? Are you ready for it? God loved him—God loved him. The Bible tells us clearly, in Romans chapter 9, verse 13, God says, "*Jacob have I loved.*" (Romans 9:13) He didn't love him because of his faults; He loved him in spite of his faults. God didn't have to change him in order to love him; God loved him so he could change him.

Now I want you to get this in your heart and in your mind today: even though you may see yourself as having so much against you, there is one thing that you have for you, and it is God. God loves you, and "*if God be for us, who can be against us?*" (Romans 8:31)

2. He Had a Spiritual Hunger

Now, here's something else that this man had for him. He had a spiritual hunger; he wanted to know God. I don't have time to get into it, but he cheated his brother Esau out of the birthright, which was the spiritual blessing. Now Esau really didn't care much for the spiritual blessing, but Jacob wanted it. Jacob, the con artist, got it the wrong way, but he still wanted it. He wanted God. Now, here's the point. God loved Jacob. God did not love Jacob for what he was, but God loved Jacob for what He could make out of him. God saw in Jacob a hunger for Himself, a hunger for God.

May I ask you this question this morning? Do you have a hunger for God, or are you just satisfied like you are? Forget about your failures. Forget about your faults. Forget about your foibles. Forget about your family. Forget that, and put that aside. And let me ask you this question: Do you have a hunger for God today? If you do, hallelujah! If you do, I don't care what your past is. Failure is not final, if you have that one thing, if you have a hunger for the God who loves you. Now Jacob did, and because of that, God could move in Jacob's life.

And I want you to see three episodes in the life of Jacob that I'm going to try to put in your heart today. And I pray that God the Holy Spirit will help you to see not only Jacob, but to see yourself.

I. God Loved Jacob with a Transforming Love

Number one: God loved Jacob with a transforming love. And God loves you with a transforming love. Now we're in Genesis chapter 28, verse 10: *"And Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went toward Haran. And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep."* Have you ever had a stone for a pillow? Jacob did. *"And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all the places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of. And Jacob [awakened] out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven. And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar,"*—that is, "a stone of remembrance"—*"and poured oil upon the top of it. And he called the name of that place Bethel: but the name of that city was called Luz at the first. And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God: and this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee."* (Genesis 28:10–22)

Now at this point, Jacob has been a religious man, but I don't think he was a saved man. I think he was like a lot of folks here this morning. You've come to church because it's the thing to do; and you know about God, but you don't know God personally. Now he has left home, and he's left home under bad circumstances. And he's out there in the desert by himself. And he pictures a man away from God; he pictures a lost sinner. He's separated by his deceitfulness. He's sentenced with death, because his brother Esau is coming after him to kill him. He's shrouded in darkness. He's surrounded by desert. He's got a stone for a pillow. He's out there. I want you to see him out there. There's the

hoot of the jackal out in the wilderness. There are the clouds that are covering the moon. He hears the mournful owl, and he's all alone, with a stone for a pillow, away from God, away from friends. He's lonely. He's hurt others. He's hurt himself. He's miserable. There he is, out there on the desert ground asleep, and he has a dream.

A. **Jacob Has a Revelation of God**

God now begins to reveal Himself to this man Jacob. And what is the dream that he has? He sees a ladder. In this dream, he sees a ladder that goes from earth all the way up into heaven. Now old Jacob has been reaching for the stars in his own flesh, and now he sees this ladder. It's going from earth to heaven. And in this dream he sees angels. Angels are coming down the ladder, and angels are going up the ladder. When I was a kid, we used to go to camp, and we'd sing that song, "We're Climbing Jacob's Ladder." Did you ever sing it? I never knew what it meant. "Each rung goes higher"—I never knew what it meant. But this is where it comes from. We are climbing Jacob's ladder. Jacob saw a ladder.

Now, what does all of that picture? May I tell you with clearness, and affirmation, and no stutter, and no stammer, the ladder that Jacob saw was a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. You say, "Well, I don't see how that's a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ." Well, Jesus Himself did. Put in your margin this verse—John 1, verses 47 through 51. I'm going to read a portion of that passage to you: "*Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!*" (1 John 1:47) Do you know what the word for "guile" is? *Jacob*: "Here's an Israelite in whom there is no guile." He said, "Here's a man that's not a con artist," when he saw Nathanael. And then this is what He said to Nathanael, in verse 51: "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.*" (John 1:51) And that was the term that Jesus used for Himself. The Lord says, "Nate, you don't have any Jacob in you, and you're going to see the angels ascending and descending upon me. You're going to see heaven open." He's referring to this passage way back there in the Old Testament, and He says, "That pictures me."

Folks, I've told you before, and I want to tell you again, the Bible is full of Jesus. Don't just think that the Old Testament was about the Jews and the New Testament is about Jesus. Standing somewhere in the shadows, you'll find Jesus all the time. And if you read the Bible and you don't find Jesus, you'd better go back and reread it, because He is the hero of the Bible. And the message of the Bible is "Jesus saves." And so here's old Jacob, and he's having a dream. Now, remember, he's away from God. He's miserable. He's a failure. He's lonely. He's got a stone for a pillow.

By the way, let me tell you something. People say it's hard to be a Christian. Where'd you ever get that? It's not hard to be a Christian. That's a lie out of hell. It's not

hard to be a Christian. It's hard not to be a Christian. Jesus said, *"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me...my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."* (Matthew 11:29–30) The Bible says, *"The way of [the transgressor] is hard"—"the way of [the transgressor] is hard."* (Proverbs 13:15) We get it just exactly backward. Here's old Jake out there away from God. He's miserable, got a stone for a pillow. But God comes to him, and God speaks to him.

1. The Reach of the Ladder

And I want you to see that ladder, and I want you to see the reach of it. Verse 12 tells us it goes all the way to heaven. (Genesis 28:12) Remember in Genesis—the early part of Genesis—men tried to build a tower whose top would reach to heaven? (Genesis 11:4) Remember that? Well, that represents man's effort to reach heaven. He can't do it. Every man-made ladder is going to break and fall, and the higher men climb on it, the further they fall. But Jesus said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes unto the Father, but by me."* (John 14:6) This ladder went all the way to heaven.

2. The Resources of the Ladder

And then, not only the reach of that ladder, but think of the resources of that ladder. The Bible says that the angels were coming down that ladder and the angels were going up that ladder. (Genesis 28:12) Jesus said, "The angels go up and down on me. They ascend and they come down on me." (John 1:51) Now, what's that talking about? Well, what are angels? Well, angels are God's ministering spirits. The Bible, in Hebrews the first chapter, tells us that the angels are spirits that minister to us. (Hebrews 1:14) Angels minister to *that* man, and *that* man, and *that* man. And angels minister to me, and angels minister to you. And they bring the blessings of God, and they bring the protection, and they bring the love of God. But do you know how they come to us? Through Jesus. Do you know how do we go to God? Through Jesus. You see, Jesus is not only your way to God; Jesus is God's way to you. Every blessing that you receive today comes down that ladder; it comes through the Lord Jesus Christ. All of the blessings of God are in the Lord Jesus Christ. When you get Jesus, friend, you get a ladder that brings you to God and brings God to you. He is Jacob's ladder. That's what Jesus told Nathanael there in John (John 1:51), and that's what I'm telling you today.

I've had the resources of heaven ministered to me so many times. When I started out as a young man, God called me to preach. I never thought about what I would give up. I never thought about what I would gain. Neither one was an issue. It was just simply God had called me. I hear preachers talk about fighting the call to preach. That's unmitigated stupidity—stupidity. Who would ever fight the call of God? I'm infinitely honored that God gives me the privilege. And I'll tell you what He said to me. He said to me, "Adrian, if you'll follow me, if you'll trust me, I will meet your need." And, friend, he

has.

I started out. Joyce and I got married. We went off on our honeymoon with fifty dollars. I mean, that's all we had: fifty bucks. We had a wonderful honeymoon. It was fine. God took care of us. I went to school. I had a conviction she ought not to work, so she stayed at home while I was in school—four years of college and four years of seminary—well, three years of college, because we got married after our first year in college. I can remember there in college saying, “Lord, you’ve called me. You’ve got to supply.” And I did all kinds of things for jobs. One of the things I would do, I had a football scholarship, but I gave up the football scholarship because I wanted to pastor a little church. The little church couldn’t pay us but just a pittance. We had to work to do other things. I got a job working in the A & P, got a job stacking groceries and working in the meat market back there. I pawned myself off as a butcher. I didn’t know the difference between beef and pork, got back there in the meat market working. And then I worked in the cafeteria busing tables, carrying trays, and gathering the scraps off the table, so I could eat there in the cafeteria. We’d have to wait around for people to finish. And a man would be sitting there, and he hadn’t eaten his pudding yet, and I’d put my thumb in the pudding, and hold it up, and say, “Are you finished with this?” He’d say, “Yes,” and I’d put it on that thing and carry it off.

I came from the A & P one day. I had not had time to go to the school cafeteria to carry the dishes for my food, so I had to stop in a restaurant. I reached down in my pocket to see what kind of money I had to buy food with. I had twenty-three cents. I mean, that was it! That was it! Nothing else! I went in a restaurant, and I kept looking and looking. And I saw a cheese sandwich; it was twenty cents. I said, “I want a cheese sandwich.” They said, “Do you want anything to drink?” I said, “No ma’am, just water.” And she gave me that cheese sandwich. I reached in my pocket, and I looked: after I paid that, and I had two or three pennies. And, folks, that’s all I had—period. It was two or three pennies—that was it! But, folks, I want to tell you, that was enough—that was enough. I never ever went without. I came that close. I remember walking home, and I said, “Lord, that’s close. Hey, that’s getting down there to the very bottom.”

But I want to tell you, friend, I have learned what Jacob learned: that not only is Jesus my way to God, but God’s way to me. And He has said, “*I will never leave...nor forsake you*” (Hebrews 13:6)—“and I’ll take care of you, and I’ll meet all of your need.” And He has from that day to this, and He’ll meet yours also.

B. Jacob Has a New Consciousness of God

And here was this man out there in the wilderness wandering around, and God gave him a revelation of Himself. And so he sees this ladder. Now he has a new consciousness of God. Look, if you will, in verse 16 of this chapter, and he says, “*And Jacob awakened out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the LORD is in this place; and I*

knew it not.” (Genesis 28:16) You know, I think that’s one of the saddest things: for God to be somewhere and for you not to know it; the astronomer to look up at the stars and not know the One who hung them there; for the physicist to study the electrons and not worship the God who causes all things to consist; or for even a philosopher to study truth and not know the Lord Jesus, who is the truth; or for you to come in a place like this... And, folks, I want to tell you, whether you know it or not, God is here today—God is here today. Wouldn’t it be a sad thing for you to leave here and not to meet God? Jacob almost missed Him. *“Surely the LORD [was] in this place;”—he said—“and I knew it not.”*

When I was looking at this passage, it reminded me of a passage over there in Romans chapter 10, verses 8 through 13. And it reminds of what Jacob said when he said, *“Surely the LORD [was] in this place; and I knew it not.”* (Genesis 28:16) Here’s what Paul is saying in the book of Romans about salvation. He says, *“But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, 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 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. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”* (Romans 10:8–13)

You say, “Why does that passage remind you of what happened to Jacob?” Well, Jacob said, *“Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not.”* (Genesis 28:16) God was so near to him, but he didn’t know it. And I thought there may be somebody I’m preaching to today who’ll be in the same situation Jacob was. Here we are describing Jacob’s ladder, which is the Lord Jesus, the ladder where we go to God and God comes to us. But you may not know it. You may be oblivious to it. And yet you may be so close to it. Listen to what Paul said in the book of Romans. He said, *“The word is [near you], even in [your] mouth, and in [your] heart.”* (Romans 10:8) Now, folks, you can’t get more near than to be in your mouth and in your heart.

How close is God to you today? Well, God is closer to you today than the person sitting next to you. How close is God to you today? God is closer to you today than the clothes you wear. How close is God to you today? He’s in your mouth. “Oh,” you say, “don’t be silly, Adrian.” I’m not being silly. He’s in your mouth, and He’s in your heart. You say, “Does that mean I’m saved?” Not necessarily. You say, “Well now, wait a minute. How did God get in my mouth, and how did God get in my heart?” I put Him there. You say, “Adrian, you put Him there?” Yeah, I put Him there. You say, “Well, Adrian, how did you put God in my mouth and in my heart?” *“The word is nigh thee,*

even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach.”

(Romans 10:8) I just put Him there when I preached Him to you. I’m putting Him there right now. I’m putting Jesus Christ in your mouth, and I’m putting Jesus Christ in your heart.

You say, “Now, wait a minute. That sounds so silly.” Well, just stay with me. *“The word is [near you], even in [your] mouth, and in [your] heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach.”* (Romans 10:8) Now, once it’s there in your mouth and in your heart, what do you do with it? Are you ready for this? You believe with your heart, and you confess with your mouth, and you’re saved, see? “That if thou shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead”—“that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” (Romans 10:9) See how close you are to being saved? I mean, the Word—the Word—is now in your heart; the Word is in your mouth. Please, today, believe with your heart and confess with your mouth. *“Surely the LORD is in this place.”* (Genesis 28:16) The Lord is so near to you. Let Him be so dear to you. Open your heart and receive Him. And so here Jacob has this new consciousness with God.

C. **Jacob Has a New Communion with God**

And then he has a new communion with God. Look, if you will, here in this wonderful passage of Scripture, and he says in verse 16, *“And Jacob [awakened] out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.”* And that’s where you’re standing right now: at the gate of heaven. *“And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar,”*—that is, a place of worship—*“and poured oil upon the top of it.”* (Genesis 28:16–18)

Now this stone also represents the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the rock. The oil represents the anointing that is on the Lord Jesus Christ. Every Old Testament altar is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. And old Jake took that pillow of pain and made it a pillar of praise. And notice God is now with him. Look, if you will, in verse 19: *“And he called the name of that place Bethel: but the name of that city was called Luz.”* (Genesis 28:19) You know what *Luz* means? It means “separation.” That’s what it used to be: a place of separation. And now he calls this place Bethel. *Beth* means “house” or “gate,” and *el* means “God,” and it is the “gate” or the “house” of God. Now he is come to the place, the very house, the very gate of God. He has a Bethel, a place where he met the Lord.

Do you have a Bethel? I mean, do you have a place where you moved from separation to fellowship with God, that Luz has become Bethel? I have one. I was a teenage boy in West Palm Beach, Florida—football player, dumb, ignorant. If I’d have

taken a course in ignorance, I'd have flunked it. That's how dumb I was. I didn't know anything about the Bible, or God, or anything. My family was quasi-religious, but some dear folks came and invited my people to a revival meeting. I can see those folks coming up the driveway. I was out there in the yard doing yard work with my daddy. They stood there and visited with my dad. I saw my dad nod his head a couple of times—just neighbors come to talk to my daddy about Jesus and ask him to come to revival meeting. He said, "We're going to that church." We went down there. I was sitting there, and my dad sitting next to me—first time I ever remember sitting in church with my dad. The invitation was given, Phil, and my dad stepped out and went down the aisle. I couldn't believe it: "Dad's going forward?" I didn't think he was anti-God, for God, or anything else. I had no idea that it was even an issue. And my dad went forward—like a dagger in my heart.

I said, "Adrian, you need that. You need God." I went down there, and I can remember Northwood Baptist Church. They sat me down there on the front row. I wish they had given me more instruction. They didn't give me very much, but, boy, they were glad I came, because I'd been giving them a lot of trouble. And I mean, people, I don't want to brag on the past. And I've never smoked dope. I've never drunk liquor. I've never done those things. I thank God I went to the marriage altar a virgin. I thank God for all of that. I was just a street fighter, mean, foul-mouthed, school-skipping, parent-disobeying—that's the kind of kid I was. My dad went forward. I went forward. I gave all I knew of me to all I knew of Jesus. I've learned about both since that time. I've done far more repenting after I've gotten saved than I did before I got saved. But I got saved. I gave my heart to Jesus there.

The years have come and gone. One day I was in West Palm Beach, Florida. That church had been sold. A precious black congregation bought that church. The old auditorium was now being used as sort of a Sunday School classroom. But I went in and asked if I could go in there. They said yes. No one was with me. I went there to the place, and I tried to figure out how the building used to be, and I said, "Well, this would be the spot right here; that's where the pulpit used to be; this is the spot right there where I sat when I gave my heart to Jesus," and by myself just had a worship service, praising the Lord, thanking God that He saved a teenager. And that place of separation became the house of God for me.

I wonder if you have a Bethel. I wonder if you have a place. I wonder if Jesus is real to you. Jacob got away from God after that, and I got away from God. I didn't have the assurance that I ought to have. That's another story. I didn't get far away from Him, but I just didn't have that assurance. I got that assurance later on. But I really believe I was saved right there as a teenage boy in that church. I gave my heart to Jesus.

Conclusion

Now, folks, you're not going to believe this—or you probably will believe it—but I want you to have profound admiration for me this morning, because this is only one-third of my sermon, and I'm quitting. Right now I want to talk about the love that our Lord had for Jacob—and the first point was that He had a transforming love; the second point, a tough love; the third point, a tenacious love. I only got the first one: a transforming love. And you just didn't listen very fast today. But I want to tell you something: this is all God wants me to say this morning—that's all. I'll give you the rest some other time. But I want to tell you, failure is not final—failure is not final. God is a God of love, and God loved Jacob, not for what Jacob was, but for what God could make out of him. God loved me, not for what I was, but for what He could make out of me. And He loves you today.

Now, here's the redeeming factor, and I hope you'll not forget it. Listen very carefully. Listen now. God saw in Jacob something He never saw in Esau. Do you know what it was? He saw a hunger for Himself; He saw a hunger for God.

When I was a little boy—I mean, a real little kid; I mean five and six—I can tell you this much: I had a hunger for God. I didn't know how to be saved, but I had a hunger for God. And I believe that's the thing that God saw, and that's what God used. And God said, "That boy's such a failure, but he's got a hunger for me. And I love him, and I'm going to reveal myself to him."

Do you have a hunger for God? I'm here today to tell you that God loves you, and I'm here to tell you there's a ladder that goes from earth to heaven. His name is Jesus, who said, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life: [and] no man [comes] unto the Father, but by me.*" (John 14:6)

The Stairway to Heaven

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: July 19, 1981

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 28:10–22

“And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.”

GENESIS 28:12

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Introduction

Now Genesis chapter 28 and verse 10—Genesis chapter 28, verse 10: *“And Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went toward Haran. And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I*

have done that which I have spoken to thee of. And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not.” (Genesis 28:10–16)

I want to talk to you today about “The Stairway to Heaven”—“The Stairway to Heaven.” How many of you have sung that little song, “We are climbing Jacob’s ladder, every rung goes higher, higher”? Most of us have sat around a campfire and sung it somewhere. Or not long ago, I believe, our ladies’ chorus did that—did you not, Brother Tommy? Yes, on a Sunday night. And we sing it; we love to sing it, but many of us don’t know what it means. It’s just a pretty little melody: “Climbing Jacob’s Ladder,” whatever that is. But I want you to see in the story that I’ve just read to you a marvelous, marvelous picture of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. And we find it tucked away here in the book of Genesis. That’s one of the reasons I love the book of Genesis. It is the seedbed of all of the Bible, and wonderful spiritual gems and truths are given here in picture, prophecy, and type that tell us all that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. And pay attention, because there’s something very wonderful in the message today.

You know, *nature forms us; sin deforms us; education informs us; penitentiaries try to reform us; but only Jesus can transform us.* And if you’d like to be transformed, you can be transformed. You can be made brand new through the Lord Jesus Christ and through the wonderful saving gospel of our dear Savior. Now many people will be amazed that I’ll find a Savior in this passage, but I’m just going to guarantee you that Jesus is right here. Incidentally, *if you study the Bible and you don’t find Jesus, you’d better reread it, because standing somewhere in the shadows you’ll find Christ.* All of the Scriptures are about the Lord Jesus. The Old Testament says somebody is coming; the New Testament says somebody has come. The Revelation says somebody is coming again, and that somebody is the Lord Jesus Christ. And so, in this passage before us, I see a picture of the sinner, I see a picture of the Savior, and I see a picture of salvation. Let’s look and see.

Now, let me give you the background here before we go back to the scripture. Jacob, you remember, is the son of Isaac, and he has a twin brother, Esau. Now the last time we were together, we told you how Jacob outsmarted Esau, and connived and worked around until he got Esau to relinquish to him the birthright; that is, the birthright or the prerogatives that belong to the eldest son. The younger son—though they were twins, Jacob came out of the womb last. And so he, however, received the elder son’s portion, the birthright, and all the amenities that came with being the firstborn child. Of course, when Esau found out he had been outsmarted by Jacob, his brother, he was very angry with Jacob, his brother. And he said, in effect, to Jacob, “I’m going to kill you.” He said, “Well, we’re going to wait until Dad’s dead. First of all,” he said, “we’ll bury Daddy, and then I’m going to bury you.” And so Jacob, now, he’s fleeing from his brother. He’s out in the howling desert. He’s out alone in a place, just a place called Luz, which is just a God-

forsaken sort of place, and it's just a desert. He's there all by himself, and he is afraid for his life. And that's where we take up the scripture right now.

I. A Picture of the Sinner

Now I want you to see how Jacob pictures the unconverted man. Incidentally, I believe this is where Jacob got saved. I believe up until this time Jacob had known about God, but he had not known God. His father was a godly man; his grandfather was a godly man, but he wasn't a godly man. He was religious, but lost. And we come to the place here in this passage of Scripture when he says, "The Lord will be my God." (Genesis 28:21) I want to ask you a question today: Is He your God? I'm not asking, "Do you know about Him?" Can you say, "He is mine. I am His forever and forever"? Do you know Him personally? Have you been saved? Have you been converted? *The devil would just as soon send you to hell from the pew as from the gutter*. I want to know, have you been born again? Does God's Spirit bear witness with your spirit that you are a child of God? If not, hang on, pay attention, because you can leave this place today knowing that you know that your sin has been forgiven. Jacob, here, was an unsaved man, I believe, when he came to this episode. He was a saved man when he came through this episode. And I want you to see how he pictures unsaved man.

A. He Was Shrouded in Darkness

First of all, I want you to notice, in verse 11, that he was shrouded with darkness. The Bible says, in verse 11, "*And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set.*" (Genesis 28:11) Now it was sunset for this fellow. The sun had gone down, and he's there in darkness. Now this is speaking literally, but I believe the Bible puts it there that we might see figuratively also that here is Jacob in darkness. You know, the Bible speaks of the next day the sun rising and him being a changed man. So I believe that the Bible here is using the sun being set to show the darkness that every lost sinner's in, for the Bible says, "*The god of this world*"—that is, the devil—"*[has] blinded the minds of them [that] believe not.*" (2 Corinthians 4:4) Every man without the Lord Jesus is in darkness.

Some people like that darkness. That darkness is more comfortable to them than the light. Sometimes we laugh at a child for being afraid of the darkness, but I want to ask you a question. What's more ridiculous: a child afraid of the darkness, or a man afraid of the light? Jesus said some people hate the light and will not come to the light, because their deeds are evil. (John 3:20) But notice here, he was shrouded in darkness.

B. He Was Surrounded by Desert

But not only was he shrouded in darkness; he was surrounded by desert. Look again in verse 11: "*And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the*

sun was set; and he took the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep." (Genesis 28:11) Now, can you imagine a place so barren that the only thing you could find to sleep on was rocks? I've been over in Israel, and I want to tell you what Israel has a lot of: rocks, mister—a lot of them. And here was poor old Jacob—the only thing he could find to lay his head upon was a rock, a stone. How would you like a stone for a pillow instead of your Beautyrest? How would you like to have to put your head upon a pillow and lain down upon stones? He was in a desert place—a desert place. And there he was. I can imagine the coyotes howling in the distance. I can imagine some mournful owl hooting on a limb above him. I can imagine him lying there upon the hard ground, homesick, heartsick, fearful, afraid, in darkness. And the clouds are covering the moon, and there he is, trembling and afraid and alone. He's without God, without hope, without joy, without peace.

You know, sometimes people tell me it's hard to be a Christian. That's so ridiculous. Friend, think about old Jacob down here sleeping on stones, a rock for a pillow, and tell me it's hard to be a Christian. It's hard not to be a Christian. The Bible says, "*The way of [the transgressor] is hard.*" (Proverbs 13:15) What could be harder than a stone for a pillow? "*The way of [the transgressor] is hard.*" It's not hard to be a Christian. Jesus said, "*Come unto me, all ye [who] labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me...For my yoke is*"—what? What's the next word?—"easy, and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28–30) I've been preaching for thirty years. Two things I've never heard. Number one: I've never heard any Christian—true Christian, born-again Christian—say, "I'm sorry that I gave my heart to Jesus Christ." Number two—something I've never heard: I've never heard any person without the Lord Jesus Christ say, "I want to tell you how much the dear, sweet, old devil means to me." No, dear friend, listen. *I'd be a Christian if there were no heaven, if there were no hell. There are both, but if I had a thousand lives, I'd give every one of them to Jesus Christ.* Right? To know Christ in this life. It is the way of the transgressor that is hard.

C. He Is Sentenced with Death

But here he is—listen—here he is surrounded by darkness, here he is surrounded by desert, and here he is sentenced with death. You see, Esau is after him. That's the meaning of verse 10: "*And Jacob went out from Beersheba.*" (Genesis 28:10) Why did he go out from Beersheba? I'll tell you why he went out from Beersheba: because Esau had sworn that he was going to kill him. Look back, if you will, in the preceding chapter—chapter 27, verse 41: "*And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob.*" (Genesis 27:41) And here he is with the hounds of justice on his trail—here he is. I believe he pictures every unsaved sinner surrounded in darkness, surrounded by desert. Here he is sentenced with death,

a poor, lonely old boy, without God, without hope, out there in the wilderness. And so, to me, old Jacob pictures the sinner.

II. A Picture of the Savior

But not only is the sinner pictured; the Savior is pictured. Look, if you will now, in verse 12. While he's lying there, he finally goes to sleep. He looks up at the stars, yawns in the face of God, closes his eyes, and sleeps. But with a rock for a pillow, no wonder he dreams! *"And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it."* (Genesis 28:12) This is Jacob's ladder right here. He saw a ladder. The bottom of it was on the earth, and that ladder went up and up and up and up and up and up and up and up and up: all the way to glory it went. And God the Father was at the top of that ladder; the Lord was at the top of that ladder. And he saw angels coming down, and he saw angels going up. That's what he saw. He had a dream, and he saw this stairway to heaven, because the word translated "ladder" here is also translated "stairway"—"staircase," by some. What was it all about?

I heard about a boy who told his girlfriend, he said, "You know, I had a strange dream last night. In my dream, I dreamed that I proposed to you and asked you to marry me. What do you suppose that means?" She said, "I think it means that you have more sense when you're asleep than you have when you're awake."

Well, old Jacob had more sense when he was asleep than when he was awake, because while he was asleep, he had a glorious, marvelous vision: he saw this ladder going all the way to glory. And what was that ladder a picture of? No ifs, ands, and buts about it: it was a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You say, "How can you be so sure?" Well, turn to John chapter 1 with me. Just put your bookmark there in Genesis 28, and let's turn to John chapter 1. And there you're going to find the story of Jesus having a conversation with a man named Nathanael. And, you know, Jesus is calling His disciples. And we come to verse 47—John chapter 1, verse 47: *"Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him"*—this is John 1, verse 47—*"Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!"* (John 1:47)

Now, pay close attention. Remember, we're talking about Jacob in the Old Testament. Now Jacob's other name was what? Israel. His name finally changed to Israel, and every Israelite gets his name from Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel. But I want you to notice here that Jesus uses the name of Jacob twice in this verse. Or notice in verse 47: *"And Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite"*—that's once—*"indeed, in whom is no guile!"* (John 1:47) That's twice. For the word *guile* and the word *Jacob* are the same word. Did you know that?

What Jesus said: “Behold an Israelite in whom there is no Jacob.” You see, I told you the name *Jacob* means “conniver, con artist, thief, liar, supplanter, heel grabber.” And what Jesus is saying here is, “Nathanael, you’re an Israelite, but there’s no Jacob in you.”

Now that’s quite a compliment that Jesus gave to Nathanael. But I want you to continue to read here and notice the context now that Jesus is referring to Jacob. Evidently, he had Jacob in mind. *“Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel. Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these.”* Now, notice verse 51: *“And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.”* (John 1:48–51)

Now in the Old Testament the angels of God were ascending and descending upon a ladder; and in the New Testament Jesus said to Nathanael, “You’re going to see heaven open, and you’re going to see the angels of God ascending and descending upon me.” (John 1:51) Now, what’s He saying? What He is saying is very clear, very plain, if you can understand it: that that Old Testament ladder was an Old Testament prophecy of the New Testament Savior. Don’t you see it? That it just typifies, it just pictures, the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is the One upon which the angels ascend and descend. He is the link between heaven and earth. Jesus Christ is the One who connects heaven and earth. He is that ladder that reaches into glory.

Now, just keep that in mind, that we’re talking about Jesus, no ifs, ands, and buts about it, and go back now to Genesis chapter 28—go back to chapter 28. And I want to point out three things about this ladder to glory, okay?—this stairway to the stars. I want you to notice three things about the Lord Jesus Christ here that I see in this passage. Of course, there are many more.

A. The Reach of the Ladder

But, first of all, I want you to notice the reach of the ladder: *“And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven.”* (Genesis 28:12) That’s verse 12—Genesis 28, verse 12: *“the top of it reached to heaven.”* Do you remember back in Genesis, in the earlier part, when men tried to build *“a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven”* (Genesis 11:4)? Do you remember how ignominiously they failed and how they sat and wept and wailed among the ruins of their crumbled tower of blunders? You see, every man-made effort is destined to fail. No one can build into heaven. Oh, people try. They have all kinds of false religions, all kinds of man-made schemes, but they all utterly collapse; they all utterly fall.

I was grieved to read about that bridge that fell in the Hyatt Regency in Kansas City,

where 111 died when that man-made thing—a lot of engineering, a lot of money, a lot of beauty—collapsed. But anything that is made by man will ultimately collapse. And some have man-made religions. They are trying to climb to heaven by their man-made religion. But, mister, I want you to know, the higher they climb, the further they will fall. There's only one ladder that will reach all the way to heaven, and it is the Lord Jesus Christ. It reached to the top. Jesus said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."* (John 14:6) That's the reach of it. Oh, so many people are trying and climbing the wrong thing! Jesus said, "Anybody climbs up any other way, he's a thief and a robber." (John 10:1)

Bob Sorrell told about a businessman. That businessman wanted to be a success. He wanted to be the greatest; he wanted to achieve. And so he sacrificed his family. He sacrificed his health. He stepped on his business compatriots. He said, "I want to be at the top of the ladder. I want to be at the top of the ladder. I'm going to get to the top of the ladder." And he said, finally, one day, he was the success that he wanted to be. He was at the top of the ladder. He had achieved. He had reached his life's goal. It was then he discovered that the ladder was leaning against the wrong wall.

Some of you men are just like that. You're sacrificing everything. You want to be a success. And when you get to the top of your ladder, mister, you're going to find out it's a mighty short ladder—and, not only that, but it's leaning against the wrong wall.

B. The Reliability of the Ladder

Think of the reach of this ladder, and think not only about the reach of it, but think, if you will, about the reliability of it. Look in verse 13: *"And, behold, the LORD stood above it."* (Genesis 28:13) That means, mister, He's watching over it; that this is one way that you can count on. The mighty angels of God ascend and descend upon this ladder, because it is the reliable way, the only way, the God-given way. God is above this one ladder, and that's the only ladder that God is above. It's the only way to the Lord.

C. The Resources of the Ladder

But think not only of the reach of it, and the reliability of it, but think with me just a moment about the resources of it. Look again in verse 12, if you will—and the Bible says, *"And behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it."* (Genesis 28:12) Now, what are these angels of God going up and down for? Well, what do angels do? Well, just put in your margin Hebrews chapter 1, verses 13 and 14, and let me read it to you: *"But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"* (Hebrews 1:13–14) Do you know what the angels are? The angels are ministering spirits. And do you know that the angels are sent to minister to you? Did you know we have guardian angels? Did you know we have

serving angels? Did you know that we have angels that are coming to us and going from us back to the Father, ascending and descending Jacob's ladder, the Lord Jesus Christ? You see, dear friend, this ladder is a ladder of resource; not only a ladder of reach, and reliability, but resource. You see, God sends His resources to us by means of this ladder.

Now, pay attention—not only is Jesus the way in which I go to God, but Jesus is the way in which God comes to me. And God meets my needs through Jesus. And not an angel comes down from heaven except he comes through this ladder; not an angel goes back to heaven except he goes through this ladder. You see, this is the resource of this ladder. Listen, friend. I thank God for this ladder. Remember in Luke the sixteenth chapter where the poor man died, and the Bible says he *“was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom”* (Luke 16:22)? How did they carry him? Right up this ladder, right to the Lord Jesus Christ. All of the blessings we have come through the Lord Jesus Christ, because not only is this a stairway to the stars, but it is also a stairway to the storehouse. I mean, it is from God and through Christ that all of the blessings come. All of the promises of God find the *yea* and *amen* in the Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 1:20) You see, friend, you get God's riches through this ladder. It is the stairway to the Father.

And these angels, these ministering spirits, speak of the riches of our Lord. And some of the riches are listed here. Look at them here, continuing in verse 13: *“And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed”*—he's already told Abraham this. He's already told Isaac this. And now He tells Jacob this—*“and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.”* (Genesis 28:13–14)

Now, what do verses 13 and 14 tell us? That in this ladder are the promises; that is, the promises are in Christ. But not only are the promises there. Also I want you to notice: *“Behold, I am with thee”*—the presence is there. And not only is the presence there—*“I...will keep thee”* (Genesis 28:15)—the protection is there.

Now, what's He saying? He's saying, “Look, Jacob. You see this ladder that I'm over? My promises are wrapped up in this ladder. My presence is wrapped up in this ladder. My protection is wrapped up in this ladder.” This Old Testament visualization is a picture of the link between heaven and earth. Who is the link between heaven and earth? *“There is one God, and one mediator between God and men...Christ Jesus.”* (1 Timothy 2:5) He's the stairway to heaven. And I want to tell you, dear friend, that there is the reach of the ladder: it goes all the way to heaven. There is the reliability of the ladder: God is over it. There are the resources of the ladder: God's promises, God's

protection, God's presence are all wrapped up in the Lord Jesus Christ, for Jesus told Nathanael that this Old Testament vision was but a vision, a prophecy, of Himself.

III. A Picture of Salvation

And now I want you to look with me just a moment, thirdly and finally, not only at the sinner pictured—here's this poor old Jacob out there in the wilderness—and not only the Savior pictured—the ladder, which is a marvelous wonderful picture of Jesus, who said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life."* (John 14:6) And may I say, parenthetically, but not incidentally, that, friend, there is no other way. There are not two ladders in this picture, just one. *Jesus is not a good way to heaven. Jesus is not the best way to heaven. Jesus is the only way to heaven*—no ifs and buts about it. If you miss this ladder, you've missed it all. He is the way.

Are you climbing Jacob's ladder? I hope you are, friend. *"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."* (Acts 4:12) So we see the sinner pictured. So we see the Savior pictured. Now, let's see the salvation pictured, because on this night I believe that Jacob came to know the Lord personally. He knew about God—many of you know about God—but he came to know God. And how did he do it?

A. A Consciousness of God

First of all, there was a consciousness of God—a consciousness of God. Look, if you will, please, in verse 16: *"And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."* (Genesis 28:16–17) Jacob before, I say, had laid his head upon that rock, yawned in the face of God, and went to sleep. So far as he knew, God was 10,000 miles from that place. But then he had that vision, and he said, *"Surely the LORD is in this place."* (Genesis 28:16) Oh, a consciousness of God: no one is ever saved until first of all he has that consciousness of God, the reality of God.

And with that reality comes a holy reverence of God. Oh, we live in a world today that's so unconscious of the presence of God! The astronomer studies the stars, but he's not conscious of the God that hung them there. The physicist studies his electrons, but he's not conscious of the God that causes them to cohere. The philosopher talks about truth, and every now and then he may have a glimmer of truth, but he's not conscious of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the truth. Sometimes people come to church, and they listen to the choir, they listen to the sermon, they greet their friends, but they're not conscious of the presence of God. I want to tell you that God is here today. I want to tell you it would be a tragedy of tragedies for you to come to this place and leave this place without saying, *"Surely the Lord is in this place; God is here."* For Jesus said,

“Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” (Matthew 18:20) You don’t have to go off searching for God, mister. I want to tell you that God is here today.

I love that passage over there in Romans chapter 10, beginning in verse 8: *“What saith it? The word is [near] thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart...the word of faith, which we preach.”* (Romans 10:8) Let’s just turn to that passage there, if you will. Look at it here for a moment, as we think of recognizing the presence of God. Just turn with me to Romans chapter 10. Some of you thought, perhaps, God was way away from you. *“But what saith it?”*—Romans 10, verse 8—*“The word is [near] thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach.”* Do you know how close Jesus, who is the Word of God, is to you? He’s already in your mouth and already in your heart.

Now you’re not yet saved, but He’s there. You say, “How did He get in my mouth? How did He get in my heart? I don’t understand that.” I just preached Him in there. You see, it’s *“the word of faith, which we preach.”* (Romans 10:8) I just preached Him in there. Now the Christ that’s in your heart is waiting for you to believe on Him. The Christ that’s in your mouth is waiting for you to confess Him. That’s how close He is to you. Look: *“But what saith it? The word is [near] thee, 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”—He’s there; confess Him—“and shalt believe in thine heart”—He’s there; believe on Him—“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. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”* (Romans 10:8–13)

Pay attention to me today. I want to tell you on the authority of this book that, if you ask Jesus Christ to save you today, He will save you. *You show me any time, any place, anywhere where anybody asked Jesus Christ to save them*, in sincerity and truth, and He doesn’t do it, I’ll close this Bible and never preach again. Mister, the Bible says, *“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”* (Romans 10:13) The Lord is in this place. He is here—He is here. Do you know it? The Word is so close: it’s in your mouth; it’s in your heart. All you have to do is say, “I believe; I confess,” and you’ll be saved. Old Jacob finally had an awareness of the presence of God. He had a conception of the presence of God. He was cognizant of the presence of God.

B. A Conversion to God

But not only that: there was also a conversion to God. Go back, if you will now, to Genesis chapter 28. Number one: a consciousness of God. But that’s not enough—

that's not enough. He even trembled. He said, *"How dreadful is this place!"* (Genesis 28:17) And we need some more trembling in our day and our age. But notice, secondly, he had a conversion to God. I begin reading in verse 18: *"And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar,"*—that is, he made an altar out of it, made a memorial out of it—*"and poured oil upon the top of it. And he called the name of that place Bethel: but the name of that city was called Luz at the first."* (Genesis 28:18–19)

Do you know what the name *Luz* means? It means "separation." He was separated from God. And how typical and how instructive it was that here he was in a place of separation and then he saw the ladder, the staircase to heaven! He understood some spiritual truth. He understood that God had made a way for him and that the blessings of God were to be mediated to him. And he's now aware of God for the first time in his life. And so he changes the name of that place from *Luz* to *Bethel*.

And what does the name *Bethel* mean? It means "the house of God." That howling desert, that wilderness, that hard place, has now become for him the very house of God. And what a blessing, what a transformation, it was in his own heart and in his own life! *"And he called the name of that place Bethel: but the name of that city was called Luz at the first."* No longer is it the place of separation. Now it is the place of worship. Now it is the place of fellowship. Now it is the place of communion with God. Continue to read: *"And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God."* (Genesis 28:19–21) Oh, he is saying, "Now, dear God, now, dear God, you can be my God."

Now some people think that Jacob was driving a bargain with God, saying, "God, if you'll do this, I'll do that," but the word *if* also can mean "since," and I believe that's what it means here: "Since you are going to do this for me, God, since you're going to take care of me, since you meet every need, because you do—not if you will, but because you do—then you're going to be my God." He's converted.

Not only was it a new morning; he was a new man. Heaven above was a brighter blue and earth beneath was a sweeter green. He had been saved. He had been born again. He comes to the place where he says, "God is my God. I'm no longer separated. No longer is this *Luz*; it is *Bethel*. No longer separation; now a house of God. Hallelujah! I've found a way! There's a stairway to the stars!" And now God becomes his God, and God is real to him.

C. A Commitment Through God

And because of that consciousness of God, and because of that conversion to God, there comes a commitment through God. Look, if you will, in verse 22, and he says, *"And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou*

shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.” Here’s the second reference to tithing in the Bible: *“Of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.”* (Genesis 28:22) Now, listen. He didn’t get saved because he gave; he started giving because he got saved. What a transformation this is! There was no law at this time that said that Jacob had to tithe. Tithing was a part of the Levitical law that would come later. There was just something in his heart that said he wanted to give. There was just something that welled up in him.

Now, keep this in mind: up until this time, do you know what the motto of Jacob had been? “Get.” He was the great getter, remember? I mean, the very name *Jacob* means “grabber, grasper, conniver, cheater, con artist.” His one great passion was to get: as we said before, “Get all you can, can all you get, and sit on the lid, and poison the rest.” That was the way he felt. I mean, buddy, that’s the way old Jake lived. But now something has happened to him, and he goes from a spirit of getting to a spirit of giving. He was like Zacchaeus, that old skinflint in the New Testament, that half-pint tax collector who was out on a limb without Him. And remember, when Zacchaeus got saved, he said, *“Behold...the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by [extortion]”—“false accusation”—“I restore to him fourfold.”* (Luke 19:18)

When a man gets saved, he wants to give. One man was complaining at a preacher for preaching on giving. He said, “Give! Give! Give! That’s all I ever hear you preach.” And the pastor said, “Thank you for the best definition of Christianity I’ve ever heard.” *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.”* (John 3:16)

And I want you to see this transformation that takes place in the life of Jacob. First of all, there’s a consciousness of God: God becomes real to him. And there’s a reverence: *“How dreadful is this place!”* (Genesis 28:17) And then there’s a conversion to God: “This God will be my God.” (Genesis 28:21) And then there’s a commitment for God: “I’m going to start life on a different principle now: not getting, but giving; wanting to be used, and wanting to be a blessing to other people.” (Genesis 28:22)

Conclusion

Do you have a Bethel? I have a Bethel. Some years ago, I went back to the church where I was saved. I went in by myself. I was saved at Northwood Baptist Church in West Palm Beach, Florida. They had an old auditorium, and then they built a new auditorium, very much like we have the Lee Auditorium and now we have this marvelous, beautiful sanctuary. Only the old auditorium at Northwood Baptist Church, they made a dining hall out of it, a fellowship hall. But I went in there, and I looked around. No, I guess it’s more like an adult class area; that’s what it is, not a dining hall. But they’ve taken the pews out, they’ve moved the pulpit and the other things; but you

could tell where those places had been.

I went in there by myself, and I walked over and I stood in that spot that I was standing when God the Holy Spirit put His finger on my heart and showed me that I was a lost sinner, when my daddy first stepped out to give his heart to Christ in a revival meeting. I stood there for a while. Then I went forward, and I stood over there at that place where they shook my hand when I came forward. I tried to remember what they said to me. And then I looked at that spot right there, and I said, “I believe this is about the spot,” and I got on my knees. Oh, it had been maybe thirty years since I’d found Christ as a little teenage boy—since He found me, really. It’s not nearly so important as I received Him as that He received me; not that I found Him, but that He found me. And I don’t mind telling you, the tears came to my eyes, and even now they do, as I think of what the Lord did in the heart of a teenage boy, as I gave my hand to my pastor and gave my heart to Jesus Christ. I have a Bethel.

Do you have a Bethel? Is there a place where you met God? Is there a place where you said, “Surely the Lord will be my God. I am His and He is mine”? Are you climbing Jacob’s ladder? Do you realize that Jesus is the stairway to heaven? Have you received Him? But not only is He your way to God; He’s God’s way to you. And, friend, every blessing that you receive you’ll receive as the angels go up and down that ladder to bring God’s blessings to you. Do you know Jesus? Are you saved? Are you born again? I’m not asking you, have you joined somebody’s church? I’m not asking you, have you been baptized somewhere?” I’m asking, does God’s Spirit bear witness with your spirit that you are a child of God? I’m asking you, do you have a Bethel? Do you have a Bethel? Has your Luz been turned to Bethel? Has your separation been turned to communion? That place was called, for Jacob, the gate to heaven.

Over in London, years ago, there used to be a nightclub called “The Gates of Hell.” And a young man wanting to go to that nightclub and not knowing where it was came to a policeman on the street, and he said to the policeman, “Can you tell me, sir, how to get to the Gates of Hell?” The policeman thought for a while, and he realized that the nightclub was just a few doors beyond an old historic church called Calvary Church. And this is what the policeman said to the young man—he said, “Yes sir, go right past Calvary, and you’ll come to the Gates of Hell.”

Friend, that’s what will happen to you too if you miss Calvary: go right past Calvary, and you’ll come to the gates of hell. But come to Calvary, and you’ll come to the gate of heaven, the Lord Jesus.

A Battle You Cannot Afford to Win

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: September 20, 1981

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 32

“And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.”

GENESIS 32:28

Outline

Introduction

- I. Jacob: A Defended Man
- II. Jacob: A Distressed Man
- III. Jacob: A Defeated Man
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- IV. Jacob: A Dependent Man
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Conclusion

Introduction

Now, open your Bibles, please, to Genesis chapter 32, as we continue our study through the book of Genesis—Genesis chapter 32. The title of the message today is “The Battle You Cannot Afford to Win.” Now many of us don’t want to lose, but there’s one battle that I hope you’re going to lose, and I’ll be talking to you about it. Now you know we’re studying Jacob. Last Sunday we studied Jacob and Jacob’s ladder, and you remember what Jacob’s ladder was a picture of: the Lord Jesus Christ, who said, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”* (John 14:6) And so, last week, we saw how Jacob came to know the Lord, where he said, “This God will be my God.” (Genesis 28:21) So, last week, we talked about how God saved Jacob. This week, we’re going to be talking about how God sanctified Jacob.

Well, you see, when God saves us, He’s not finished with us. The Bible says, in Philippians chapter 1 and verse 6, *“He [who] hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”* (Philippians 1:6) And remember what the name *Jacob*

means. It means “con artist.” It means “cheat.” It means “liar.” It means “crook.” Remember when Jesus saw Nathanael coming, there in the early chapters of John, and Jesus looked at Nathanael, and He said, *“Behold an Israelite...in whom [there] is no guile!”* (John 1:47) And that word *guile* is the same word that’s translated “Jacob.” *“Behold an Israelite...in whom [there] is no [Jacob].”* The word, the name, *Jacob* means “guile, deceiver, cheat, con artist, gyp, liar, twister, conniver.” And that’s exactly what he was, ladies and gentlemen. And yet he was saved. But, oh, he had so much of this old man in him. He had so much of the old ways in him that God needed to deal with.

And pay attention, because there’s a little Jacob in all of us. Pay attention today so we can understand how God dealt with Jacob, because how God dealt with Jacob, in many ways, is how God deals with us. You see, this is not just what God has said; this is what God is saying. Now, had we been there, and had we chosen, we would probably have chosen Esau rather than Jacob. From outward appearance, Esau looked a little more redeemable than Jacob did. But the Bible says, “Jacob have I loved. Esau have I hated.” (Malachi 1:2–3) Why did God love Jacob? Pay attention, because it’s the same reason He loves you. God did not love Jacob for what he was, but for what He knew He could make out of him. For in spite of all of his faults, Jacob had a heart for God. Do you?

Secondly, I want you to pay attention that God did not change Jacob so that He could love him; He loved Jacob in order to change him. And I’m so glad that God loves us today. With all of our weaknesses and with all of our faults, God sees something in us that He wants to make out of us. And so He just loves us, and He keeps working with us. Thank God for His infinite, marvelous patience.

And Jacob now has been away from home for twenty years. Now, remember, he left home under very extenuating circumstances. He had cheated his elder brother Esau out of the birthright. Now he’s on the lam; he’s running from Esau, for Esau had given a threat. Esau said, “First we’re going to bury Daddy, and then I’m going to bury you, Jake.” And so Jacob decided he’d just saturate that place with his absence, and he got out of there. And he’s gone now, and he’s been gone for twenty years. And that whole twenty years he’s been going through what I call “the school of hard knocks.” And as a matter of fact, the Lord arranged it that Jacob would end up with his uncle, Laban.

Now Laban was just like Jacob. As a matter of fact, it’s kind of humorous when you read it, because it’s the story of cheat cheating cheat. Laban is dealing with Jacob, and Jacob is dealing with Laban, and God knew just where to put Jacob. You know, God is very wise where He puts us. He puts us into the circumstances that we find ourselves in because He wants to show us what we are and to bring things out of us that we never knew were there. God knows just where to place us in order to prune us, doesn’t He?

And so here’s where Jacob finds himself. Now Jacob, remember, Jacob was saved.

He had met the Lord. He said, “This God is my God.” (Genesis 28:21) But, oh, he’s been having a hard time. And now Jacob is going back home, and he’s got to meet Esau. He knows he has to. Every man has enough sense to know he cannot be totally right with God until he’s right with his brother. And so he’s got to go back now, and he’s got to meet Esau.

And that’s the situation that Genesis chapter 32 begins in. And so, let’s look now in Genesis chapter 32 and begin reading in verse 1: “*And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God’s host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim,*” (Genesis 32:1–2) which means “the place of two hosts,” or “the place of two armies.”

I. **Jacob: A Defended Man**

Now the first thing I want you to notice about Jacob is that he is a defended man—a defended man. While he’s going home, God sends His angel host to watch over him and to defend him, and he has an angel escort. Now part of the way he’d not seen these angels, and now these angels manifest themselves. They materialize, and he sees these unseen guardians. You know, the Bible teaches us, in the book of Hebrews, that angels are ministering spirits sent by God to minister to those of us who are heirs of salvation. (Hebrews 1:14) You remember he’d seen those angels going up and down that ladder. And now he sees these angels again. They appear to him to teach him that God is with him. And he names that place “two hosts” or “two armies.” There’s that seen host that he could see, and then he realized there was that great unseen host, the heavenly host. Aren’t you glad that “*the [angels] of the LORD [encamp] round about those that fear him*” (Psalms 34:7)?

In preparation for this message I got down that little book by Billy Graham called *Angels*, and I read. Billy Graham told a particular story there about John Paton, who was a missionary to the Hebrides. And John Paton said that there in the Hebrides Islands on one particular night all of the natives had risen up against the missionary compound there, and they’d made up their mind that they were going to burn down the missionary compound and they were going to murder the missionaries. John Paton and his wife were inside their little modest cottage, and they prayed all the night long that God would protect them and that God would deliver them. And they could hear all of the goings on outside, but the night went on through. And finally the dawn came, and when the sun arose, those who would do them harm just disappeared back into the village and back into the jungle.

Later, the chief of this native tribe was converted and came to Jesus. And John Paton said, “Were you in that group that was outside our mission compound that night?” And the chief said, “Yes, I was.” He said, “Did you mean to kill us?” He said, “Yes, we

did.” He said, “Well, why did you not attack?” And the chief said, “Well, who were all of those men?” Paton said, “What men?” He said, “There were hundreds of them all around your cottage, and all of them wearing shining garments, all of them with swords in their hands. Who were they?” Paton said he realized that God had sent his guardian angels that night. *“The [angels] of the LORD [encamp] round about them that fear him.”*

II. Jacob: A Distressed Man

And so here is Jacob. He’s God’s man. He’s been saved. And God has given him promises, and God has promised to take care of him. Though he is a defended man, he is a distressed man. Notice, if you will, beginning in verse 3: *“And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother unto the land of Seir, the country of Edom. And he commanded them, saying, Thus shall ye speak unto my lord Esau”—*boy, he’s changed his tune now, hasn’t he? I want you to see this fellow. Boy, he turns on the Dale Carnegie, and—*“my lord Esau; Thy servant Jacob…”*—his philosophy is always, “Speak well of your enemies; after all, you made them.” And, brother, he did. He’s softening up ol’ Esau—*“Thy servant Jacob saith thus, I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed there until now: and I have oxen, and asses, flocks, and menservants, and womenservants: and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find grace in thy sight. And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, We came to thy brother Esau”—*now this isn’t exactly what Jacob was wanting to hear—*“and...he cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him.”* Here comes Esau with blood in his eye and an army of four hundred strong men. And then I want you to notice verse 7: *“Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed”—“distressed.”* (Genesis 32:3–7) Jacob, a defended man, is Jacob, a distressed man.

And in spite of the fact that God has said He will be with him, in spite of the fact that God has sent His angel army to watch over him, now old Jacob turns back, and he starts to tremble; he starts to be afraid. He puts his eyes upon circumstances rather than keeping his eyes upon the Lord, and that old mind of his starts to work again; his mind starts to connive. And so I want you to notice what he does, beginning in verse 7: *“Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed: and he divided the people that was with him, and the flocks, and herds, and the camels, into two bands; and said, If Esau come to the one company, and smite it, then the other company which is left shall escape.”* Do you see how his mind worked? Right away, he says, “Now half of you get over there, and half of you get over here. And if he attacks here, then we’ll save this. If he attacks here, then we’ll save this.” You see, he decided that half of something was better than all of nothing. And so his mind is working. Oh, he’s very clever. And then after he takes care of those logistics, then he says, “Oh, yes, and I’d better pray also.” So in verse 9: *“And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord*

which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee: I am not worthy of the least of [thy] mercies,” (Genesis 32:7–10) and so forth. And then he prays a good prayer. But do you notice how his mind starts to scheme first, and then he prays? Prayer, with him, is not the first thought; it is the last resort. I mean, he schemes first, and then he prays.

Has prayer been a last resort for you? One person asks a woman, “Where did you get your husband?” She said, “I met him in the travel agency. He was the last resort.” Well, is prayer your last resort rather than your first thought?

That’s the way Jacob was. It wasn’t that he didn’t believe in prayer, but it wasn’t, dear friend, that he didn’t believe in trying to arrange things also. And so he kind of makes a sandwich out of this prayer. First of all, he arranges his flocks, his herds, his families. He gets everything all spread out. Then he prays. And then he goes back to public relations. He starts to send Esau gifts. As a matter of fact, he takes 580 valuable animals, and he sends them in droves and flocks of five. First, he sends some, and a little message, to Esau. And then he waits a while, and then he sends some more, and a little message. And then some more—five times, just to soften him up.

You see how his mind is working? You see how he’s thinking? You see how he’s planning? Here he is a very distressed man. Now it’s not that he doesn’t believe in God. He’s saying, “Lord, I trust you.” But how hard it is for the old man to give up!

III. Jacob: A Defeated Man

Now the third thing I want you to see about Jacob. First of all, he is a defended man: the Lord is going to take care of him anyway. Secondly, however, he’s a distressed man: he just can’t let go and let God. Now, thirdly, I want you to see he is a defeated man—a defeated man. Look in verses 22 and following: “*And he rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two womenservants, and his eleven sons, and passed over the ford Jabbok.*” That means the river Jabbok. “*And he took them, and sent them over the brook, and sent over that he had. And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against them*”—that is, “when the man saw that he prevailed not against Jacob, the man”—“*touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob’s thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him.*” (Genesis 32:22–25) Jacob: a defeated man.

Now I want you to see what God did with Jacob. Now, remember that God is working on Jacob. He never stops working on him, because when He saves us, dear friend, we’re then, from then on, under construction. And so here’s Jacob. He finally is alone. Now he’s afraid. I’m certain he’s afraid. He doesn’t know what’s going to happen. He’s done the best he can do, and he’s also prayed, and now he’s over there by himself.

And I want you to see where God brought him.

A. **A Place of Isolation**

First of all, God brought him to a place of isolation, because verse 24 says he was alone. (Genesis 32:24) And, you know, that's so hard for God to bring us just to the place of isolation so we can be still and know that He is God. (Psalms 46:10) Do you know what the carnal man wants to do? He wants to stay busy. He doesn't want to get alone with God. He really doesn't. He wants to be surrounded by his friends. He wants to be surrounded by his business. When he's home, he wants that television on all of the time. If the television can't be on, he wants a radio on. And if he can't be sitting by the radio, he'll go around with an earplug stuck in his ear. He does not want to be alone with God, because it bothers him to be alone. And, oh, how God wants us to come to the garden alone! How God wants us to come to this place of isolation!

B. **A Place of Confrontation**

And finally God brought Jacob to a place of isolation, that He might bring him to a place of confrontation. Look again, if you please, in verse 24. And the Bible says he *“was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him.”* (Genesis 32:24) That doesn't say he wrestled with a man. The man wrestled with him. That is, Jacob, he's lying down, perhaps trying to go to sleep, and suddenly he's pounced. Have you ever been pounced? I mean, there he is out there in the wilderness and thinking about Esau all of the time. And just all of the sudden out of the darkness there comes a man and puts a hold on him, and a wrestling match starts.

Who is this man? Hosea tells us that it was the angel of the Lord. (Hosea 12:4) And Jacob, when he finished this wrestling match, said, *“I have seen [the Lord] face to face.”* (Genesis 32:30) Do you know who he was wrestling with? The Lord. Not an ordinary angel: this was the angel of Yahweh, the angel of Jehovah. It was a pre-incarnate appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ. Here is Jacob wrestling with Christ, but the emphasis is not on Jacob wrestling with Christ; it is Christ wrestling with Jacob, because, you see, it was the Lord that initiated this wrestling match. And it's not what Jacob was trying to get from the Lord; it's what the Lord is trying to do with Jacob. And if you don't understand that, you'll miss the emphasis. It was the Lord that started this particular battle. And so the Lord is wrestling with Jacob.

C. **A Place of Desperation**

So He brought him to a place of isolation, that He might bring him to a place of confrontation. Why? That He might bring him to a place of desperation. Look here. And the Bible says, *“And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint.”* (Genesis 32:24–25)

He said, in effect, “Jake, I hate to do this to you, son,” but he reached in and touched him right there on the ball and socket, and put his thigh out of joint. And anybody who’s done any wrestling knows that a wrestler depends upon his legs. These are the strongest muscles. Here’s where the strength is. And what God did was to touch him right in the strongest place; not in the point of his weakness, but at the point of his strength. He disabled him. He wiped him out. He’s defeated. As a matter of fact, he’s so defeated that not only can he not wrestle; he can’t even run, not even “fight or flight.” And if Esau comes, he can’t even “pick ’em up and put ’em down.” I mean, he is completely debilitated. The Lord brought him there to this place of isolation, to bring him to this place of confrontation, to bring him to this place of desperation. He is now a defeated man. He has lost the wrestling match.

IV. Jacob: A Dependent Man

Now I want you to see, not only is he a defeated man, but the defeated man becomes a dependent man. Look in verse 26: “*And he said, Let me go...*”—that is, the Lord said to Jacob—“*Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said*”—Jacob said—“No sir, I’m not going to let you go. I’m not going to let you go unless you bless me.” (Genesis 32:26) That’s very interesting. I mean, now he’s completely weakened. He can’t do anything. If he were wrestling with another man—even a human—the human could get away. But here he’s wrestling with the Lord.

Now, people, don’t you think that angel could have gotten away if He’d really wanted to? I mean, be reasonable. Here’s the angel saying, “Let me go,” and Jacob’s saying, “I won’t let you go.” I want you to learn something here that you need to understand. When the angel said to Jacob, “Let me go,” the angel was thinking in his heart, “I surely hope he doesn’t”—“I hope he doesn’t.” You see, the angel didn’t want to get away. Now you’re going to have to learn something about how God works. Many times God will appear as though He wants to go from us, as though He does not want to hear us, as though He does not want to bless us. And if you deal with God just on the surface, and God says, “Let me go,” and you let Him go, you’re going to miss a blessing that you could have had.

Do you remember reading there in the Gospels about that Syrophenician woman who lived down there on the seacoast—the wicked Phoenician people? Here was a woman. She wasn’t a Jewess. She had no claim, really, upon Israel’s Messiah. But Jesus was there, and she comes to Him, and she says, “Oh, Jesus, have mercy! My daughter is vexed with a devil.” And do you know what Jesus said to her? Jesus said, “Do you think that I’m going to take the children’s bread and give it to dogs?” My goodness! What would most of us have done if He’d said that to us? We would have said, “Well, I don’t guess so. So long. Goodbye.” Do you know what she said? Her chin

started to quiver. I suppose her eyes welled with tears. And she said, “That’s right. I have no right to the children’s bread, but,” she said, “even the dogs”—and she uses a different word for dogs than Jesus used the first time. The first time He used a word that meant “household pet,” but she uses another word which means “yellow, mangy, back-alley dog”—“even that kind of dog gets the crumbs that fall from the children’s table.” And Jesus’ heart of compassion broke, and He said, “Woman, great is your faith. It will be done.” (Matthew 15:21–28; Mark 7:25–30) Jesus was testing her, wasn’t He?

Or do you remember there the story of the parable that Jesus told in Luke 18, where there’s a widow that comes to an unjust judge, and she asks for things, and he won’t hear her, but she keeps on asking, and finally Jesus said, “And though he will not hear for one reason, he does hear for her inopportunity”? And the Bible says, in Luke 18:1, “*He spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.*” (Luke 18:1) It’s not that God is unjust. No, that’s not the point. The point that Jesus is making there is we need to get hold of God and say, “God, I’ll not let you go unless you bless me.”

Do you remember the story of those two disciples on the road to Emmaus? They were going on after the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. They were walking along, halfhearted, heartbroken, doubting, unbelieving, discouraged, not knowing whether Jesus was really risen or not, and Jesus Christ Himself came and joined Himself with them. And they are walking along now, the three of them, on the road to Emmaus. And He is reasoning with them and talking with them out of the Scriptures. And then the Bible says Jesus made as if He would go on further, but they constrained Him and said, “Please stay with us,” and He did. (Luke 24:28–29) He acted like He wanted to go on, but what He really wanted to do was to stay. But He would not have stayed had they not constrained Him to stay with them.

Do you remember when Elisha said to Elijah, “I want a double portion of the spirit that rests upon you,” and Elijah said, “Well, if you’re with me when I’m taken up, you’ll have it.” (2 Kings 2:9–10) And from that time on, Elisha stuck to Elijah like glue on fly-paper. I mean, he was with him, and Elijah said to Elisha, “Go back now. I’m going somewhere, some other place.” And Elisha said, “Where you go, I’ll go.” (2 Kings 2:2–6) And then they went to another place, and then Elijah said to Elisha, “Now, you stay here. I’m going somewhere else.” Elisha said, “Listen, mister. Wherever you go, I’ll go.” He had eyes for the man of God and wouldn’t take his eyes off Elijah. And it seemed as though Elijah was trying to discourage Elisha. But he wasn’t. He was testing him. And when the angel of the Lord said to Jacob, “*Let me go,*” (Genesis 32:26) friend, you have to understand that, in the heart of the angel, the angel did not want him to let Him go.

Have you let go of God too easily? Have you? Oh, friend, listen, God wants us to come to that place of total, absolute dependence upon Him, where we say, “I will not let

you go unless you bless me.” Most of us have never come to that place. Most of us still have enough Jacob in us to say, “Well, we hope He’ll bless us, but if He doesn’t, we’ll figure out a way. We’ll figure out a way somehow.” Our whole mind will start to work again.

But, you see, God had brought Jacob to such a place of desperation; it’s the place that He wants to bring every one of us to. As Paul said in the book of Philippians, we are those who *“have no confidence in the flesh.”* (Philippians 3:3) Do you know what most of the people in America want to learn? Self-confidence. Isn’t that right? Self-confidence. Man, you go into any bookstore, and there will be a wall of books on self-confidence. I imagine most of us have been guilty of telling to our kids, “Now you’ve got to have some self-confidence there.” It sounds so good that to speak against self-confidence sounds un-American. But, ladies and gentlemen, I’m here to tell you that is the one thing we don’t need, is self-confidence. Right away your mind threw up a wall to, “Oh, yes, we do”—“yes, we do.” Everybody wants that self-confidence. We’ve been taught everywhere we’ve got to have self-confidence.

Paul says, *“[We] have no confidence in the flesh.”* (Philippians 3:3) I’m not saying you ought not to have confidence, but, friend, if you’re going to have confidence, then you just have it in Jesus—in the Lord. It doesn’t mean that you’re going to go around like a doormat. You go around like a real person. You will really have confidence. You talk about a confident person! What about a man like the apostle Paul, who said, *“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me,”* (Philippians 4:13) because the apostle Paul had come to this place where he said, *“[I] have no confidence in the flesh.”*

That’s exactly where He wanted to bring ol’ Jacob. Here was Jacob, a defended man—God was taking care of him; but a distressed man, trying to do it himself; now a defeated man, that God brings him to the end of himself, that he ought to become a dependent man, that he might say, “God, I can’t, and I’m not going to let you go except you bless me. I have no hope.”

You say, “Well, Brother Rogers, my problem is not like Jacob. I’m not a con artist. I’m not a deceiver.” Well, maybe not; maybe that’s not where your confidence is. Maybe your confidence is in your business ability. Maybe your confidence is in your physical strength. Maybe your confidence is in your personality. Maybe your confidence is in your ability to preach. Maybe your confidence is in your ability to sing. Maybe your confidence is in your ability to play the violin. Where is it? I’m not saying that God will take those things from you, ladies and gentlemen. But I’m saying that God will not allow you to be successful as a Christian if your confidence is anywhere else except in Him. And, “I will not let thee go except thou dost bless me. Lord, you’re my only hope. No longer am I mine. No longer my ability, no longer my scheming. I need you. God, without you I am sunk.”

Have you ever come to that place? God wants to bring us to that place. He wants to bring us to that place of isolation, that He might bring us to that place of confrontation, that He might bring us to that place of desperation, that He might bring us to that place of dependency—totally, completely, dependent upon the Lord. Here is a man who is a dependent man.

V. **Jacob: A Different Man**

Now, let me say, finally, this dependent man becomes a different man. Look, if you will, in verses 27 and following. Now, in verse 26, he says, “I’ll not let you go, except you bless me.” And I want you to notice the transformation, in verse 27: *“And he said unto him, What is thy name?”* That is, the angel of Jehovah, the pre-incarnate Christ, says to him, *“What is thy name?”* *“And he said, Jacob.”* (Genesis 32:26–27) Remember the last time we read about him being asked that: “What is your name?” What did he say? “My name is Esau.” He lied to his father, Isaac. He wouldn’t admit who he was. Old liar. “My name is Esau,” he said, and he deceived his blind father, Isaac. But now he tells the truth. “My name,” he says, “is Jacob.”

Now, remember, the name *Jacob* is more than a name. It has a meaning. He said, “My name is”—what?—“guile.” “My name is conniver.” “My name is supplanter.” “My name is grabber.” “My name is con artist.” He admitted it. Now, when the angel asked him for his name, the angel wasn’t asking for information; the angel was asking for a confession. The angel knew whom He was wrestling with. Now Jacob may not have known whom he was wrestling with to begin with, but I’ll guarantee you, the Lord knows all things. And so, when the Lord asked him, “What is your name?” He was really asking Jacob, that he might confess it. And so, when the angel asks his name, and he says, “My name is Jacob,” I want you to notice in verse 28: *“And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel.”* (Genesis 32:28) He becomes now a different man.

“Now, wait a minute. I thought he lost this wrestling match, and now we find out that he won it? How did he win it?” He won it by losing. He finally prevailed when he came to the end of himself. And God changes his name from Jacob to Israel. And *Israel* means “prince with God; one who overcomes”: power with men, and power with God. Oh, how God blessed this man! But God had to break him in order to bless him. And God had to cripple him in order to crown him.

Let me tell you something about God. If you study the Bible, you’re going to find out that God delights in using broken things. Now we throw broken things away as useless most of the time, but God really never uses something until first of all He breaks it. We read there in the book of Jeremiah where Jeremiah says, *“Break up your fallow ground.”* (Jeremiah 4:3) Why does God want the ground broken up? Because He wants a crop. That’s why. We read there in the book of Judges where God told Gideon to break the

pitcher. Remember, Gideon had the lamp inside the pitcher, and God said, “Break the pitcher,” because it wasn’t until the pitcher was broken that the light would shine. (Judges 7:17–19) My light will not shine until I’m broken. Remember when Mary came to anoint Jesus? She had an alabaster box of ointment, and the Bible says she broke it, and when she broke it, that sweet perfume filled the house. (Mark 14:3)

Oh, dear friend, people are not going to see the sweetness of the Lord Jesus in my life until I’m broken. Do you remember when Jesus fed the five thousand? And the Bible says that He took those loaves and those fish, and He broke them and blessed them. (Matthew 14:19) You see, He breaks them in order to bless them. And He blesses them in order to feed the multitude. And if you want to be blessed, you’ve got to be broken—and if you want your life to be a service to mankind. David said, “*A broken and a contrite [spirit]...thou wilt not despise [O God].*” (Psalms 51:17) Jesus said, “*This is my body, which is broken for you.*” (1 Corinthians 11:24) You see, Jacob knew brokenness, that he might know blessedness. He becomes a different man.

Did you know that God has to break us all in order to use us? But let me tell you something right here. You’re saying, “Oh, my goodness, Brother Rogers! I’d like to have the result, but I’m not too keen about the process.” Did you know that God doesn’t have to bring calamity into your life to break you? Did you know that? Did you know there’s a verse of Scripture that says, if we’ll judge ourselves, we’ll not be judged? (1 Corinthians 11:31) That means you can say, “Never mind, Lord. I’d just rather do it myself.” Did you know that if your heart is right, you can just take this Word, and this Word will break you? Did you know that? Did you know that if your heart is right, and if you’re not mulish and stubborn, the Spirit of God can just break you? Did you? Why go through all that ordeal, dear friend? Why not just say, “Never mind, Lord. I’ve got the thought. I’ve got the idea. Forgive my arrogance. Forgive my willfulness. Forgive my selfishness. Forgive the Jacob that’s in me. Oh, God, I’ll not let you go unless thou dost bless me”? You can save yourself a lot of wrestling, folks.

I want to tell you, there’s no blessedness without brokenness, no matter how it comes—no matter how it comes. Many of us have never been broken. We sit in church haughty, unbent, unbroken, proud. “*These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him,*” and number one on the list is “*a proud look.*” (Proverbs 6:16–17) Oh, we’ve never seen ourselves as God wants us to see us.

The Bible, over in the book of Hebrews, makes a wonderful commentary on this. Turn to Hebrews chapter 11, if you will, for a moment—Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 21. Here’s an interesting verse—Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 21. The Bible says, “*By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon his staff.*” (Hebrews 11:21) Now, why was he leaning upon his staff? Because he’d been crippled. And he was a branded man. I mean, he kept this the rest of his life. Everywhere

he went, he went with a crutch. And when he was dying, brother, his salvation was real on his deathbed. And all of his life he worshipped leaning.

Do you know what Jacob had learned? I suppose if he had it in a song today, he'd sing, "Learning to lean, learning to lean, I'm learning to lean on Jesus." That staff that God gave him the rest of his life was a reminder that the arm of flesh will fail you; you dare not trust your own. "Leaning on Jesus, leaning on Jesus, leaning on the everlasting arms." He worshipped leaning upon his staff.

Conclusion

Have you learned to lean? Or are you still standing on your own two big feet? Have you learned to lean? Have you become a desperate man, that you might become a defeated man, that you might become a dependent man, that you might become a different man?

Now, folks, I want to tell you something. You pay close attention. In all this wrestling match, the Lord never did pin Jacob. He never did put his shoulders on the mat. Could the Lord have? Absolutely! But He never did. What does that tell me? God will never make you anything you don't want to be. He'll wrestle with you, but He'll never pin you. You're going to have to come to the place to say, "Lord, I'll not let you go except you bless me." If you think God's going to pin you to the mat today, He's not going to do it, friend. There's a battle you can't afford to win. I hope you don't. I hope you don't.

An old hermit went away to get right with God. Somebody found him later and said, "Uncle John, how you doing? You still wrestling with the devil?" He said, "No longer. Now I'm wrestling with the Lord." "Oh," they said, "you don't hope to win, do you?" He said, "No, I hope to lose."

Friend, I hope you do, too. I hope you do. There's a battle you cannot afford to win. And when God the Holy Spirit is striving with you today, why don't you just throw in the towel and say, "Lord, I'll not let you go except you bless me," and no longer be dependent upon the flesh.

*Learning to lean, learning to lean,
I'm learning to lean on Jesus.*

—JOHN STALLINGS

God Is Not Finished with You

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: July 21, 1999

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 32

“Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children.”

GENESIS 32:11

Outline

Introduction

- I. God Will Protect You, But He Will Not Pamper You
- II. God Will Hurt You, But He Won't Harm You
- III. God Will Break You, But He Will Not Fail to Bless You

Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take God's Word and be finding Genesis chapter 32. Last Wednesday night, if you were here, we talked about climbing Jacob's ladder. Remember we asked Jamie if he knew that song, and he didn't know it. Obviously, he's learned it by now. When Jacob was alone—you know Jacob was one of the stars in the Hebrew heaven, father of the faithful; Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that trinity of patriarchs in the Old Testament—when Jacob was alone, fleeing from his brother Esau out in the desert, he had a rock for a pillow, and he had a vision, and he saw a ladder reaching from earth to heaven, and above it was the Lord Himself, and he saw angels descending and ascending on that ladder. And remember we showed you in the New Testament that that ladder is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of man, who is God's way to heaven. And it was there that Jacob met the Lord and he was transformed. But God was not finished with Jacob.

And I want to tell you that, when you get saved, God is not finished with you. Most of us have a long, long way to go. We're still under construction. So you might look at me and say, "Well, Adrian, you don't look so saved." Well, God is not finished with me yet. An old cowboy said, "I *ain't* what I ought to be, and I *ain't* what I'm gonna be, but thank God I *ain't* what I was." I have been changed, but I am being changed. And I love Philippians chapter 1, verse 6, that says, "*Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.*" (Philippians 1:6) So God has begun a work in us; He's going to finish it.

The Lord has begun a work in Jacob, and Jacob was saved, but there was still a lot of Jacob in Jacob. And remember that the name *Jacob* has the idea, the connotation, of being a con artist, a conniver, a cheat, a man who lived by his own wits. And he had truly met the Lord, but he still had these inward proclivities, this ol' sin nature—and God's got to work on that. Now, keep that in mind as we look into Genesis chapter 32, and I want to give you three thoughts. And you'll find these thoughts will be true in the life of Jacob, and they'll be true in your life, as God is moving you onward, not only to salvation, but to sanctification, and they'll help you to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

I. God Will Protect You, But He Will Not Pamper You

Here is the first point: God will protect you, but He will not pamper you. Now, begin chapter 32 in verse 1: *“And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God’s host:”*—that is, “God’s army”—*“and he called the name of that place Mahanaim.”* (Genesis 32:1–2) And do you know what *Mahanaim* means? It literally means “two hosts.” Now Jacob was traveling, and he had a host of people with him; but then there was another host. He had an angel escort as he was traveling. He’s out there away from home, he’s headed home, and God has sent some angels to guard him and to escort him.

Now we’re going to see in the story that he was really out of fellowship with God. He was God’s man, he was saved, but he was out of fellowship with God. Yet, in all of that, God sent angels there to guard him, to guide him, to protect him. He had an unseen angel escort that finally appeared to him, and he realized that the angels have been with him all the time, even though he had not seen them.

May I tell you that God has angels that take care of His children. Did you know that there are angels watching over you? Now, you know, the New Age has taken this thing of angels and has so distorted it that it is ludicrous. But the Bible has so much to say about angels. And angels do watch over us. And here’s the wonderful thing: the angels watch over us, the angels protect us, when we’re really out of fellowship with God. God still sends His angels to guard us and to protect us. Now God will protect us, but He will not pamper us. And that’s what we’re going to learn.

So here is Jacob going along, and he’s out of fellowship with God, and we’re going to see he’s going to get into serious trouble. God could have kept him out of that trouble, but God doesn’t want to keep him out of that trouble. As a matter of fact, we’re going to see that God engineered his trouble. Jacob left home some twenty years earlier, and he’s fleeing from his brother Esau. Now Esau was a brawny, redheaded, muscular outdoorsman. Jacob, even though they were twins, was very, very genetically different. His skin was smooth. He was an indoors man. He was pensive, reflective. He

wasn't a bit like Esau at all.

Jacob has learned that Esau is coming to meet him. Jacob knows that he's got to get it right with Esau. He can't be a felon forever. He can't run forever from his brother whom he cheated out of the birthright. And so he learns that big, brawny Esau is coming after him, and Esau has an army of four hundred men with him. So God is beginning to work on Jacob. He is protecting Jacob, but He is not pampering Jacob. As a matter of fact, I was looking at this this afternoon, and I was interested to read Genesis chapter 31, verse 24. Jacob had an uncle whose name was Laban, and Laban was about as bad as Jacob. It would have been interesting to hear these two connive, because you had cheat cheating cheat. And God told Laban how to deal with Jacob, and it says, in chapter 31, verse 24, *"And God came to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night, and said unto him, Take heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad."* (Genesis 31:24) He says, "Laban, I'm not going to let you hurt him, but don't help him. I don't want it to be easy on him." Do you think God wants you always to have a life of ease? No, you're wrong.

Now God loved Jacob. The Bible tells us clearly, in the book of Malachi, and also in the book of Romans, that God loved Jacob. (Romans 9:13) God sent angels to take care of him. God protected him, but He did not pamper him. Now Jacob's in trouble, because Esau's coming. And I want you to notice how the old Jacob begins to work now. Notice here, let's continue to read verses 3 to 5: *"And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother unto the land of Seir, the country of Edom. And he commanded them, saying, Thus shall ye speak unto my lord Esau; Thy servant Jacob saith thus, I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed there until now."* (Genesis 32:3–5)

Now, notice how he's groveling. Notice how he's humbling himself. Notice his speech. "Oh, say to my lord Esau..."—he's talking to his brother now that he's cheated—"my lord Esau...thy servant Jacob." One man said, "Speak well of your enemies. After all, you're the one that made them." And that's exactly what he's doing. And you see his mind now; you just see the old Jacob working. Look in verses 6 to 8 and see how he begins to connive: *"And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, We came to thy brother Esau, and also he cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him."* Uh oh. Now, watch this: *"Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed: and he divided the people that was with him, and the flocks, and herds, and the camels, into two bands; and said, If Esau come to the one company, and smite it, then the other company which is left shall escape."* (Genesis 32:6–8)

Now what he's doing is just covering the bases. He's spreading out his resources. He's not putting all of his eggs in one basket. His mind is working overtime to cut his losses. He said, "If Esau hits me here, then these over here can escape." Now, notice what he's doing. He's trying to soften up ol' Esau. He's trying to protect his interests.

Now, after he does all that, then he prays. It's not that he's ungodly; it's just that he cannot let go. He has to protect himself, first of all, and then finally gets around to praying.

Notice verse 9: *“And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the LORD which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee: I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children. And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.”* (Genesis 32:9–12)

Now he's reminding God of His promises, but here's a man living by his own wits and praying. The problem with this prayer is not that he prayed, but his prayer was not his first thought; his prayer was the last resort. Like the woman who met her husband at the travel agency—she said, “He was the last resort.” And Jacob now begins even more public relations. Go on down to verse 13, and look in this chapter where we left off: *“And he lodged there that same night; and took of that which came to his hand a present for Esau his brother; two hundred she goats, and twenty he goats, two hundred ewes, and twenty rams, thirty milch camels”—*that means milk camels—*“with their colts, forty kine,”*—that's cows—*“and ten bulls, twenty she asses, and ten foals”—*that's young colts. *“And he delivered them into the hand of his servants, every drove by themselves; and said unto his servants, Pass over before me, and put a space betwixt drove and drove”—*that is, “from herd and herd.” *“And he commanded the foremost, saying, When Esau my brother meeteth thee, and asketh thee, saying, Whose art thou? and whither goest thou? and whose are these before thee? then thou shalt say, They be thy servant Jacob's; it is a present sent unto my lord Esau: and, behold, also he is behind us. And so commanded he the second, and the third, and all that followed the droves, saying, On this manner shall ye speak unto Esau, when ye find him. And say ye moreover, Behold, thy servant Jacob is behind us.”* And here was the philosophy: *“For he said,”*—this is what Jacob is thinking—*“I will appease him with the present that goeth before me, and afterward I will see his face; peradventure he will accept of me.”* (Genesis 32:13–20)

Listen. Here he is. First of all, he sent someone out there just to humble himself before ol' Esau. He says, “O my lord Esau, I'm your servant Jacob.” And then he takes everything, and he puts some over here, and some over here, and he put some over here, and over here, and over here, just to protect himself. And then he gets all of these animals, these presents—now, remember these are people who are shepherds;

this means very much—so he takes—I think I counted it up: there are 580 different animals—and put some in flocks—the Bible calls them *droves*—and he says, “Take a bunch and send them there; and say, ‘Esau, this is for you.’ ” And then after a while some more are coming: “Esau, this is for you.” After a while some more are coming: “Esau, this is for you.” And Jacob’s back here.

Now you can just see his mind working. Here is a man who’s a very, very shrewd man. He is full of himself, and what he is saying is this: “I trust you, Lord, but...” Have you ever been there? “Now, Lord, I trust you. Yes, I remember all your promises; but, God, I’ve got to take care of myself.” You see, the old man in Jacob really did not want to give up. No wonder God would not pamper him. God protected him, but God did not pamper him. I’m going to tell you what: God will protect you, but He will not pamper you. He’s not going to keep you out of difficulties. As a matter of fact, He’s going to use that difficulty to help you to grow. And when I’m pointing at you, three fingers are pointing right back at me.

II. God Will Hurt You, But He Won’t Harm You

All right, here’s the second thing I want to learn: not only will God protect you but not pamper you; God will hurt you, but He won’t harm you. God will hurt you, but He will not harm you. Now, let’s come down to verse 24, and notice it says here, “*And Jacob was left alone.*” Now he’s finally gotten to a place where he’s alone—and all this time he’s had other people around. He’s directing them and traveling in this company, but now he’s finally alone. And I believe God also engineered this. I believe God wanted Jacob to be alone. Do you know what the problem with most of us is? We never really get alone.

I remember Bob Sorrell told me something years ago, and it was so true. He said, “Pastor, you just need more *think time*. Just get alone.” And I thought, “Boy, that is so true.” Sometimes I’ve thought I’d just like to get alone in a cabin for about a month with nothing but a Bible and some books and God—just be alone. Just to think. Just to sort things out. Just to pray. But God here has gotten Jacob alone. God engineered that.

By the way, our flesh doesn’t like to be alone. That’s the reason why you constantly have the television on in your house. That’s the reason when you get in the car you turn on the radio. That’s the reason why at work you always want to be around friends or somebody. We don’t like to be alone, because, when we’re alone, we have to face ourselves. And so we’re constantly wanting to be amused. I’ve told you before, you know what *amused* means, don’t you? *A*—the alpha prefix—is a negative, and *muse* means “to think.” When you’re amused, you’re not thinking. That’s the reason why we have so much amusement. A museum is the place you go to think—and that’s the opposite from amusement, where we don’t really want to think. Somebody said that if little David out

there keeping his father's sheep had had a transistor radio, we'd probably not have had the Twenty-third Psalm—but he's out there alone and thinking about God.

And what God has done now is gotten Jacob alone. And so he's alone out there, and while he's alone, he's frightened to death—I mean, he's afraid of Esau. Listen, that is how the Bible describes Jacob. He's already afraid of Esau, and now he's out there alone and in the dark: somebody pounces him. Look at it in verse 24: *“And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.”* (Genesis 32:24) He has somebody that jumps him and begins to wrestle with him. And, of course, we're going to find out that the man was the angel of Jehovah. Actually, not an angel—the angel. It was a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus Christ here on this earth, I firmly believe. Jesus came to deal with this cheat, this man who's still full of himself, just like He comes to deal with us. Now there's a wrestling match here, and according to this verse the man is wrestling with him, and it's an all-night wrestling match. All night long Jacob is wrestling with the angel of the Lord, this man from heaven.

Now, folks, it is not primarily Jacob wrestling with the angel; it is the angel wrestling with Jacob. Jacob didn't start this fight; he's pounced. The angel comes and jumps on Jacob, and they wrestle. All night long they wrestle, and finally the angel—He doesn't say this in the Scripture, but I can just imagine Him saying, “I hate to do this to you, Jake”—reaches in and touches the hollow of Jacob thigh, and He cripples Jacob. He actually hurts him.

Look, if you will now, in verse 25: *“And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him.”* (Genesis 32:24) Now, what was this? Well, if any of you have ever done any wrestling... I've never been a wrestler, not even the kind Jesse Ventura is; I've never been a wrestler. I have a son who was on the wrestling team, and I know something about wrestling—I'm talking about true collegiate wrestling, high school wrestling—that a wrestler's greatest strength is his legs, and the greatest part of his leg is his thigh. This is where the power is in wrestling. And that's what the angel touched right back here. And he goes limp. Well, there's no way—there's no way—that he's going to wrestle.

You see, Jacob is still thinking. He's thinking, “Now, look. If Esau comes this way, I can go that way. If he's mad, I can soften him up. I can do all of this. And, if nothing else, I can pick 'em up and put 'em down. I can run.” But now he can't even run—he can't even run. He's ruined. I mean, he is now desperate. The Lord has hurt him, and now his confidence is completely shattered. You see, why did the Lord touch his thigh? In order to break him. Well, why did the Lord want to break him? To bring him to the point of desperation.

You know, the sooner we come to the point of desperation, the better we're going to

be. Most of us think we're too weak. But I'm going to tell you the truth: most of us are not weak enough. We're still trying. We think we're too weak. We say, "I can't do it." But we have never come to the place of absolute, utter desperation. Now Jacob knew he was weak. That's the reason he was doing all this scheming; he was doing all of these things. His mind was just going and going and going, and finally the Lord pounces him, and reduces him to absolute utter desperation. Why? In Philippians 3:3, the Bible says, "*Have no confidence in the flesh.*" (Philippians 3:3)

Now I don't know where your confidence is. You say, "Pastor, this doesn't apply to me. I'm not a wrestler." Well, I mean, your confidence may be in your mind. Your confidence may be in your bank account. Your confidence may be in your personality. Your confidence may be in your contacts. Your confidence may be in your speaking ability. Whatever it is, whatever that confidence is, if it's not in God, it is misplaced confidence.

Now what happens here is Jacob's scheming is finally over. His resistance to God is over. And he comes now to a different situation. Look, if you will now, in verse 26: "*And he said,*"—that is, the angel said—"*Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said,*"—that is, Jacob said—"*I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.*" (Genesis 32:26) Thank God for this. Ol' Jacob, from the time he connived for the birthright up until this time, is still wanting the blessing. And that's the redeeming factor of this man. And I hope that's the redeeming factor in your life, where you say, "Dear God, I do want the blessing."

Now the angel says to Jacob, "Let me go." Well, question: This is an angel, it's the pre-incarnate Jesus, and He's saying to Jacob, "Oh, let me go." Let me go? Listen. Just like that, He could have pulverized him. I mean, He didn't have to wrestle with this man all night long. We've had Ron Dunn here to preach. I like what Ron Dunn said about this. He said, "This fight was fixed." I mean the angel is wrestling and wrestling and wrestling; the angel could have pulverized him at any moment, but He's wrestling with Jacob to bring Jacob to this point where Jacob finally says, "I will not let you go, except you bless me. You are my only hope. Now I'm not wrestling to get away; I'm wrestling to hold on." That's where God wants to bring you.

Listen. God will often appear to you like He wants to get away from you. But He doesn't—He doesn't. It's a strange thing. You read in the Bible illustrations, for example, on the road to Emmaus after the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He's on that road to Emmaus, and there are two disciples that are with Him, and they're forlorn and downcast. They're not quite sure; they're half-believing, half-doubting about the resurrection. And Jesus, after His resurrection, comes and begins to walk with them. But God had sort of clouded their understanding. They didn't recognize it was Jesus. I don't know why. Whether He was wearing a hood over His head, or whether His visage was changed by the resurrection, I don't know. But they didn't recognize Him. And they're

walking along, and Jesus begins to explain to them the Scriptures, and He opened their understanding, and their hearts began to burn. And then the Bible says Jesus made as if He would go on further; and they constrained Him, and they said, “No, stay here with us.” But He made as if He would go on further. (Luke 24:13–32)

I’ll give you another illustration. There was a Syrophenician woman. She was from Syrophenicia, and they were pagans, and this woman, however, had learned of Jesus. She had a demon-possessed girl. And Jesus was there in the coastland, and this woman came to Jesus and she said, “O master, I have a daughter who’s vexed with a demon. Please heal my daughter.” And Jesus said, “Do you expect me to take the bread that’s for the children and give it to the dogs?” Can you imagine that? Can you imagine Jesus speaking to her that way? Here is a woman with a motherly instinct, and she’s come face to face with a malevolent devil who is tormenting her daughter, and she comes to Jesus in deep humility and says, “Please heal my daughter,” and Jesus says, “I’m not going to take the children’s bread and give it to the dogs.” That’s what they called the Gentiles: Gentile dogs. He said, “I’ve just come for the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” Do you know what ninety percent of us would have done? We would have said, “Well, some messiah you are! Good night! I’ve never been treated that way in my life!” She didn’t say that. She said, “That’s right, Lord. It’s not right to take the children’s bread and give it to the dogs. But,” she says, “even the dogs get the crumbs that fall from the table.” “Oh,” He said, “woman, great is your faith. You have what you ask.” (Mark 7:25–30)

We had the same thing when Elijah the prophet had Elisha following after him. What did Elisha want? Elisha wanted a double portion of the power that rested on Elijah. And Elijah said, “I’m going over here. You stay here.” Elisha said, “No. Wherever you go, I’m going.” Then, in another place, he said, “You stay here, I’m going,” He said, “Wherever you go, I’m going.” He couldn’t shake him. He couldn’t get rid of him. He didn’t want to get rid of him. (2 Kings 2:1–11)

Listen, folks. I’m going to tell you something. *God does business with people who mean business.* Did you know that? I mean, this angel was not trying to get away. I mean, hey, if He wanted to get away, He could get away. He’s an angel, and He’s saying, “Let me go”; “I hope he doesn’t, because I want to bring him to this point of desperation.”

III. God Will Break You, But He Will Not Fail to Bless You

Now, folks, God wants to bring us to a point of desperation. I’m going to tell you what I’ve learned about God, and what the Scripture teaches. God will protect you, but He will not pamper you. God will hurt you, but He will not harm you. He will not harm you. Jacob wasn’t harmed; he was helped by what happened to him. Now I’m not saying it didn’t hurt. Now, here’s the third and final thing I want you to see tonight: God will break

you, but He will not fail to bless you. Begin now in verse 27 of the same chapter—chapter 32, verse 27: *“And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob.”* Now you have to understand the word *Jacob* means “guile.” Remember what Jesus said to Nathanael? “There is an Israelite in whom there is no guile”—that is, “There is an Israelite in whom there’s no Jacob.” And he said, “My name is con artist.” “What’s your name?” “Con artist, full of guile, supplanter, liar, cheat, conniver.” *“And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there.”* (Genesis 32:27–29)

We are dealing with names now. Jacob, well he doesn’t even say, “Jacob”; he just says, “What is your name?” He says, “Jacob, sneak, twister, thief.” I can imagine the Lord said, “Well, I’ve been waiting for you to admit it. I’ve been waiting for you to call yourself by your own name. Now that you finally realize what you’re made up of, and how you are, I’m going to change your name. I’m going to give you a brand new name. I’m going to name you Israel. That means ‘prince with God.’”

Have you ever admitted your name? What is your name? Is it lust? Is it laziness? Is it doubt? Is it self-sufficiency? Is it pride? Is it fear? God wants you to admit it. I mean, it took a long time for Jacob to come to admit who he was and what he was.

Now, why did God cripple him? Why did God break him? God broke him that He might bless him. And he goes from being crippled to being crowned. He becomes a prince. He goes from a name of shame to the hall of fame over in Hebrews chapter 11. He goes from being broken and beaten to being blessed.

Now I want you to learn something, and I think this is a biblical principle. There is no blessedness without brokenness. You can read this all through the Bible. If there’s going to be a crop, what do you have to do? You have to break up the soil.

In Jeremiah 4, verse 3: *“Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns.”* (Jeremiah 4:3) You have to put the plow in.

When Gideon was fighting that battle, he had his lamps under that pitcher, and that pitcher had to be broken before the lamp could shine, because there is no brightness without brokenness. Judges 7, verse 20: *“And the three companies blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands.”* (Judges 7:20)

A little boy had some loaves and fish, just a little lad’s lunch, but it didn’t feed anybody until it was broken. Matthew 14, verse 19: *“And he”—Jesus—“commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.”* (Matthew 14:19)

Mary of Bethany had an alabaster box full of precious perfume and ointment, but it

didn't bless Jesus until it was broken. Mark 14, verse 3: *"And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box..."*—she didn't just take the lid off—*"she brake the box, and poured it on his head."* (Matthew 14:3)

God told David, in Psalm 51, and David repeated it back to God, "A broken and a contrite spirit thou wilt not despise, O God." (Psalms 51:17)

Even Jesus, in order to be a blessing to us, at the Lord's table took bread, blessed it, and broke it, and He said, "This is my body"—"This is my body." (Matthew 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19)

The one thing that we don't want to do today is to be broken. I want to tell you something. God will break you, but He'll not fail to bless you. God will protect you, but He will not pamper you—He won't do it. God will hurt you, but He won't harm you. God will break you, but He'll not fail to bless you. You see, God is in the business of building saints. And when ol' Jacob got saved, God wasn't finished with him yet.

Now there's a very interesting commentary on all of this in the New Testament. So put in your margin, if it's not already there, Hebrews chapter 11, verse 21. It's a very, very key verse to all we've had to say—Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 21. It says this: *"By faith Jacob, when he was a dying..."*—that's just old English for "dying." He's on his last legs, as it were—*"By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff."* (Hebrews 11:21)

Now he's an old man; his wrestling days are over. All of his life, he's walking with a limp. All of his life, that leg is out of joint. He has to get a staff; he's got a crutch, and he's leaning on that crutch. And he comes to the end of his days: what's he doing? What a glorious way to live! He dies worshipping God. But how is he worshipping God? He's worshipping God leaning on a staff. And every time he saw that staff, it just reminded him of his own weakness and God's great strength. "Learning to lean, learning to lean, learning to lean on Jesus." Somebody wrote these words:

*O for a faith that will not shrink,
Though pressed by many a foe;
That will not tremble on the brink
Of any earthly woe;
That will not murmur nor complain
Beneath the chastening rod,
But, in the hour of grief or pain,
Can lean upon its God.*

—WILLIAM HILEY BATHURST

Conclusion

Let's have a few lessons.

Number one: Failure is not final. You may be like ol' Jacob, and you fail; but God is a merciful God.

Number two: Why don't you just humble yourself before God and save yourself a wrestling match? You don't have to go through this ordeal. You know what the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 11:31? *"If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged."* (1 Corinthians 11:31) Now you can humble yourself, or I always get a funny feeling when anybody says, "O Lord, humble us." I say, "Wait a minute, Lord. I'd just rather do it myself." *"If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged."* Save yourselves a wrestling match.

Number three: If suffering, pain, and difficulty come to you, learn to lean, and learn to worship. Don't let it go without a blessing. Say to God, "I don't understand this, but I will not let you go, except you bless me."

Number four: Learn what it's all about. What is it all about? It's not about Esau. It's not about flocks and herds. What's it all about? It's the worship that leans on Jesus that really counts. Jacob now is 147 years old, weak and weary, but he spent his last days worshipping. And, by the way, that's what I intend to do, and I hope that's what you intend to do. What a way to go!

I want you to learn something else, and we're almost finished. This angel that was wrestling with Jacob never did pin him. He could have, but He didn't. God will never ultimately force Himself on you. You're going to have to surrender, but He's not going to pin you. He's not going to force you to be something you do not want to be ultimately.

An old hermit got alone to get right with God. Somebody found him later on, and said, "Well, how are you doing? Are you still wrestling with the devil?" He said, "No longer." He said, "Now I'm wrestling with God." "Oh," he said, "you don't hope to win, do you?" He said, "No. I hope to lose"—"I hope to lose." And that's where all of us are—need to be: just, "Lord, here I am"—"here I am."

God will protect you, but He will not pamper you. God will hurt you, but He will not harm you. God will break you, but He will not fail to bless you. And you're stronger leaning on Jesus than you are standing on your own two big feet.

The Blessing of Brokenness

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: May 26, 1991

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 32:1–28

“Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children.”

GENESIS 32:11

Outline

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Introduction

Would you take God’s Word, and turn, please, to Genesis chapter 32. In a moment, we’re going to study an episode in the life of the patriarch Jacob.

Do you remember your childhood stories that used to thrill you? They were generally—or not always, but many times—the story of transformation, and that which was not very beautiful was made beautiful, or that which was not recognized came to be recognized. For example, the story of the ugly duckling—remember that little swan that thought he was a duck, and he was really a swan, but he was the ugliest duck that any one had ever seen? The story of Cinderella, that little household maiden, who was a scullery maid, and then she met the prince, and she became a princess; and all of those stories about frogs who are kissed and the frog turns into a prince: all of these are just fables, and fairy tales, and stories about transformation.

Now the story that we have today is the story, really, of a worm who became a

prince, because in one place in the Bible, the Bible calls Jacob a worm (Isaiah 41:14), but he became a prince. God, marvelously, wonderfully, radically, dramatically, eternally changed Jacob, and He made something wonderful out of something ugly. And I'll tell you, he was ugly to begin with. The very name *Jacob* means "con artist." Now the word *con artist* is not a Bible word at all, but it's our modern counterpart for a liar, a cheat, a crook, a fraud, a schemer, a figurer. And the name *Jacob* means "that which grabs by the heel" or "supplanter, deceiver." That's the name that he had; it's a name that his mother gave him, but it really aptly describes his nature. But later on he got a new name, *Israel*, which means "a prince of God."

Now all of this can be a great encouragement to you and to me, because if God changed Jacob, I think there's hope for me. As I look at Jacob, I see a man that really had three strikes against him.

A. The Family That Formed Jacob

First of all, there was the family that formed him. You talk about a man that really didn't come from a good family! His father, Isaac, was sort of a sensual man. The Bible says that his father loved his brother Esau more than he loved Jacob, and the reason that Isaac loved Esau more than he loved Jacob is that he loved to eat Esau's venison. (Genesis 25:28) I mean, just because of food, he loved one brother more than another brother. And then Jacob's mother, she was a schemer. She helped him to betray her husband and his son in order that Jacob might get a birthright; that is, the blessing of the firstborn that really wasn't his. And then old Esau himself, who was the brother of Jacob, do you know he was the one who sold his birthright for a mess of pottage? Whether or not you remember that Bible story, you take it from my word: he didn't necessarily come from good stock. That was the family that formed him.

B. The Faults That Fettered Jacob

And then you see the faults that fettered him. I mean, here was a man who had all of these problems. He was a schemer by nature. In the Bible we find out where he agreed with his mother to deceive his father. We learn how he cheated his brother out of a birthright, which was the legacy of the firstborn. And he was a man that, if you looked at him, there was not a lot that was appealing about him. He was kind of a mama's boy. He stayed in the kitchen with Mama. Now his brother was a redheaded, hairy-chested outdoorsman—the hairy, red hunter. But Jacob, the Bible said, was "*a smooth man.*" (Genesis 27:11) He was smooth in more than one way. He was smooth in appearance and smooth in the way he went about to get things done, always dealing under the table and tied to his mama's apron strings.

C. The Failure That Followed Jacob

And you see a man with kind of a bad family and sort of a bad heredity, and his genes

and chromosomes just don't seem to be working right in him. And he was a man that had failure that followed him everywhere he went; it seemed like environment. And now age is against him. He's getting to be an older man. He's past middle age, and he still hasn't succeeded; he's failed. He's just a failure. But God uses all of this as the black velvet to display the diamond of His grace and show the mighty transforming power that turned Jacob to Israel, the worm to the prince. And, dear friend, it's the same power that can change you.

May I tell you what that power is? It's spelled in four letters: l-o-v-e. The Bible says that God loved Jacob. (Romans 9:13) Now he wasn't really lovely. I mean, if you and I had looked and we wanted to choose one of the brothers that were Jacob and Esau, most of us would have said, "If I want to make something out of anybody, I'll certainly choose Esau. At least Esau's got some 'get-up-and-go,' and at least Esau's a man's man; he's not a wimp like old Jake." We'd choose Esau, but the Bible says God loved Jacob.

Now, why did God love Jacob? God didn't love Jacob for what he was, but God loved Jacob for what he could become. There was a basic difference between Jacob and Esau. Esau despised his birthright, the blessing of God. Jacob wanted it. Even though he went about to get it the wrong way, at least he wanted it; at least he had a hunger for God. I wonder, do you? Now, listen, my dear friend. God loved Jacob for one thing. Down beneath all of his faults, and all of his failures, and all of his proclivities to scheme and cheat, and despite everything that was against him, God just cleared it all away, and God found one thing down there that He could use: a desire to know God. Is that desire in you today? I hope it is. Listen. God did not love Jacob for what he was, but for what He could make out of him. Listen to me, dear friend. *God does not change you so He can love you; He loves you so He can change you.* God loved Jacob. Do you have that in your mind?

Now, with that in your mind, I want to tell you four things about that love today that changed Jacob, and it's the kind of a love that can change you today if in your heart there is that germ, that desire, to say, "Oh, my God, I need you. I want you." Now chapter 32, verses 1 and 2: "*And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him. And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God's host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim,*" (Genesis 32:1-2) which means, literally, "two hosts."

Now, here's what's happening. Jacob is a fugitive; he is running. I mean, he has tricked his brother, Esau; he has conned Esau. And now Esau has realized that he has been cheated, and Esau knows what's happening to him. And remember now that Esau was a brute; he was a man's man. I mean, he's the kind of guy that pumps iron. And he was a hunter and a woodsman. And Jacob wasn't. Jacob was a fellow that kind of worked from the neck up. And so here is Esau now. He realizes what Jacob has done to

him, and Esau is coming after him. And Jacob is a fugitive; he's on the lam. He's running, and he's been in the school of hard knocks now for twenty years. And it just seems like everything is against him. He moves from one failure to another failure. And yet the Bible says he's out of fellowship with God. Well, he's a saved man. He believes in God, but he's out of fellowship with God. And verses 1 and 2 tell us that all of this time God has His angels camping over and round about Jacob. (Genesis 32:1–2)

I. God Loves with a Tender Love

May I tell you the first thing, therefore, about God's mighty love that transforms all of us, if we allow it to do so? It is, my dear friend, a tender love—a tender love. God sent His angels to take care of this fugitive, this runaway, this backslider, this person who still has so much work to be done on him. God sets His angels over Jacob to watch over him.

You know, God never gives us up. The Bible says, in Philippians chapter 1 and verse 6, *“He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”* (Philippians 1:6) And I just thank God for this mention of tender love. Oh, he deserves chastisement, and he's going to get it. But, my friend, remember this: that God's eye, God's care, God's provision never left the man of God, and God gives this fugitive an angel escort—unseen angels all around.

I want to leave that point, lest I don't have time to get finished, but just put it down: no matter who you are and what you've done, God loves you. There's nothing you can do to make Him love you any more. There's nothing you can do to make Him love you any less. You may not agree with that. The Bible says, *“God commendeth His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”* (Romans 5:8)—much more than, now that we're saved. Oh, my friend, God's great love for you, if you're His child, is there. You may be a failure, you may be way behind in your sanctification, but God posts His angels to take care of you.

II. God Loves with a Tactical Love

His love is a tender love. Now, secondly, His love is a tactical love—tactical. I had to think a long time to get just the right word, but here's what God is doing: God is arranging the circumstances of Jacob's life. And God is not helping Jacob to get out of trouble; God is engineering his trouble. Have you ever thought that the troubles that you have, that you're asking God to take away from you, may be the very troubles that God is tactically engineering for you?

Look, if you will now, in verses 3 to 5: *“And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother unto the land of Seir, the country of Edom. And he commanded them, saying, Thus shall ye speak unto my lord Esau; Thy servant Jacob saith thus, I have*

sojourned with Laban, and stayed there until now: and I have oxen, and asses, flocks, and menservants, and womenservants: and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find grace in thy sight." (Genesis 32:3–5) Now, what is all of this about? Jacob knows that Esau is out there somewhere, and he sends somebody out there, a little public relations firm, to say, "Go out there and find out what he is thinking." And he uses a very flattering term. He says, "You go tell Esau, my lord." You see, look at it in verses 3 through 5, how flatteringly he speaks of Esau. Reminds me of that old adage, "Always speak well of your enemies; after all, you made them." That's exactly what he is doing. He's really beginning to butter ol' Esau up. And word comes back, and it says, "Yeah, Esau's out there, all right. Not only is he out there, but he's got four hundred strong men. And not only does he have four hundred strong men, but he has hate in his heart and blood in his eye. And he is coming after you, Jake." Jacob is scared to death, and so his mind begins to work.

Now we don't have time to take this entire passage apart a little by little, but if you look in verses 6 through 8, you'll find out that Jacob's mind, boy, he just starts to go like this, and he says, "Oh, I'm wealthy. I've got all of these goods and everything I've accumulated. Now here comes Esau to take it away. I'd better cut my losses." So he says, "Now, you folks, go over there. You folks, go over here. This group, go over here. You take these flocks here and put them here, and you take these herds here." (Genesis 32:6–8) That is, "If Esau strikes here, I'll save this." He's just spreading out his resources to cut his losses.

And then after he's tried to butter Esau up with this entourage that goes out there, and he spreads out everything so as to cut his losses, then he begins to pray. Look in verses 9 and 10: "*And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the LORD which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee: I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands.*" (Genesis 32:9–10) That is, "I'm all divided up." He hastily utters a prayer, but prayer for Jacob was not his first thought; it was his last resort. I mean, he's taking care of it the way Jacob thinks he ought to take care of it; and now he's turning to God, and he says, "Oh, yes, Lord, I remember your promise. God, take care of me." And then he goes right back to scheming again. And so God has already shown him His angel. God has already said, "Jacob, if you'll trust me, I'll take care of you."

But now the next thing Jacob does, he begins to try to soften up Esau with his public relations operation. He has about 580 valuable, valuable animals, and he puts them in five droves, or flocks. And he sends a public relations firm out, and he says, "You go out and meet Esau, and you give him a gift here. And then you wait a little while, and then you give

him another gift. Then you wait a little while, and then you give him another gift. And then you wait a little while, and then you give him another gift. And then you wait a little while, and then you give him another gift.”

Now you've got to hand it to Jacob. Jacob is a smart guy. I mean, he is doing everything. First of all, he flatters Esau. Then, he spreads everything out. Then, he shoots up a prayer. And then, he goes right back again. He's just trying to soften Esau up. Can you see the mind of this man? I mean, you can just see him working—working. He's trying to get it all done. But who put Jacob in this mess? You say, “Jacob put himself in this mess.” Well, he may have, but God engineered it all.

Look, if you will, back in chapter 31 for a moment, and see what Jacob said in verse 7. He's talking to his two wives, and he says, “*Your father hath deceived me*”—that is, “*Laban hath deceived me*”—“*and changed my wages ten times; but God suffered him not to hurt me.*” (Genesis 31:7) You see, God is over the whole thing. Look, if you will, in chapter 31, verse 24: “*And God came to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night, and said unto him, Take heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad.*” (Genesis 31:24) God is just over this whole thing. Look, if you will, in verse 29: Laban says to Jacob, “*It is in the power of my hand to do you hurt: but the God of your father spake unto me yesternight, saying, Take thou heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad.*” God says, “Don't help him; don't hurt him.”

Now I'm just reading those verses to show you that here's old Jacob out there, the fugitive on the lam. He's running from Esau. But up in heaven, moving everything around, is God. God says, “I want you, Laban, to do this: don't help him; don't hurt him. We're just going to get him in a particular place.” Have you ever thought of the fact that where you are right now, you just think is all happenstance? But, my dear friend, if you're a child of God, every hair of your head is numbered. (Matthew 10:30' Luke 12:7) He knows the steps that you take and the trouble, the morass, the difficulty that you find yourself in. It's just engineered of God. You see, God's love is a tender love, but it is a tactical love—a tactical love. *Real love doesn't give us what we want; it gives us what we need.*

III. God Loves with a Tough Love

Now, wait a minute. I want you to see the third thing God did for him. It was a tender love. It was a tactical love. But it was a tough love. Now Jacob finally gets alone by himself. He's done everything else, and God finally gets him where He wants him to be—and that is alone. Look, if you will, in verse 24: “*And Jacob was left alone.*” (Genesis 32:24) It took so long to get Jacob alone. He didn't want to be alone.

You know, the people who are running from God, they don't want to be alone. That's the reason the places of amusement are so full. That's the reason that they are going to

the Indianapolis 500. That's the reason, dear friend, that they are going to the Sunset Symphony. That's the reason that they are at the football games. That's the reason they are in the nightclubs. That's the reason that they can be at these places. They are going to have a transistor radio thing in their ear or a ghetto blaster on their shoulder. They are going to have something. Have you ever thought—aren't you glad little David didn't have a transistor radio when he was keeping his sheep? We never would have had the Twenty-third Psalm. People don't want to be alone. They don't want to face themselves, and they don't want to face God.

But verse 24 tells us, finally, that, oh, Jacob is alone. (Genesis 32:24) And now you're going to see tender love and tactical love that becomes tough love. There is a confrontation with God now. He's already alone, and he's already afraid. And he doesn't know who's coming, and all of a sudden someone, or something, pounces him in the dark. Look, if you will, in verse 24: *"And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day."* (Genesis 32:24) Now here he is all by himself; and yet there's a man there. How can he be alone, and there's a man there? Well, that man, I believe with all of my heart, was Jesus Christ—pre-incarnate Christ. You know, the Lord appeared to men before His incarnation in what we call theophanies or the pre-incarnate appearance of the Lord Jesus. He's called "the angel of the Lord," but Jesus is often called "the angel of Yahweh," "the messenger of Yahweh."

And here he meets the Lord. Here's Jacob now. He's God's man. He's alone now. He's in the dark. He's scared, and there is Jesus. He's face to face with Jesus, and they're in a wrestling match. Now often you hear people talking about Jacob wrestling with the Lord, but it wasn't Jacob wrestling with the Lord; it was the Lord wrestling with Jacob. The Bible says, *"There wrestled a man with him."* That is, it is the Lord that started this thing. It's the Lord that pounced on Jake. It's the Lord, now, that's putting the full nelson on Jake. And they are wrestling—they are wrestling. There's a wrestling match going on out there in the wilderness. It's really kind of a funny thing, when you think about it. And so they are wrestling back and forth. The Lord is trying to do something with this man that He loves so much.

And now this love is what I want to call a tough love. Now the match goes on back and forth, back and forth. You say, "Jacob must have been very, very strong to wrestle with the Lord." Oh no, the Lord wanted to. He could have said *plit* and it was over. You see, as Ron Dunn said, "That's like a fight with sticks." The Lord didn't want to overcome him; the Lord wanted Jacob to prevail. The Lord didn't want to overpower Jacob in the wrong sense of the word. It is kind of a strange fight.

Now the Lord's getting ready for one final stroke, and I want you to see what He does, because He may be doing this to you right now. Look in verses 24 and 25: *"And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day."*

That is, they have wrestled all night long. *“And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob’s thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him”* (Genesis 32:24–25)—the hollow of his thigh. Right here the angel of the Lord reaches out and grabs Jacob right there.

Why? Well, if you’ve ever wrestled—I’ve wrestled a little bit—but if you’ve ever wrestled, man, if a wrestler’s legs are gone, I mean, he just can’t do anything. I mean, this is the strongest muscle for a wrestler. I mean, he’s got to get position with his leg. And so his hip goes out of joint, and the Lord just reaches in there and cripples Jacob. And now his legs go. Now his final weapon is gone. I mean, if everything else fails, at least he could run. Now he can’t even run. He’s spread out his resources. He’s done everything. He’s tried to soften up Esau. Finally, finally, finally, finally, God brings him to the place that He’s been wanting to bring him. This was the place of utter, absolute, complete brokenness and dependence. Finally, he just comes to the place where he says, “Oh, God, I’m a goner without you.” And the angel says to this crippled man, *“Let me go.”* Look at it—look at it here in verse 26: *“And he said,”*—that is, the angel of the Lord—*“Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said,”*—Jacob said—*“I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.”* (Genesis 32:26) Oh, at that moment, something wonderful took place.

You know the word *Jacob* means “that which grabs, that which holds.” He’s still grasping, but this time, for the first time in his life, with all of his heart and mind and soul, he gets a hold of the Lord, and he says, “Oh, God, I need you. God, I will not let you go, except you bless me.” Oh, what words! God had been wanting to hear those words for so long, and finally now He hears them. You see, the Bible says we’re to *“have no confidence in the flesh.”* (Philippians 3:3) Jacob’s confidence was not in the Lord; it was in the flesh until this moment.

I wonder where your confidence is. You know where a wrestler’s confidence is? In his legs, his arms, his chest, his muscles. Where is your confidence? Maybe in your mind—you’ve got a good mind. And I’m looking at some men, I know you’ve got good minds; I’ve talked with some of you. Maybe your confidence is in your personality. Maybe, choir, musicians, it’s in your music ability. Maybe, preachers, it’s in your ability to talk. Businessmen, maybe your confidence is in your wealth. Some of you are saying, “Boy, I’ve got it in the bank. I don’t have to worry any more. I mean, anything I want I can buy.” Maybe that’s where your confidence is. Maybe your confidence is in your political power, your pull. Whatever it is, dear friend, the Bible says you are to *“have no confidence in the flesh.”* (Philippians 3:3) The Bible says, *“That no flesh should glory in [God’s] presence.”* (1 Corinthians 1:29)

So here’s Jacob now. Finally, finally, finally, this old schemer, this con artist, says, “God, I won’t let you go, except you bless me.”

God's love was a tender love. It was a tactical love. It was a tough love, because God had to break him to bless him.

IV. God Loves with a Transforming Love

May I say, finally, that God's love was a transforming love. Look, if you will now, in verse 27 of this same chapter: "*And he said unto him*"—that is, "The Lord said unto him"—"*What is thy name?*" Of course, God knew his name, but God still asked him, "*What is thy name? And he said, Jacob.*" Now God knew it, but He wanted Jacob to confess it. "Now, what is your name?" "My name is cheat. My name is fraud. My name is liar. My name is con artist." "That's right, Jacob. I wanted to hear you say it. You've finally seen it. You've finally seen that you're a sneak, a twister, a thief. But from now on, I'm going to give you a new name." "*And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.*" (Genesis 32:27–28) How did he prevail? By saying, "Oh, God, I will not let you go, except you bless me."

Now, have you ever been brought to the place where you've ever really admitted your name? I mean, if God were to ask you today, "What is your name?" would you say, "My name is lazy," if you are lazy? Or, "My name is fearful," if you are fearful? Or, "My name is doubter," if you are a doubter? Or, "My name is greedy," if you are greedy? Or, "My name is lustful," if you are lustful? Whatever it is, what is that thing that just dogs your footsteps and keeps you from being all that you could be and ought to be? Admit it before God. Call yourself by your name.

You see, listen. God wanted to bless Jacob. God didn't want to hurt him. "*Faithful are the wounds of a friend.*" (Proverbs 27:6) God crippled him, that He might crown him. God broke him, that He might bless him. And he goes from a name of shame to God's hall of fame. He becomes a prince with God, Israel—Israel—because he came to the end of himself finally.

I want to tell you something, folks. Now, you listen to me, because I want to get very serious with you. Do you know why many of us are not yet truly blessed? Because we have not yet been truly broken. Now, you put this down big, and plain, and straight. There is no blessedness without brokenness. Men throw broken things away, but God never uses anything until He first breaks it. God said to Jeremiah, "If you want a harvest, *break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns.*" (Jeremiah 4:3) Before there can be a crop, the plow must go in. There must be brokenness. Gideon's little army, his band, they had those earthen pitchers, and they had a lamp under the pitcher. And God said, "Break the pitcher. It is not until the pitcher is broken that the light will shine." (Judges 7:16–19) We have within us, in this earthen vessel, the light of the glory of God in Jesus Christ. But, dear friend, you'll never see the light of Jesus in

Adrian until this earthen vessel is broken.

There was a little lad's lunch. Jesus fed the multitudes with it, but He never fed the multitudes with it until He blessed it and broke it. Jesus, at that memorial meal, held up that matzo, that unleavened bread, and said, *"This is my body, which is broken for you."* (1 Corinthians 11:24) David said, *"A broken and a contrite [spirit]...thou wilt not despise [O God]."* (Psalms 51:17) There was a woman with an alabaster box of sweet perfume, but nobody could smell that perfume until she broke that alabaster box of ointment and poured it out on the Lord Jesus Christ. Jacob would never have become Israel until God broke him.

I have been preaching long enough to know and to see those people that God has used, and I can tell you that everyone—everyone, everyone—that God has used He has broken. You'll never show me anybody who has been mightily used of God, or will be mightily used of God, who does not come to this place where he is so broken, where he says, "Oh, God, I'll not let you go unless you bless me"—broken to be blessed, crippled to be crowned. God's love is a tender love. It is a tactical love. It is a tough love in order that it might be a transforming love. That's what God did for Jacob. That's what He wants to do for you.

Let me show you now a wonderful verse. Turn to your New Testament, and turn to Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 21. Boy, I'm telling you this is a blessing, so don't miss it. This is incredible—Hebrews 11, verse 21. Now, remember this. The rest of his life, Jacob had to have a crutch. I mean, the rest of his life, he's limping. His thigh is out of joint. This isn't just something that could be fixed and be put back into condition by a trainer and the whirlpool. Oh, no, the rest of his life, he's walking with a crutch; he has a staff that he leans on. And now here he is 147 years old—and listen to what the Bible says, in Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 21: *"By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph"—now, watch this—"and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff"—"worshipped, leaning [on]...his staff."* (Hebrews 11:21)

Now, friend, God doesn't waste words. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God. Why do you think that the Holy Spirit of God wrote in there that Jacob worshipped God leaning on his staff? Just to show, dear friend, that Jacob had finally learned to lean, that Jacob realized that he was stronger leaning than he was standing on his own two feet. Self-sufficiency is not a virtue.

*Learning to lean, learning to lean,
I'm learning to lean on Jesus.
Finding more power than I'd ever dreamed,
I'm learning to lean on Jesus.*

—JOHN STALLINGS

He worshipped leaning. That's the only way you'll ever worship.

Conclusion

I'm finished, but let me just give you five thoughts.

D. Failure Need Not Be Final

Number one: Failure need not be final. Listen to me. Are you a Jacob? God's not finished with you yet. I don't care if age and heredity and circumstances are against you: God is not finished with you. Failure need not be final.

E. If You Assume Brokenness, God Will Not Have to Break You

I'm going to tell you something else. You can save yourself a wrestling match. You really can. You know, the Bible says, if we'll judge ourselves, we'll be not judged. (1 Corinthians 11:31) Did you know that you can just assume brokenness, and God won't have to break you, if you'll just humble yourself and break yourself?

F. Learn to Lean

Thirdly, if and when suffering comes to you, learn to lean—learn to lean. Through that suffering, don't come out of it without leaning on the Lord.

*O, for a faith that will not shrink,
Though pressed by every foe,
That will not tremble on the brink
Of any earthly woe!
That will not murmur nor complain
Beneath the chastening rod,
But, in the hour of grief or pain,
Will lean upon its God.*

—WILLIAM H. BATHURST

If you're in suffering right now, just get a hold of God—just get hold of God.

G. The Most Important Thing Is to Be Able to Worship God

And I want to tell you another thing. Remember, when it's all settled—I mean, when everything's all over—the most important thing that will matter is, can you worship God? What a way to die! And he died leaning on his staff and worshipping God. (Hebrews 11:21) I believe he blessed the day that he was crippled. What a way to go!

H. God Will Never Pin You

Now, last and finally, I want you to remember this: that the angel never did pin Jacob—the angel never did get Jacob down, put Jacob's shoulder on the mat and make him "say uncle." He never did. He could have, but he never did. I want to tell you something. God will never pin you. You're going to have to just simply say, "Lord, I won't let you go, except you bless me."

An old hermit—an old hermit—was met one day by someone who said, "Are you still

wrestling with the devil?” And he said, “No, I’ve quit wrestling with the devil, and now I’m wrestling with God.” He said, “Well, you don’t hope to win, do you?” The hermit said, “No, I hope to lose.”

And I hope you do, too. I hope you say, “Oh, God, oh, God, I’ll not let you go, except you bless me.”

Back to Bethel

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: August 2, 1981

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 35

“And God said unto him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins.”

GENESIS 35:11

Outline

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I. Jacob’s Invitation

II. Jacob’s Determination

A. A Decided Choice

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Introduction

Be finding in your Bibles, please, Genesis chapter 35. Open your Bibles, and leave them open there in your lap. You’ll always learn so much more, you’ll always receive so much more, if you’ll use your Bibles. Someone said a long time ago, “A Christian who has a Bible that’s falling apart generally has a life that’s not.” Now you’re to use your Bible, and read your Bible, and underscore your Bible, and mark your Bible. And then, when you wear it out, get another one, and say, “Praise God.” Amen? Use this book.

These hath God married and no man shall part:

Dust on the Bible and drought in the heart.

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Genesis chapter 35: “*And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother.*” (Genesis 35:1)

All right, I want us to think today on this subject: “Back to Bethel”—“Back to Bethel.”

And, really, we're talking about backsliding and its cure. So I want us to pay close attention, because it may be indeed that God is using this message to speak to your heart. Now you will remember that we talked and studied and prayed about how God had met with Jacob there at Bethel, and how Jacob was converted at Bethel when he saw Jacob's ladder, that staircase to heaven, which was a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, and he said, "This God will be my God." (Genesis 28:10–22) And then you will remember how last week we studied about Jacob, "The Battle You Cannot Afford to Win," how he wrestled with the angel of the Lord. And not only did we see, therefore, Jacob's conversion at Bethel, but we now saw his consecration, where he said, "I'll not let thee go, unless thou bless me." (Genesis 32:24–26) And most of us have thought, "Well now, Jacob is fixed for life. Boy, he's had the two big ones. He's gotten saved, and he's made a full surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing bad can happen to him." But, friends, I want to tell you, as you read chapters 33 and chapters 34, you find out that Jacob got himself into all kinds of difficulty and trouble.

And that just leads me to say this: There is no one decision that you can make that is going to guarantee your dedication, your consecration, until you get to heaven. This matter of living a Christian life is a matter of daily abiding.

And I don't care what kind of an experience you may have had in the past: if you fail to abide in the Lord, you're going to backslide. It's like riding a bicycle uphill with no brakes. Either you keep going forward, or you start going backward; but you cannot stand still.

And Jacob failed to realize this, and Jacob became a backslider. Now these two chapters are marked with failure and frustration and defeat. But yet it doesn't seem that way outwardly. Outwardly, he's very wealthy. You know, he always had an itch for gold. He always wanted to get things. And now he has it all. It seems like old Jacob has the Midas touch. Everything that he touches just turns to gold.

He's like a man I heard about one time who loved gold so much that, finally, when his ship came in, finally, when he made his fortune, he decided he would redecorate his bedroom. So he put down a yellow rug to remind him of the gold that he loved so much. He had his walls painted a parchment color. He had gold-colored drapes. He had everything decorated in gold appointments. Even got him some yellow pajamas. Boy, he was fixed. He loved gold so much. But then he got sick. And guess what he came down with? Yellow jaundice. So his wife called the doctor. And the doctor went upstairs to the bedroom to examine him. And the doctor stayed up there an inordinate amount of time and finally came back down with a quizzical look on his face. His wife said, "Doctor, how was he?" The doctor said, "I don't know. I couldn't find him."

Now Jacob was very much like that: lost in materialism, lost in his wealth, but lost also in his spiritual relationship with God. Jacob had become a backslider. And I tell

you, not only did it affect him; it affected his family. As you read these prior chapters, you'll find out that one of his daughters, Dinah, was raped. And she was taken to be the wife of a pagan chieftain. And then also you find out that two of Jacob's sons committed terrible, horrible, unspeakable, unmentionable atrocities to avenge for their sister Dinah. And when the word came back to old Jacob—Jacob surrounded there by all of his wealth, all of his so-called success—I'm sure a thought like this must have come into his mind: "What should it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own family?" Jacob was backslidden.

And so I want us to pay attention, because Jacob needed to come back to God. And perhaps today you need to come back to God. You say, "Well, Brother Rogers, don't you see me sitting here in church this morning with a smile on my face and a Bible in my hand? Don't you know that I'm not backslidden?" You may be. Let's take the test today and find out if you are. If there was ever a time in your life when you loved Jesus Christ more than you do at this moment, you, sir, are backslidden. If there was ever a time when God was more real to you, and prayer was more precious to you, and the Bible was more valuable to you, than it is at this time, this day, this moment, then, lady, you're a backslider.

I. **Jacob's Invitation**

So, pay close attention. Let's look now at this passage that's before us and see how we can come back to Bethel. Notice again in verse 1. This is what I call Jacob's invitation—Jacob's invitation: "*And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother.*" (Genesis 35:1) Here was God's invitation to Jacob to come back to Bethel.

Now, remember, it was where God appeared to Jacob and made Himself real to Jacob. This is where Jacob got right with God. This is where Jacob met God. This is where Jacob said, "*Surely, the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not.*" (Genesis 28:16) And he called it "Bethel"—Bethel—which means "the house of God." And when God said, "Arise, and go back to Bethel," what sweet memories must have flooded Jacob's heart and mind! What was the invitation of God to Jacob? It was to soak his bruised soul in the healing balm of those sacred memories he had when he had met God so long ago.

Do you have a Bethel? If you're saved, you do. There was a time, there was a place somewhere, where you met God. Do you have a Bethel? Is God real to you? Have you seen the Lord through the eyes of faith? I have a Bethel. I told you about it the other day. I had that time, that place, when I said an everlasting *yes* to Jesus Christ, and a river of peace and love started to flow through my soul. But I want to ask you another

question. Is God as real to you right now as He was at your Bethel?

*Where is the blessedness I knew,
When I first saw the Lord?
Where is the soul refreshing view
Of Jesus and His Word?
What peaceful hours I once enjoyed!
How sweet their memory still!
But they have left an aching void
The world can never fill.*

—WILLIAM COWPER

Is that what you must say: “Where’s the blessedness I knew when I first saw the Lord”?

But I want to tell you that God gave an invitation to Jacob—and that was to come back to Bethel. Do you know what that tells me today? It tells me that our God is the God of a new beginning. Our God is the God of a second chance. We find it all through the Bible.

God told Jonah to go preach to Nineveh, but Jonah rebelled and had a whale house for a jailhouse, and took the first submarine ride in history, and spent the night on a foam blubber mattress. But yet God spoke to Jonah again, and recommissioned Jonah, and told him to preach the preaching that God had bidden him to preach. And Jonah had a second chance. He went back to his Bethel.

I remember reading in the Bible about Moses that God called to deliver His people from the hand of Pharaoh. And Moses started out to be a missionary, and he became a murderer, and hid out on the backside of the desert for forty years, washed out, forgotten; and yet God appeared to him in a burning bush, and spoke to him, and gave him a second chance, and recommissioned Moses. And the God that did that is the God of the second chance.

I read in the Bible about Samson, who betrayed the Lord, that heavyweight champion of the Old Testament who lost his title because of sin and compromise, and got his hair cut in the devil’s barbershop. But not only was he shorn of his hair; he was shorn of his power with God. And yet I read how the hair of his head began to grow again, and how he said, “Oh, God, empower me this one more time.” And he bowed himself and pulled down that mighty temple of the god Dagon, because God gave him a second chance.

I remember reading in the Bible of Simon Peter, how he cursed and swore and denied the Lord Jesus Christ before that little Jewish maiden. But then he was the same man who wept bitterly, repented, came back to the Lord, was filled with the Holy Spirit, became the mighty, flaming apostle of Pentecost; for God gave Peter a second chance.

And the God that said to Jacob, “Jacob, come back to Bethel,” is the God that’s saying to you today, if you’re away from Him, “Come on back! Come on back! I’m the God of a second chance.”

II. Jacob’s Determination

But not only do I want you to see Jacob’s invitation; I also want you to see Jacob’s determination. Begin reading now in verses 2 and 3: *“Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments: and let us arise, and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went. And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which were in their hand, and all their earrings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem.”* (Genesis 35:2–4)

Here is Jacob’s determination. He says, “I’m going to do it”—“I’m going to do it.” And I want you to see what marked his determination.

A. A Decided Choice

First of all, there was a decided choice. He had to choose against these false idols that had come into his life, or at least the lives of his loved ones. And so he says clearly, and emphatically, by a decided choice, “Put these things away. We’re going to bury these idols. We’re going to put them in the grave of God’s forgetfulness.” And that’s what he did.

You say, “Well, Brother Rogers, I don’t have any idols today. After all, we live in America. We’re not idolaters. I don’t have any false gods.” Oh? What is an idol? What is a false god? It is anything that means more to you than Almighty God. It is anything that keeps you from loving God, knowing God, serving God. It is anything that comes between you and God. For many of you, you’ve made an idol of your possessions. Many have made an idol of your pleasure. Many of you have made an idol of your family. I’m not saying that, when you love the Lord, you’re not to love your family. As a matter of fact, you cannot love your family as you ought, until you love the Lord. But my wife knows that she’s not first in my life; and I know I’m not first in her life. Jesus Christ is first. *Jesus Christ does not want a place in your life. Jesus Christ does not want prominence in your life. Jesus Christ demands preeminence.* And if He doesn’t have preeminence, dear friend, you are an idolater. And idolatry is the chief sin.

And here’s Jacob who is saying, “Put these things away.” Some of us have made an idol of ourselves. The Bible speaks of some *“whose God is their belly.”* (Philippians 3:19) They look in the mirror and sing “How Great Thou Art”; make idols of themselves, worshipping themselves, putting self first rather than God first. How foolish we are to allow these idols to come into our hearts and into our lives!

I was reading an article in the newspaper this past week. This article spoke of a man who died of radiation poisoning. Did you read it? It's an interesting article to me. It says here, "Tulsa, Oklahoma. Associated Press. An unemployed industrial radiographer has become the first American to die of radiation poisoning since the early days of the A-bomb experimentation, federal officials say. Douglas Crowfoot, thirty-eight, of Henrietta, died at a Tulsa hospital Monday, six months after he sought medical care for radiation burns on his chest and left arm. Officials said the radiation destroyed his bone marrow, burned off his left nipple, and ate deep into his body like a cancer. 'I've never seen anything like it in my life,' said Crowfoot's lawyer, Richard Gibbon."

And then it goes on to say that there was a little capsule of radioactive material that was stolen. And the article says that, "The source of the exposure remains under investigation. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has investigated the theft, about December 30, of an industrial radiographic device from a locked pipeline inspection truck parked about a half-mile from Crowfoot's home." And then the article described the size of this little capsule: "The capsule was described as slightly larger in diameter than a pencil and one-half to one inch long. Such devices are used by radiographers employed by oil companies to detect problems in pipeline wells." That little thing that this man got hold of was about the size of the end of my little finger. And there he kept it, most likely, in his pocket, near to his heart, and it ate the very life out of him.

You say, "How foolish! How foolish that someone would take something that did not belong to him, something he had no right to have, and place it near his heart!" Not as foolish as that Christian who has some idol stored away in his heart that is eating away his spiritual life and vitality. Ten thousand times ten thousand more dangerous is sin than that little capsule. But few of us believe it. Few of us believe it.

There is idolatry in our lives, and we think that we can keep that thing in our heart. "But can a man take a fire in his bosom, and be not burned?" (Proverbs 6:27) He cannot.

B. A Divine Cleansing

And so here's what Jacob said. First of all, there was, ladies and gentlemen, a decided choice.

*The dearest idol I have known,
Whate'er that idol be
Help me to tear it from Thy throne,
And worship only Thee.*

—WILLIAM COWPER

But not only was there a decided choice; there was a divine cleansing as a result of that choice. Look in verse 2: "Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were

with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you,”—that is, his decided choice—*“and be clean”*—that is, the divine cleansing. (Genesis 35:2) And, you see, one follows the other. It is not until we confess and forsake our sins that we have mercy. It is not until we deal with idolatry that we can be clean. And the Bible says, “The blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanses us from all sin.” (1 John 1:7)

Friend, don’t you want to be clean? You can’t come back to Bethel and be dirty. It’s your sin that’s drawing you away from Bethel. And you cannot come back to that relationship, that blessedness, that joy, that happiness, that fullness, that freedom that you knew when you first met the Lord, until you make that decided choice that leads to that divine cleansing. Be clean. Be clean.

*Lord Jesus, I long to be perfectly whole;
I want Thee forever to live in my soul.
Break down every idol, cast out every foe;
Now wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.*

—JAMES L. NICHOLSON

C. A Definite Change

Are you following a decided choice? Have you made it? It will do you no good to sit here and listen to this message unless you’re willing to make that choice, unless you’re willing to be done with those idols, whatever they are, whatever that thing is that comes between you and your great God. Then there will be that divine cleansing. And then there will be that definite change. Look again, if you will, please, in verse 2: “*Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods*”—the decided choice—*“and be clean,”*—the divine cleansing—*“and change your garments”*—a definite change. (Genesis 35:2)

The change of garments represents a sanctification, a change of life. It is symbolic of a changed life. That’s why he was saying, “Change your garments. We’re not going to be the same anymore. And to symbolize this new way, we’re going to change our very clothes.” You know, we call our clothes today our “habit.” And I think that it’s Jacob’s way of saying, “Change your habits. Put off the garments of idolatry and compromise and sin, and put on the garments of glory and praise and righteousness and true holiness.”

III. Jacob’s Preservation

And so, first of all, you see Jacob’s invitation. God says to Jacob, “Come on back to Bethel.” That’s what God is saying through me and through His Word to everyone here today who’s a child of God who’s gotten away from Him. And then I want you to see Jacob’s determination. He says, “We’re going to do it.” Now God’s invitation without your determination is still not going to get it done. And all the preaching in the world is

not going to get it done. I want to tell you there's somebody sitting in your seat this morning who's going to have to say, like Jacob said, "I will do it!"—Jacob's determination. I want you to see, thirdly now, Jacob's preservation.

Continue to read now in verse 5 as we continue to read: *"And they journeyed: and the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob."* (Genesis 35:5) Now this is very interesting, because all of those pagans round about there hated Jacob, and they hated Jacob's God. They had blood in their eye. They were out for vengeance. They represent the demonized forces of hell who would like to stop the work of God, and who would like to hurt the people of God. But I want you to notice that there was a supernatural dread that was upon God's enemies. And why was this? Friend, it was not because they were afraid of Jacob. Look at it real plainly: *"And as they journeyed: and the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob."* Why? The terror of God. Not the terror of Jacob. The terror of God!

Now, friend, the devil's not afraid of you, but he's afraid of your God. Did you know that? He is afraid of your God. The devils tremble at the mention of the name of Jesus. And did you know that every child is to have preservation from the power of the devil? But you're not going to have preservation over the power of the devil as long as there are idols clutched to your heart, because that idol in your heart and in your life is the devil's legal right, the devil's legal territory, the devil's legal campground to do what he will. The Bible says, in Ephesians 4:27, "Don't give place to the devil." (Ephesians 4:27)

Don't give the devil a club to beat you with. Don't let idolatry be in your life. Don't you know that the backslider is the dirty plaything of the devil? Don't you know that the backslider is vulnerable to the devil? But don't you know that when you let go of this world with both hands and take hold of God with both hands, don't you know that God will build a wall of fire round about you and protect you? "For greater is He that's in you than he that's in the world." (1 John 4:4) And there are many backsliders today who are stumbling around being hurt and wounded by the enemy. They have no protection. They have no environment round about Almighty God, because there's unconfessed, unrepented-of sin in their life. And they have given a place to the devil. Have you done that? Have you done that?

IV. Jacob's Revelation

Jacob had an invitation. Jacob made a determination. And then Jacob had a preservation. God watched over this man. God took care of him. Now I want you to see, next, Jacob's revelation. I want you to see what he learned when he went back to Bethel; some things that God wants to reveal to you today. Begin reading now in verse 7: *"And he built there an altar, and called the place Elbethel: because there God*

appeared unto him, when he fled from the face of his brother.” (Genesis 35:7)

A. God Revealed to Him the Glory of His Person

The first revelation he had was a revelation of the glory of God’s person—the glory of God’s person. Jacob called that place *El-Bethel*. Now *Bethel* means “house of God.” *Beth* means “house”; *El* is one of the Hebrew names for God. And so Jacob called that place when he first got there *Bethel*, which is “the house of God.” But now this time he changes the name a little bit, and now he calls it *El-Bethel*. Now *El* is the Hebrew name for God, and it speaks of the might of God, the majesty of God, the strength of God. And now here’s what Jacob calls that place when he goes back to Bethel. He doesn’t call it “the house of God,” but he calls it “the mighty God of the house of God”—“the mighty God of the house of God.”

Now that’s very interesting to me. And I thought on that, and I tried to say, why is this? Why does he not call it anymore “the house of God”? Why does he change the name? Why is it now “the mighty God of the house of God”? I’ll tell you what I think happened. I think the thing happened to Jacob that happens to so many of us: that worship and ritual and religion had taken the place of God. Many of you, when you first came here, you knew this place as “the house of God,” because it was here that you met God. And you saw God face to face. But now you come in, and you sing these hymns, you sing in the choir, you hold your Bible, you meet your friends, you go through the ritual, and you know the house of God, but you don’t know “the mighty God of the house of God.” And it has become, dear friend, a perfunctory thing for you. And you can go through the form, and you can go through the ritual; and you know the place, but you have forgotten the person. And the person is, so many times, replaced by the place.

And listen. The Lord doesn’t care how beautifully this choir sings. And the Lord doesn’t care how circumspectly you walk. And the Lord doesn’t care how holy you look, and how liberally you give, if you don’t love and worship Him, dear friend. God’s not concerned about this. Oh, the mighty God of the house of God: Is He real to you? Have you come here this morning, drudge in and drudge out, listen to a sermon, sing a song, and God is not real? Is He real to you? Is He the mighty God of the house of God? Is He? Is He the mighty God of the house of God? Is He? If not, you’re backslidden. You say, “I go to the house of God.” Do you know the mighty God of the house of God? Or do you have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof? (2 Timothy 3:5)

B. God Revealed to Him the Greatness of His Power

I’ll tell you what this backslider learned when he went back. He learned that he’d been going through form and motion, but he had lost the reality of it. And he needed to go back to the house of God to learn the mighty God of the house of God. He needed reality. But not only did God reveal to him the glory of His person; God revealed to him

the greatness of His power. Continue to read here in verse 9: *“And God appeared unto Jacob again, when he came out of Padanaram, and blessed him. And God said unto him, Thy name is Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name: and he called his name Israel.”* (Genesis 35:9–10)

That sounds like a broken record. We just heard that last week in our message where he was wrestling with the Lord, and he said, “I’ll not let thee go, except thou bless me.” (Genesis 32:26) God gave him this name. He said, “What’s your name?” “My name is Jacob.” “Your name will no longer be called Jacob. You’ll be called Israel. For as a prince you prevail with God.” (Genesis 32:27–28) And now again, the same thing. God is just reminding him of what he should have already known but what he had so obviously forgotten. He had slipped back into the Jacob ways because he had forgotten who he was. And God had to remind him of who he was.

And, dear friend, every backslider needs to be reminded of who he is. Do you know who you are? I mean, you talk about Jacob being a prince with God: friend, do you know the Bible says we’re *“heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ”*? (Romans 8:17) *“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.”* (1 John 3:1) Did you know that we are a royal priesthood, a holy nation? (2 Peter 2:9) Did you know that we are a kingdom of priests of God and of Christ? (Revelation 20:6) Do you know what happened to you when you got saved? The backslider forgets that: just who he is. Friend, we’re somebody. I mean, we are somebody! The child of God is in danger when he forgets just who he is and what name God has given him. “There’s a new name written down in glory; and it’s mine, all mine.” And I pray God I’ll never forget it; that God will not have to remind me that I’m a prince with God.

When I used to take my children to school every morning, drive them up to the school, just before I’d let them out, I’d lean over and kiss them, tell them I loved them, and then always say to them, “Remember today who you are, and whose you are”—“Remember today who you are, and whose you are.” And would to God that everyone who is a child of God today would remember who we are in Christ!

C. God Revealed to Him the Grace of His Promise

And if you’ve forgotten, you need to come back to Bethel, that one more time you might have that divine revelation; that you might see, ladies and gentlemen, the glory of God’s person—He’s the great God, the mighty God of the house of God; and that you might see the greatness of God’s power; and that you might see the grace of God’s promise. Continue to read here in verse 11 and following in this chapter: *“And God said unto him, I am God Almighty...”*—that word *God Almighty* here is used in the Hebrew to mean a God that can succor you or supply every need; that meets every heart hunger—*“I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of*

thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins; and the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and thy seed after thee will I give the land.” (Genesis 35:11–12)

And what does God do here? God just reconfirms His age-old promise, and God reveals here to him the grace of His promise. Now, you see, God keeps reiterating this promise. This promise was not made because of Jacob’s goodness. It was not made because of Jacob’s faithfulness. It was made because of God’s grace. And it was kept because of God’s faithfulness. And this old backslider was kept because God had a sovereign will for his life and God would not let go.

And I want to tell you today, I’m so grateful for the sovereign grace of God that hasn’t let go of me when I’ve backslid. I’m so grateful that I was saved by grace. And I’m so grateful that I am kept by grace. I am so grateful that God, in His infinite mercy, saves us and keeps us by His marvelous, marvelous grace.

V. Jacob’s Dedication

Now there’s one other thing I want you to see before we finish this message this morning. Not only do I want you to see Jacob’s invitation, and Jacob’s determination, and Jacob’s preservation, and Jacob’s revelation, when he went back to Bethel, but I want you to see, as a result of those things, Jacob’s dedication. Begin reading now in verse 13 as we continue to read—in Genesis chapter 35: *“And God went up from him in the place where he talked with him. And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he talked with him, even a pillar of stone: and he poured a drink offering thereon, and he poured oil thereon. And Jacob called the name of the place where God spake with him, Bethel.”* (Genesis 35:13–15)

Now, what does this stone represent? This stone represents to me the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the true cornerstone. He is the smiting stone. So many times in the Bible He is spoken of as our rock. I believe that this is the symbolism when Jacob here, by the leadership of the Lord, poured oil upon that stone. For, you see, in the Old Testament someone was anointed with oil. And the name *Christ* means “anointed one.” The name *Messiah* means “anointed one.” And this oil that was poured on this stone is a picture of our anointed Lord.

But wait a minute. There was something else that was poured out there. There was a drink offering, the Bible says, that’s poured out. Look at it there. And the Bible says, in verse 14, *“And he poured a drink offering thereon.”* (Genesis 35:14) Now, what was a drink offering? This is the first time that a drink offering is mentioned anywhere in the Bible. What was this drink offering? After the sacrifice had been made in the Levitical law, then, as an extra offering, this libation, this drink, would be taken and poured upon the sacrifice. And when it was poured upon the sacrifice, the heat there in the altar and

the flames would consume it and vaporize it, and it would be gone forever, never to be retrieved, never to be brought back. It would go into the presence of God; or, in the case of this particular stone where there was no flame in this particular instance, it would be absorbed into the ground, run over the altar, and be absorbed, never to be retrieved.

What does it picture? It pictures our complete dedication: a life poured out to the Lord Jesus Christ. That's what Jacob was saying: "Here is my life. One more time, Lord, I pour it out to you like I should have been doing the whole time." Incidentally, Paul said, in Philippians 2:17, that his life was like a drink offering poured out. Now you don't get that in the King James Version when you read that, but if you read it in other translations, you'll see it in Philippians 2:17. I read it in about six translations. It is called a drink offering. His life is just poured out. What Paul was saying is, "I give my life upon the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. I pour it out, no holds barred; never hope to get it back; no strings attached." (Philippians 2:17)

You say, "Brother Rogers, a man's a fool if he does that." Oh? Oh? Jesus said, "*Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it.*" (Mark 8:35) We used to say, "Finders keepers; losers weepers." Jesus says, "Losers finders, keepers weepers." "*Whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall [find] it.*" Jacob's dedication. He gave it all to Jesus Christ. Have you done that? Have you done that? You'll never know what Bethel means unless you do.

Conclusion

Now I can't go back to Bethel, as a place. My Bethel, as a place, is down in Florida; and I can't go back there as a place. But I want to tell you, my Bethel is really a person. That stone represents Jesus. And He's just near to me right now. And I can go to Bethel right now. Don't you need to come back to Bethel? Some of you do—you really do. I tell you, sometimes in my life I get cold and backslidden. And you say, "Well, preachers are not supposed to get cold and backslidden." I know it. And it happens imperceptibly. And sometimes I get so occupied with the ministry, and get so busy, and so forth, I realize sometimes that my love for Jesus is not like it ought to be: I've left my first love. And I don't have that reckless holy abandon I had when I first got saved. And I have to go back to my Bethel.

Sometimes I do that in my study. And I get on my knees, and I examine my heart, and I try to see if there are any idols in my life. And I give my physical body to the Lord. Then I give my material possessions to the Lord. And I give my family, one at a time—my precious wife and children—to the Lord. I give my grandbaby to the Lord. I give this church to the Lord. I give my so-called abilities to the Lord. And one at a time I say, "Lord, if there were a blank sheet of paper here, I'd sign it and let you fill it in and take

anything you want.” And I can tell when I come to that place where I really mean business, and I can tell when everything has been given over to Him, because there’s that feeling that the Bible says, “When your eye is single, your body is full of light.” And I’ll tell you, that’s a wonderful place to be.

And I wonder if today there are some of us who’ve been holding back just a little bit. It may be something just as small as that little bit of radioactive material, but, oh, so dangerous, because you harbor it in your heart, and you don’t give it to the Lord.

*The dearest idol I have known,
Whate’er that idol be
Help me to tear it from Thy throne,
And worship only Thee.*

—WILLIAM COWPER

Are you willing to do that? God is calling you back to Bethel.

Investing for Life

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: January 07, 1996

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 37

“Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmeelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh. And his brethren were content.”

GENESIS 37:27

Outline

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Introduction

Turn, if you will, please, to Genesis chapter 37. We begin next Sunday a series of studies and disciplines entitled “Investing for Life.” And, tonight, I wanted to get your hearts ready for that, because I want you to learn how to make your life count for our Lord.

Quite a number of years ago, when our boys were fighting overseas in Vietnam, I was in an airport. And one of the things I do in airports is to watch people. I don't know whether you ever do that or not, but people are well worth watching. And if you have nothing else to do, it's very entertaining, sometimes instructive, just to watch people. And so I was sitting back watching, and I saw a young man dressed in his military uniform. And this young man, dressed in his military uniform, was there with who I supposed were his father and his mother. And the young man was a handsome young man. He looked like he could have been a movie actor, and he looked also like he could have been a football backfield star. He had a square jaw, broad shoulders, impeccably dressed in his uniform. His mother and dad were there. His little boy and little girl were

there, and they were saying goodbye.

And it looked like a Norman Rockwell magazine cover—to see the old man and the old woman, to see this beautiful wife, to see the handsome, noble man, and the little children gathered around his knees. I almost felt like it was wrong for me to watch, but I was transfixed. I watched as they hugged, embraced, kissed. I watched him as he kissed his wife, his mother. His dad embraced him. I watched him as he picked up those little children one more time and hugged them. And I thought to myself, “He’s going overseas. He’s going, maybe, to the battlefield. He may never come home. This may be the last goodbye.”

And I thought, “I wonder, does he know the Lord? Is he saved?” And I prayed, “Lord, let him sit by me on the airplane.” And I got in and got my seat. It was pre-assigned. And I waited. And in an answer to prayer that young man came and sat down right beside me. And so I turned to him and I said, “Sir, I was watching, and I don’t mean to be intrusive, but was that your mother and father?” He said, “Yes.” I said, “Obviously, then, that was your wife?” He said, “Yes.” “Those were your little children?” “Yes.” I said, “Are you going to the front?” He said, “Yes, I’m going to Vietnam.” I said, “Do you expect to see combat?” He said, “Yes, I do.” I said, “Well, may I ask you a question? If, perhaps, you don’t come home, are you absolutely certain, if you died, you’d go straight to heaven?” He said, “Oh, yes sir. I know I’m going to heaven.”

I said, “Well, tell me about it.” He said, “Well, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and I believe He took my sins to the cross and He died for me. And I have trusted Him as my personal Lord and Savior. He’s very real in my heart.” It was so, so beautiful to hear that testimony. And I said, “Well then, are you afraid of dying?” He said, “No sir, I’m not afraid to die.”

I said, “Well, what about if you die young?” He looked at me. And he didn’t know who I was. I didn’t know what I was getting out before I asked him the question. He didn’t know I was a preacher. And sometimes I try to hide that, disguise that. He looked at me as if to give me some instruction. And it was good instruction. He said, “Sir, let me tell you something.” He said to me, “Christ is real in my life.” And he said, “God has been good to me.” And he said, “I may die young. And if that’s His plan, praise His name. But,” he said, “mister, let me tell you something. I have learned that life is not lived in length; it is lived in depth.” I’ve never forgotten it: “Life is not lived in length; it is lived in depth.” And he said, “Jesus has given me a very full, rich, and deep life.” I wanted to witness to him, but, friend, God put him on that airplane to witness to me.

I believe that the greatest tragedy in life would be to discover on your deathbed that you lived a shallow life, that you lived maybe, perhaps, many, many years, but you never lived in depth, that you never laid hold of that for which God laid hold of you. And in the words of another, you might look back on your life and say that “youth was a

struggle, maturity a blunder, and old age a regret.” So many people are born into this world with so little, and yet they achieve so much. And others are born with so much, and achieve and accomplish so little.

Now I want to talk to you about “Investing for Life,” and what I want to use as a framework is the life of one of the most noble young men that I know anything about in the Bible, whose name was Joseph. And I want to give you some things that will help you to invest in life and to live life in depth, not merely in length.

I. Learn to Dream

Number one: Learn to dream; dare to be a dreamer. Read with me now in Genesis chapter 37, verse 1: *“And Jacob dwelt in the land wherein his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan. These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father’s wives: and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report. Now Israel”—that’s another word for Jacob—“loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours. And when his brethren saw that their father loved him”—that is, Joseph—“more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him. And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it to his brethren: and they hated him yet the more. And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you this dream which I have dreamed: For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf. And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words. And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me. And he told it to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth? And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying.”* (Genesis 37:1–11)

Now as you read the rest of the life of Joseph, it’s obvious that this was not a mere daydream. This was not some inordinate, silly ambition. But God had given to him a dream. It was a God-given dream that one day the world rulers would bow at his feet and the world’s resources would be in his hand. God gave him that dream. And when he told the dream, he was not boasting; he was not bragging, because the dream was for God and the dream was for the benefit of other people.

Now, let me say this: that if you would invest your life, you need to get a dream—a

God-given dream. Now I don't mean something that you schemed up and something that you dreamed up. Jeremiah chapter 29, verse 8, says, "*Neither hearken to your dreams which ye cause to be dreamed.*" (Jeremiah 29:8) Now I'm not talking about idle daydreams, but I'm talking about finding God's will, God's plan, for your life. I love Jeremiah chapter 29, verse 11, in the King James. The NIV gives it even in a more poignant way. Listen to it. Here's what God said to His ancient people: "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you, and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future." (Jeremiah 29:11) And I don't believe that it would be wrong for us to take the intent of that verse and apply it to our hearts, because as God loved His ancient people, God loves us. And there is a sense in which there is a divine destiny for every one of us, and every one needs to catch that dream, to hear the voice of the Lord, to say, "Lord, what is it you have for my life?"

Again, if we come to the Old Testament prophet Joel, Joel said, in Joel chapter 2 and verse 28, "*And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions.*" (Joel 2:28) Do you have a vision? Have you dreamed a dream? Again, I want to say I'm not talking about carnal ambition. I'm not talking about silly daydreams. God doesn't promise to fulfill our fantasies, but God does want to give us a divine aspiration, divine inspiration, divine inclination to be what we ought to be.

How can you tell whether it's a God-given dream or just a daydream of a fantasy? How can you tell whether that thing that you feel stirring in your heart is of God? Sometimes people assay to do things that are not of God.

I heard of a man who thought he would be on the police force, and he went down to the police force to see if he could join the police force, and they gave him a test. He came back home, and his wife asked him—she said, "Do you think they're going to let you be a policeman?" He said, "More than that." He said, "I think they're going to make me a detective." She said, "Well, why do you believe that?" He said, "Well, they gave me a test, and they asked me a very serious question, and said, 'Who killed Abraham Lincoln?'" He said, "They've already put me on a murder case."

Sometimes people have inclinations that are not of God. They're silly, and they have unrealistic expectations that are not of God. Don't lie to yourself and think that God has a plan for you that He doesn't have for you. You daydream, perhaps, of being the chairman of the board of General Motors, or whatever. Test your dreams.

When God spoke to Mary and told Mary she was to be the mother of the Messiah, she believed God; she acquiesced. But, you know, there's something very interesting. The Bible says, in Luke chapter 2, verse 19, that "*Mary kept these things, and pondered them in her heart.*" (Luke 2:19) She turned them over and over in her mind. This was not unbelief, but she began to ponder and to say, "Lord, is this your will? And if it is your

will, how is it going to come to pass?” And she just turned that over and over in her heart and her mind—not in unbelief, but in wise scrutiny.

I remember when God called me to preach. I was a teenage boy, and I had not come from a line of preachers. There was no reason that I should be a preacher. As a matter of fact, I was very shy to speak in public, didn't want to speak in public—had no inclination to do so. But, somehow, in my heart the germ thought got in my heart that God might want me to preach. Now I'd already told the Lord, “Lord, I will do anything you want me to do,” and that was a settled thing in my heart and in my mind. And I thank God that I had enough spiritual inclination to know that God's will for me was good and perfect and acceptable. So I said, “Lord, here I am. What do you want me to do?” And somehow that germ got in my heart and in my mind that God might want me to preach, and I began to ask the Lord, “Lord, do you want me to preach?” because, in a way, it seemed a little ludicrous. And then after a while, I began to pray this way: “Lord, I think you might want me to preach.” And then after a while, I began to pray this way—and this went on for a period of many months: “Lord, if you don't want me to preach, you'd better let me know.” And then one day, “Lord, I know that I know that you've called me to preach.”

Now I didn't know the scripture that I'm about to give you when I was going through that exercise. As a matter of fact, I knew very little. As a matter of fact, I didn't know who came first in Bible chronology: Abraham or Moses. But I felt God moving in my heart and in my life. But then I discovered a scripture that explains what was going on in my heart. That scripture was in Proverbs chapter 4 and verse 18. It says, *“The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.”* (Proverbs 4:18) Now the shining light is the sun. And as the sun comes up, at first it's dark; then it is gray dawn. You can just see shapes but no colors. Then after a while, you can see colors but long shadows. And after a while, it is high noon, and there are no shadows. That's the way it was in my life: it was dark, and it was gray dawn. I could just see these kind of masses, ideas, thoughts. But then, finally, it was high noon in my heart and in my life.

If you think that God is speaking to you about something, if you're wondering, “Is it God's will?” do what Mary did and ponder it in your heart. Do what I did and say, “Lord, if this is you, just keep on speaking,” and say, “I am ready to do your will, whatever it is.”

I had a missionary friend call me, and I was honored. He said, “I'm facing a real decision. How can I know the will of God?” Well, I had to think, because we didn't have a lot of time to talk. And I gave him a verse that I want to give you—Romans 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, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” (Romans 12:1–2) And here is the formula: presentation plus transformation equals realization.

A. **Presentation**

Think about it: *“Present your bodies a living sacrifice.”* (Romans 12:1) Now, what is a living sacrifice? Well, a sacrifice has no plans of its own; it’s a sacrifice. You don’t have to die to be a sacrifice. You can be a living sacrifice. You put everything on the altar. You say, “Here I am, Lord. I present myself—I give myself—to you.” Have you done that? If you haven’t done that, you have no right to expect to know the will of God. Presentation.

B. **Transformation**

When you do that with that presentation, there comes a transformation. *“And be not conformed to this world: but be...transformed by the renewing of your mind.”* (Romans 12:2) Now, how does that transformation come about? God renews your mind. Well, when God renews your mind, what does He do with that new mind? Or, what do you do with it? You’re to think with it. Why would God renew your mind if He didn’t want you to think with it? So God renews your mind. You have the mind of Christ, and you’re transformed. You no longer have the old ambitions, the old desires, the old standards of right or wrong. You have a new mind to think with.

C. **Realization**

There’s presentation. There’s transformation. And then there’s realization. Then you will know what is that good and perfect and acceptable will of God. Do you know where the will of God is? Right between your ears and right in your heart. The will of God is God speaking to you through the renewed mind as He brings opportunity to you. And you see these things, and you begin to assess things in the light of God’s wisdom as God speaks to you. It’s not all that mystical, though it is absolutely miraculous.

And so you need to get a dream. You need to let God speak to you. Now God didn’t tell Joseph that one day he was going to be the prime minister of Egypt. He didn’t spell it out with specificity. But Joseph had a dream. He knew he was special. He knew that he was set apart. He knew that God had His hand on his life for something. I pray that you will say, “Dear God, don’t let me just be living a shallow life. I want to live life in depth. I want to know your will for my life.”

II. **Remember Your Distinctiveness**

Now, number two: not only do you need to dare to dream, but you need to remember your distinctiveness. Remember that the you you see is the you you will be. God made you very, very special. You’re different. Look, if you will, in verse 3: *“Now Israel loved*

Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours. And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto.” (Genesis 37:3)

Now Joseph stood out from his brothers. He was different. He dared to be different. And there’s a great contrast in the life of Joseph and the life of all of his brothers. The beautiful coat that he wore just symbolized his distinctiveness, and that coat of many colors was the kind of coat that royalty would wear. It was the sign of noble birth. And, friend, if there’s anybody who ought to stand out as distinctive because of a noble birth, it’s those of us who’ve been twice-born, those of us who are children of the Father in heaven, the deeply beloved of our Father. And you’ll find that, when you display your nobility, not arrogantly, but boldly, the world will resent that nobility, and the world will try to squeeze you back into its mold. That’s what Joseph’s brothers tried to do to him. They tried to make him conform. But he had been transformed, and he would not conform. Now God had a plan for him. God said, “Joseph, you’re going to be different; you’re distinct.” And God revealed it to him.

Now his brothers resented him for it. I have had people try to get me to back out of the ministry. When I announced as a teenager that God had called me to preach, there were those who said things like this: “You can make more money doing something else,” or, “You will never succeed in the ministry,” or, “You’ll never make it,” “You won’t last,” and all of those things. The world has plenty of wet blankets to put out your fire. Why do people resent it when you go on in the things of God? Because your spiritual success shows them up for what they are: spiritual failures.

Now Joseph was surrounded by negativism. Do you know we live in a very negative society? Paul Harvey said that 97.2 percent of the news that we read is negative. You think about the newspaper—when’s the last time you read some good news on the front page? It’s so depressing. Every morning you get up and read the newspaper before breakfast. There are riots, rapes, murders, bombings. Even read the weather report—it’s negative. I’m not talking about today. They say twenty percent chance of rain. Why don’t they say there’s eighty percent chance of sunshine? You go down the road, and there’s a thing they call a stoplight. Why don’t they call it a go-light? We’re just negative. We live in a negative society. And if you’re not careful, you’re going to fall right into it.

To see yourself as special, to see yourself as somebody, is not pride. Remember that verse I told you: *“Be not conformed to this world:”—*don’t let Joseph’s brothers squeeze you in—*“but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye might prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”* And then he said, *“I say...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 12:2–3) And in that passage he says “*think*” three times: “*Think,*” “*think,*” “*think*”—“not to think more highly of yourself that you ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God has dealt to every man a measure of faith.”

What do you do with your renewed mind? You think with it. And what do you do? You assess yourself. You say, “Who am I? Where am I?” I’m not talking about sinful exaggeration. I’m not talking about false humiliation. I’m talking about sober estimation to see who you are. God made you special. Don’t think that just some people are special. I love what Ethel Waters said, that great black singer. She said, “God don’t make no junk.” And that’s you. You’re not junk. You’re somebody. And so learn to be distinctive, to stand out, and to say, “I am special,” that “God has a plan, a destiny, for me, and I want to discover that destiny.”

III. Learn to Turn Your Problems into Possibilities

Now, here’s a third thing: Learn to turn your problems into possibilities. In this life you’re going to have problems. All people have problems. Don’t get the idea that there are some people who have problems and other people don’t have problems. If you continue to read this thirty-seventh chapter of Genesis that we’re in, we’re going to find out—here are some of the things. You think you have problems? Joseph was scorned by his brothers, hated by his brothers, in verse 8. (Genesis 37:8) In verse 18 it tells about a conspiracy that they got together against him. (Genesis 37:18) In verse 24, they tied him up and threw him down into a slimy pit. (Genesis 37:24) In verse 28, he’s sold as a slave and carried off to a foreign country. You go on and read, in the book of Genesis chapter 39, he’s falsely accused of rape, put in prison. (Genesis 39) In chapter 40, he’s forgotten in prison, and those who were supposed to help him to get out of prison and remember him, forget him. (Genesis 40) This man’s life is replete with problems.

What’s the difference in people? Some have problems, and some don’t have problems? That’s not difference.

I love the ocean, and I used to have a sailboat that I sailed around some when I was in Florida. And there’s not much place to sail here, although I have gotten a little sailboat, looking for a place to sail it, but it’s sitting in my driveway. But if you will notice sailboats, one will be going in this direction, and another will be going in this direction, both of them sailing with the same wind. Do you know how that works? One boat goes this way, and one boat goes that way; and they’re both sailing with the wind.

Well, the poet put it this way:

*One ship drives East,
And another drives West,
With the self-same winds that blow,
'Tis the set of the sails,*

*And not the gales,
That tells us the way to go.*

And then the poet said,

*Like the winds of the sea
Are the ways of fate,
As we voyage along through life.
'Tis the set of a soul,
That decides its goal,
And not the calm or the strife.*

—ELLA WHEELER WILCOX

There's a lot of wisdom in that poem. Problems don't mean that God doesn't love you. Problems don't mean that you cannot attain in life, and maximize your life, and invest in life.

Joseph, in Genesis chapter 50, when he looked back on all of his life, all of his ups and downs, and ins and outs, and the problems that he'd had—his brothers had sold him into slavery—he looked them in the face, and this is what he said to them: *“But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.”* (Genesis 50:20) Do you know what that is? That's just an Old Testament statement of Romans 8:28: *“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”* (Romans 8:28) God doesn't want you to have an easy life; God wants you to have an exciting life. God put Joseph through all of these troubles because He was training him.

One of my heroes is General Douglas MacArthur. Now, if I ever say this in a sermon, somebody will send me a book about General Douglas MacArthur. Don't do it. I can't read it. I've read enough about him, and I've got some to read about him that I haven't read yet. But he was a great man. When he was in the Philippines, this is what Douglas MacArthur wrote, talking about the kind of son he wanted, and he said, “Build me a son, O Lord, who will be strong enough to know when he is weak, and brave enough to face himself when he is afraid; one who will be proud and unbending in honest defeat, and humble and gentle in victory. Build me a son whose wishbone will not be where his backbone should be; a son who will know Thee and that to know himself is the foundation stone of knowledge. Lead him, I pray, not in the path of ease and comfort, but under the stress and spur of difficulties and challenge. Here let him learn to stand up in the storm; here let him learn compassion for those who fail. Build me a son whose heart will be clean, whose goal will be high; a son who will master himself before he seeks to master other men...one who will reach into the future, yet never forget the past. And after all these things are his, add, I pray thee, enough of a sense of humor, so

that he may always be serious, yet never take himself too seriously. Give him humility, so that he may always remember the simplicity of true greatness, the open mind of true wisdom, and the meekness of true strength.”

Now, folks, that’s a mouthful. And right in the middle of that he said, “Lord, I’m not asking that you give my son an easy life.” And God doesn’t want you to have an easy life. Learn to turn those problems into possibilities, and learn that, because you’re having difficulty, God is still working in your life. One great man said, “The door to the room of opportunity swings on the hinges of opposition.”

IV. Learn to Practice the Presence of God

Now, here’s the final thing that I want you to do as you are investing in your life and determining that you’re not going to live a shallow life, that you’re going to live a life in depth and not in mere length and width—and it is this: Learn to practice the presence of God. Fast-forward to chapter 39, and look with me for a moment. There’s one sentence in verse 2 that is repeated over and over again that epitomizes why Joseph was such a great man. Look, if you will, in chapter 39, verse 2. The Bible says, “*And the LORD was with Joseph.*” (Genesis 39:2) Then skip down to verse 3. The Bible says, “*And his master saw that the LORD was with him.*” (Genesis 39:3) Then look, if you will, in verse 21: “*But the LORD was with Joseph.*” (Genesis 39:21) Look, if you will, in verse 23: “*The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the LORD was with him*” (Genesis 39:23)—and the “*him*” refers, again, to Joseph. “The Lord was with him.” “The Lord was with him.” “The Lord was with him.” “The Lord was with him.” And in the New Testament, in the book of Acts, when Stephen is preaching that magnificent sermon, he says, in Acts chapter 7 and verse 9, “*And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him.*” (Acts 7:9) And that’s the thing that Stephen remembered. God was with him. God was with this young man.

He’s sold. He’s put in a pit. He’s sold to an Ishmaelite caravan going to Egypt. I can see him there as he’s put on the slave block and the whip whistles through the air. His hands are tied, and some barker, some auctioneer, says, “What am I bid for this fine seventeen-year-old boy?” And old Potiphar was there and looked at Joseph. Potiphar was the head of the Pharaoh’s KGB. He was the chief enforcer, the head of Pharaoh’s guard, and he buys Joseph. And Joseph goes to serve Potiphar, not with rebelliousness, not with a sullen look. Joseph now, who is a slave, makes his job his temple of devotion. And in the New Testament there’s a verse that describes the life of Joseph. It’s Colossians 3, verse 24: “*Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.*” (Colossians 3:4) He’s talking about slaves. He said, “Just serve the Lord. You’re serving the Lord Christ.” Chapter 39, verse 3, says that Potiphar took notice of this: “*And his master saw that the LORD was*

with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand.” (Genesis 39:3)

What a testimony Joseph had! Potiphar, who has bought his boy in the slave market, says, “Hey, I got a pretty good bargain. Look at this! Everything that lad touches, it seems to prosper. Look how hard he works! Look how wise he is! He serves a God named Jehovah. I wish I had more servants who were servants of Jehovah.”

A. God Was with Joseph in the Small Issues

Now, here’s the point, and I want you young people who are here tonight—and we have a great number of young people here tonight—to listen. Joseph learned to serve Potiphar, and was faithful in small things before he was faithful in big things. God makes servants before He makes rulers.

B. God Was with Joseph When Joseph Was Facing the Great Moral Issues of Life

And then I want you to see that God was with him, not only in this mundane servitude, but God was with him when he was facing the great moral issues of life and his self-control. And I’ll not take time to read this story, because you know it, but in verses 6 through 21 in this chapter, the Bible describes how handsome Joseph was. (Genesis 39:6–21) He was a virile young man. The Bible says he was a goodly young man. It means he was very physically attractive. And his master, Potiphar, had a wife who began to have impure inclinations. And she began to lust after Joseph, and she began to make overtures to Joseph, and tried to seduce Joseph. And Joseph, in order to keep himself pure, just distanced himself from her. But, upon a time, she caught him there at what she considered to be an opportune moment and tried to drag him into an adulterous bed. And Joseph so fled that he left his coat in that place, and she, so scorned and so angry, and in a fit, she tore her own clothes, and took the robe of Joseph, and began to scream, “Help! Help!” And they all came running in there, and she said, “That young man tried to rape me.” And Joseph is cast into prison. What else could Potiphar do? His wife had accused this man. Could Potiphar say to his wife, “You’re telling a lie”? She was lying, but God was with Joseph.

Do you know what kept Joseph from sinning? Look, if you will, in verse 9. Joseph said to her, “*There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he*”—that is, “my master”—“*kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?*” (Genesis 39:9) You see, God was with him—God was with him. You know what kept me pure as a young man? Not reading books about purity, but God Himself—the fact that I could not sin against God. This sin is not primarily against your wife, or against your husband, or against some other woman, or against your own body; it’s against God. And so here God is with Joseph. Joseph just gets out of there. He runs away. The Bible says there’s a way to

escape. (1 Corinthians 10:13) Sometimes it's two legs and a hard run. And that's what Joseph did.

C. **God Was with Joseph When Joseph Was Suffering**

And, again, God was with him when he was suffering. And I don't have time to tell you that, and you don't have time to listen, except to say this: that Joseph is in prison, and the last few verses tell us—in verse 21, *“The LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it. The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the LORD was with him, and that which he did, the LORD made it to prosper.”* (Genesis 39:21–23)

What I'm saying to you, my friend, is, practice the presence of God. If God gives you a hard job to do, do it as unto the Lord. If God puts you in a situation where you're tempted to compromise, to steal, to commit adultery, to tell a lie, practice the presence of the Lord, and say, “I cannot do this thing against God.” If God gives you an opportunity for leadership, do it as God enables you to do it. And whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might, (Ecclesiastes 9:10) and practice the presence of the Lord.

Conclusion

You say, “Well, Adrian, all that you say tonight about living a life in depth is good; but, Adrian, God called you when you were a teenage boy. God put His hand upon Joseph when he was a seventeen-year-old lad, and even before that. I'm an old man. I've missed the call of God upon my life.” Friend, let me tell you something: the wisest thing that you could do, whether you're seventeen, fifty, seventy-five, or ninety-five, right now, would be to make a full surrender to the Lord, and say, “Lord, I want you to help me to make up for those wasted years. I want you, Lord, to give me a dream. Give me a dream today. If I have five years, one year, three months, twenty years, whatever it is, Lord, I want to go out with a blaze of glory. Lord, I want to know your will for my life. God, give me a dream. Help me, Lord, to dare to be different. Help me, Lord, to turn my problems into possibilities. Lord, help me to practice your presence, wherever I am. And, Lord, if you make me the prime minister of Egypt, or keep me in prison, it makes no difference. Lord, if I'm in your will, that's all that really matters.” The highest place is just in the center of God's will, wherever it is.

But, folks, I don't know how much longer I'm going to have, or you're going to have, or any of us are going to have, but I want to be like that soldier I met on that airplane. I want to say that my life was lived not in length, but in depth, don't you?

Practicing the Presence of God

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: September 17, 2000

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 37

“And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more.”

GENESIS 37:5

Outline

Introduction

- I. Express Your God-Given Difference
- II. Explore Your God-Given Dreams
- III. Endure Your God-Given Difficulties
- IV. Enlist Your God-Given Dynamic

Conclusion

Introduction

Turn, if you will, with me, please, to the book of Genesis chapter 37. And when you've found it, look up here again. I want to talk to you about “Practicing the Presence of God.”

Now, what is the greatest tragedy of all? I suppose the greatest tragedy of all would be to come to your deathbed, being ready to die, and to discover you've never lived, because Jesus said, “I've come that you might have life, and have it abundantly.” There are many people who are grinding it out, who are enduring, who are existing, but they are not living. One man described it this way: “Youth—a struggle; maturity—a blunder; and, old age—a regret.” Yet there are some people who seem to be born with so little, and yet they accomplish so much. There are other people who seem to be born with so much, and yet they accomplish so little. What is the difference? I submit to you that the difference, the secret, is the presence of God.

Now we're going to study the life of a young man named Joseph, and I'm going to show you later on, there's a refrain about Joseph that comes in the story of Joseph, and it says this: “And God was with him,” “And God was with him,” “And God was with him.” That is, here was a man who learned how to practice the presence of God. It's an interesting thing.

The book of Genesis is a wonderful book, but let me give you an astounding fact.

Twenty-five percent of the book of Genesis is about Joseph. That's an amazing thing,

because in the book of Genesis it also tells about the creation of the universe, and in five words—five words—it says, “*He made the stars also.*” (Genesis 1:16) That’s it: five words for the whole universe—and twenty-five percent of this one book about one man whose name was Joseph. I believe the most Christ-like character in the Old Testament was Joseph, and we have so much to learn about him. And the story we’re going to read pretty soon takes up when Joseph was a teen, seventeen years of age, just about ready, if he were to live in today’s society, to graduate from high school. And sometimes we think that these were mighty men, great men, never had any problems, and somehow they were born full-grown and mature and all of that.

Let me tell you about Joseph. Joseph came from a dysfunctional family. His father, Jacob, was a con artist by nature. I mean, if you study the life of Jacob, you’ll understand that before God got hold of Jacob and turned him inside out, upside down, Jacob was a con artist. He had an uncle, Laban, who was slicker than Jake, and just as big a cheater. Now I’m not going to get into all that story, but let me tell you that, on top of all of that, his mother died when he was in his mid teens. Can you imagine the trauma of having your mother die? He had a gracious, beautiful mother, whose name was Rachel. But she died. And when he came up, friend, he lived in a nest, a swarm, of wicked, ungodly brothers. Now that’s the kind of background that this boy had. He’s a seventeen-year-old kid. And that’s the start that he gets.

And then we’re going to find out, in the story, that he gets into all kinds of difficulty and trouble. And to set the stage, if you’re not familiar with the story of Joseph, I’m going to give you just a brief thumbnail sketch of this boy named Joseph.

First of all, he was his father’s favorite son. I believe he was his father’s favorite son because he was born of Rachel, who was his father’s favorite wife. Now Jacob had several wives; but his true love, his real love, was Rachel. And Joseph was born of Rachel. And Jacob loved Joseph so much that he gave him a coat, a coat of many colors. And we’ll talk about that coat later on, but he receives a coat of many colors. And he receives some dreams. God speaks to him, and God gives him a vision. And God says to Joseph, this seventeen-year-old boy, “One day, all of the world’s resources are going to be at your disposal, and all of the world’s rulers are going to bow down to your feet.”

Now he’s just a seventeen-year-old kid, and God gives him this dream, and he tells it to his brothers. His brothers envy him because of his coat of many colors, his distinctiveness. They are jealous of him because of the father’s love for him. They resent him because of his dreams and his visions which he told them. Well, upon a time, when they were out in the field, his brothers took him, stripped off his beautiful coat, really wanted to kill him. They put him in a pit to die, a pit where there was no water, to languish there. And then, when a caravan coming to Egypt passed by, they

said, “Well, hey, we’ll do something better than let him die in the pit. We’ll sell him.” And so they sold him for the price of a slave. Here’s this teen boy. He’s done nothing wrong. Now he has been abused by his brothers, sold as a slave. I can see him as he’s bound to the caravan there, the whip whistles through the air, and off he goes all the way to Egypt.

When he gets down to Egypt, he’s put on the slave block down in Egypt. And the chief of Pharaoh’s guard, Potiphar—the head of the KGB in Egypt, the one who protected the Pharaoh—saw this goodly, handsome young man, full of virility and strength and handsome—he was a beautiful young man. The Bible calls him that: a handsome young man—very much like you, Mark. And he was this kind of a young man. And Potiphar bought him and made him a household slave. But Joseph was of such character and industry and ingenuity and fidelity that he begins to rise up in the ranks. And, before long, he is running Potiphar’s household for him. But then Potiphar’s wife begins to lust after Joseph and begins to try to entice him into an adulterous affair, which Joseph refused. And hell hath no fury like a woman scorned. So she said that Joseph tried to assault her and to rape her. And she tells her husband “what this boy did to me.” And her husband takes Joseph now by the nape of his neck and casts him into prison. He’s languishing there in prison, not for doing something wrong, but for doing something right, for keeping himself pure.

And there he is down in the prison, and he begins to rise to the top again. He’s beginning to be in control of the prison. And he helps a man who gets out of prison. The man says, “Joseph, I know you’re innocent. I’ll speak a word for you when I get out of prison.” But he forgets Joseph, and Joseph is there rotting in prison, languishing in prison. He stays there for a while, until Pharaoh has a dream. He needs somebody to interpret the dream. Joseph is taken out of prison, because Joseph has the wisdom of God about him. Joseph interprets the dreams for Pharaoh. There are going to be seven years of plenty and seven years of famine. And Pharaoh says, “Joseph, you’re so wise; you’re so smart. I’m going to put you in charge of all of this.” And Joseph is gathering grain, and after a while, Joseph becomes the savior of that known world, in the physical, material sense. And Pharaoh exalts Joseph. He is the prime minister of Egypt.

Now this is the boy that was sold as a slave, and he just keeps rising and rising and rising. Now he is the prime minister of Egypt. And there’s a famine in the land. Down in the land of Canaan, those wicked brothers that sold him into slavery have to go to Egypt for food. They don’t know who Joseph is. I mean, Joseph now is dressing like an Egyptian. He’s grown up. He’s changed. But they’ve come and they have to appear before Joseph and ask Joseph for grain. And the story gets so interesting there. And I can’t tell you all of it right now, because time would fail me. But, finally, Joseph reveals himself to his brothers and forgives his brothers, brings his father there, old Jake, all the

way from Canaan to Egypt. It is a glorious story. It's one the greatest stories ever written. I mean, it's not fiction; it is fact. It is true, and it is full of Bible truth. But there is a theme.

Well, let's just look at it now. Turn to chapter 39, if you will here, for just a moment, and look, if you will, in verses 2 and 3, and notice here—Genesis 39, verse 2: *“And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man.”* (Genesis 39:2) Do you see that? Look in chapter 39, verse 21: *“But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison.”* (Genesis 39:21) Look, if you will, in chapter 39, verse 23: *“The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the LORD was with him,”*—that is, with Joseph—*“and that which he did, the LORD made it to prosper.”* (Genesis 39:23) I love that: “The Lord was with him”; “The Lord was with him”; “The Lord was with him.” No matter what happened, here was a man who was practicing the presence of God.

Now, would you like to do that? Would you like to prosper? I mean, have real prosperity. That's not necessarily wealth. Prosperity is the progressive realization of the will of God for your life. Would you like to prosper? Let me give you four principles—can I do that?—that are going to come right out. Go back to chapter 37, if you will, here.

I. Express Your God-Given Difference

Number one—principle number one: Express your God-given difference. When God saved you, God made you different. And Joseph expressed his God-given difference. Read the first four verses: *“And Jacob dwelt in the land wherein his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan. These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives: and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report.”* Now that doesn't mean he was a tattletale; it means that he was a truth teller. *“Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he had made him a coat of many colours. And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.”* (Genesis 37:1–4)

Now, put it down big, plain, and straight: Joseph was distinct, and Joseph was different. And the multi-colored coat that he wore was a mark of distinction that he wore. Now I believe—and we'll get into this later—this was because Joseph was given the birthright, which was spiritual as well as material. That is, he was distinct because of his nobility. The multi-colored, long-sleeved coat was a mark of nobility.

Now, what does that have to say to Adrian today? What does that have to say to you today? Folks, I want to tell you that we are nobility in the Lord Jesus Christ. Do you know who's preaching to you today? A royal blueblood. I'm a king and a prince. You say,

“You’re full of yourself.” Ha, ha, I can’t help it. I’m a king and a prince. If you don’t want to call me Pastor, just call me Prince Adrian. Listen, folks. I am telling you that God has made us a kingdom of priests. We are somebody. We are a chosen generation. And the Bible calls us a peculiar people. We are different. And the world resents our nobility in the Lord Jesus Christ, and the world always wants to squeeze us into its mold. As Paul said, in Romans chapter 12, verse 2, “*Be not conformed to this world.*” (Romans 12:2) Joseph was different. His brothers hated him. He would not conform.

I can hear these wicked brothers say, “Hey, Joseph, you sissy!” “Hey, Joseph, take a drink of this.” “Hey, Joseph, take a puff of this.” “Let’s get old Joe a date with you know who.” And Joseph, they’re constantly trying to get Joseph to conform, but he will not do it. He would not conform.

You know, this world wants to make us conform. I’ll guarantee you. There’s something about nature that makes us want to conform. We speak of a flock of sheep, a pack of wolves, a swarm of birds, a covey of quail, a pride of lions, and a gaggle of geese, a bevy of women, a gang of boys—and we might say, a giggle of girls. We all want to get in there and somehow conform. And the chief religion in America is the cult of conformity. And the chief sin is to be different.

Now it’s very strange that sometimes, however, somebody will break out from the group and he’ll be different. There will be an old boy, and rather than putting his hat on this way, he’ll put the bill back this way; and for a while all the kids look at him, then the first thing you know, they’re all putting the bill back this way. And that’s the way they wear the hat. That thing’s supposed to keep the sun off your eyes, not off your neck. But they’re all wearing the hats. And the first thing you know, somebody will wear a pair of baggy pants that most young, respectable young men wouldn’t be caught dead in, but he’ll wear these pants hanging down, real baggy, and so forth. Next thing you know, all these kids are wearing these baggy pants. They don’t want to be different. They want to conform. Somebody will put a safety pin through his nose. Good night! Good night! And you see these kids with a safety pin through their nose. Everybody’s got to conform. You’ve got to be like the crowd.

I was reading where some scientists were trying to understand why fish swim in schools. Do you know what they did? They took a fish, and by surgery they did a lobotomy on that fish, removed his brain, but he could still swim. They took away the schooling instinct, evidently, that was in this fish. And so he no longer followed the school. He just swam off by himself. Now, let me tell you what happened. All the rest followed him. True. Here is a fish without brains—without brains—and the rest are following him. For further reference, go to any junior high school.

Here was Joseph. Joseph refuses to conform. He is different. And I want to tell you, friend, a child of God is different. What we believe starts at a different source; it follows a

different course; it ends at a different conclusion. And we're twice-born people in a world of once-born people, and you're going to be going against the tide most of the time. And you ought to stand out like a diamond in a gold mine.

Now we are special. We're distinct. Would you like to have the presence of God? Well, let me just say, express your distinction, your difference.

II. Explore Your God-Given Dreams

Number two—number two: Explore your God-given dreams—explore your God-given dreams. Look in verse 5: *“And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more. And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed: For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf. And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words.”* (Genesis 37:5–8) And then, in verse 9 on through 11, he dreamed another dream, and I'm going to compact it and let you read that when you get home. But here was a man who had a God-given dream. He's just a teen, but God is putting a dream into his heart.

May I tell you that youth is a wonderful time not to conform, but to dream. Let God put a dream in your heart. I was about Joseph's age, a little younger, when God called me into the ministry. I was in high school, and my pastor told me that God had a plan for everybody's life. And I wanted to know God's plan for my life. And I said to the Lord, “Lord, I don't know what you want me to do; but whatever it is, I want you to show me your will, and whatever it is, I want to do it.”

Now God spoke to Joseph through a dream. He may speak to you some other way. But the point is this: that God has a plan for your life. Would you like to know what God's plan for your life is? Really, would you? Now, remember, Joseph just had a vision. He had a hint, but that's all. God didn't give him a road map. I think Joseph would have been perturbed had God told him about the pit and the prison, and the accusations and all of this. But he had a dream. He had something that he aspired to. Romans 12, verses 1 and 2, for those of us who live this side of Calvary, is such a wonderful, wonderful formula for formulating our God-given dream. And I've preached this verse to you so many times, but it's such a key verse—Romans 12:1–2: *“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:”*—now, notice the order—*“but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”* (Romans 12:1–2) You want to know the will of God? There it is.

There's the formula. Presentation plus transformation equals realization.

Presentation—just present yourself to Him. Have you done that? I mean, have you really done that? Have you presented yourself to Him? “Here I am, God.” Most people have never done that. Most people say, “You know, if I did that, no telling where I'd end up. I'd be a missionary over in Pago Pago somewhere.” You don't want to present yourself to God. Listen. Present yourself to Him. Sign the contract, and hand it to Him, and tell Him to fill it in. Don't be afraid of that, because when you present yourself to Him, then you're transformed. *“Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed.”* (Romans 12:2) And the word *transform* is the word we get our English word *metamorphosis* from. You will have a divine metamorphosis. What is a metamorphosis? It actually means—*meta* means “change”; *morphosis* means “form.” It's a change of form. It literally means “when that which is on the inside comes to the surface.” For example, the worm goes into the cocoon and comes out a moth or a butterfly. It has gone through a metamorphosis. The inner nature of that caterpillar is a beautiful butterfly.

Jesus, on the Mount of Transfiguration, the Bible says He was transfigured. It's the same word: *metamorphosis*. Jesus went through a metamorphosis. What was His inner nature? Glory. It just came to the surface. He was metamorphosed. He had a change of nature. What is the inner nature of a child of God? If you're born again, what? It's God. It is glory. It is Jesus. Your inner nature is Jesus. Christ lives in you. When you present yourself to Him *“a living sacrifice,”* there will be a metamorphosis, and that which is on the inside will come to the surface. Rather than letting the world squeeze it out, it begins to come out. Presentation plus transformation equals realization. And you will know “what is that good, perfect, acceptable will of God.”

Hey, folks, listen to me. You don't find the will of God; the will of God finds you. You get your heart right with God. You present yourself to Him. You let the glory of Jesus come out of you. You have the mind of Christ, and you just get in the stream, and you'll find out that God will be guiding you. God will be guiding you. I mean, God didn't give Joseph a road map, but God gave to Joseph a dream. Now, don't say, “God, you show me what you want me to do, and I'll consider if I want to do it.” No sir.

Now, make sure it's God that's speaking now. When I'm talking about dreams here, I'm not talking about carnal ambition. I'm not telling you that God has promised to fulfill your fantasies. I'm talking about a God-given dream. I found this verse—Jeremiah 29, verse 8. The Bible says, *“Neither hearken to your dreams which ye cause to be dreamed.”* (Jeremiah 29:8) Boy, that's a good one! Did you write it down? No, you didn't. Write it down. Jeremiah 29, verse 8: “Hearken not to your dreams which ye have dreamed.” Why? Because God's got a better dream for you. Jeremiah 29, verse 11: *“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and*

not of evil, to give you [a future and a hope].” (Jeremiah 29:11)

God has a dream for you. And God wants us to dream dreams, not daydreams—God-given dreams. The book of Joel says, in Joel chapter 2, verse 28, *“And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions.”* (Joel 2:28) What’s he saying? He’s saying, “Let God be real in you.” How can I tell whether my dream is a God-given dream? Think about it. Pray over it. When Mary had a vision about the coming Savior, the Bible says that Mary “pondered all these things in her heart.” (Luke 2:19)

One of my great verses that I love is Proverbs 4, verse 18. It says, *“The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.”* (Proverbs 4:18) What does that mean? Sometimes you don’t know what the will of God is for your life, even the will of God for today, but “the path of the just is as the shining light, that shines more and more unto a perfect day.” At first, it’s dark. Then, it’s gray dawn—no color. You can only see shadows. And then, the sun is coming up, and you can see the colors, but there are long shadows. And after a while, it’s high noon. *“The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.”*

When I was a kid, I said, “Lord, what do you want me to do?” And then after a while, I got a little germ in my heart: “Lord, I think you want me to preach.” And then it was, “Lord, do you want me to preach?” And then after a while, it was, “Lord, I think you want me to preach.” Then after a while, it was, “Lord, if you don’t want me to preach, you’d better let me know.” And then finally, “Lord, I know this is what you want.”

You see, check your dream out. Soak it in prayer. God will guide you. You say, “Lord, if this is you speaking, keep on speaking,” but explore your dreams. That’s what Joseph did.

I wish I had more time to talk about that. By the way, there were plenty of wet blankets in Joseph’s time. They hated him because of his nobility. They despised him. And when you get a dream in your heart, I can promise you the devil will see to it there’ll be a bunch of people on the Cold Water Committee and the Wet Blanket Committee to keep you from doing it.

I was a teen, sleeping in the back bedroom—or taking a nap. My dad was out on the patio with a man named Bert. He was the sheriff of that county, and I respected him so much. Bert said to my dad, “What’s Adrian going to do when he gets out of high school?” My dad says, “He thinks he wants to be a preacher.” Bert said, “That boy will never be a preacher. That boy will never make it.” He didn’t know I heard that. But I was sitting there listening. There are plenty of people who say that it can’t be done; but I’m telling you, if God gives you a dream, it can be done. Let it be a God-given dream.

III. Endure Your God-Given Difficulties

Number three—and we’ve got to hurry this morning—number three: Endure your God-given difficulties. Now, when there’s a God-given dream, there will be some God-given difficulties. And in this chapter, if you read from verse 8 on through 27, you would find just a few of the difficulties. Here’s this man, scorned by his brothers. There’s a conspiracy against him. He’s thrown into a pit. He’s sold as a slave. He’s falsely accused. He languishes in prison. Well, was God out of control? Not for a second was God not in control—not a nanosecond. When it was all over—and you can just put in your margin Genesis chapter 50, verse 20—Joseph is confronting his brethren, and he says, *“As for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.”* (Genesis 50:20) Now they meant it for evil. God meant it for good. What’s the corresponding verse to that? You know it. Romans 8:28: *“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”* (Romans 8:28)

God is going to allow you to have difficulties in life. God does not cause these things. God did not cause Potiphar’s wife to accuse Joseph of rape. God did not cause these things to happen. But wherever man rules, God overrules. And God was not finished with Joseph. Are you having difficulty? Did you have a dream, and your dream is now shattered? Your dream is shattered. That doesn’t mean that God is out of business with you—I mean, if you’re in an impossible situation. I know at least one brother that I’m speaking to this morning that’s in that kind of situation, and God gave him a dream, and at this moment the dream lies shattered. I want to tell you that God is over it all, and no matter what Satan does, no matter what happens, there’s a God who is in control of this world. And, friend, you’d better get a lock on that, okay?

IV. Enlist Your God-Given Dynamic

Now I had a lot to say on that, but I’m going to move on to the last point, because I’ve got a couple of minutes here. Here’s the fourth thing if you would practice the presence of God: Enlist your God-given dynamic.

You’ve got the dream. You’ve got the difficulties. But there is a dynamic. And what is the dynamic? Go back again to Genesis chapter 39 again: “And God was with him”; “and God was with him”; “and God was with him.” And do you know, in the book of Acts, when a great preacher was preaching a sermon on the Old Testament, do you know what he said about Joseph? Do you know what he picked out about Joseph? Put it in your margin—Acts chapter 7 and verse 9—and it says this: *“And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph...”*—now the patriarchs were his other brothers. They called them patriarchs—*“sold Joseph into Egypt:”*—but notice what he said—*“but God was with him.”* (Acts 7:9) I love that: *“But God was with him.”*

When I was coming to the pulpit this morning, a little boy stopped me. He said, “Preacher, I’ve got a question to ask you.” I said, “What is that?” He said, “Is God in hell?” Pretty good theological question. The boy looked to me like he was thirteen, maybe twelve. If he’s here, maybe eighteen. He looked eighteen. Now he said, “Is God in hell?” I said, “Son, there’s nowhere where God is not.” God is in hell. Satan doesn’t rule in hell. God is in hell. God has given Jesus a name, which is above every name, “*of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth...that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*” (Philippians 2:9–11) There is no place where God is not.

One philosopher said that God is a circle whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere. Now, you chew on that. God is a circle whose center is everywhere. There’s nowhere where God is not. God is *here*. God is *here*. God is *here*. For there’s nowhere where God is not. Well then, what is the difference in God being with Joseph and God being with Hitler? You see, the difference is not His actual presence. When the Bible says that God was with him, it means that God was for him, God was on his behalf, God was engineering things for Joseph. God was with him in times of persecution. God was with him in times of responsibility. And, by the way, all of these things are a little sermon here, but I’m well on through. God was with him in time of temptation—we’ll see it later. God was with him in times of slander and suffering. God was with him. God was with him when he died.

Do you know what I want? I want God with me. I want there to be something about Adrian that you cannot explain apart from the fact that God is with me.

One of our deacons—as a matter of fact, the chairman of our deacons, Brother Harry Smith—we were talking in a committee meeting, and we were rejoicing over what God has done these twenty-eight years here at Bellevue Baptist Church. And he said, “Pastor, I appreciate the music.” He said, “I appreciate the preaching.” He said, “I appreciate the administration of Bellevue.” But he said, “There’s something about Bellevue I can’t explain.” Have you ever felt that way? “There’s something about Bellevue I can’t explain.” And I said, “That is it. It is the presence of God. And we can’t strut about that. But God forbid that we should ever cease to be grateful that God is, just by His grace, He’s with us.”

I don’t want God to take His hand off of my life. I don’t want God to take His hand off of our lives. We’ll have sorrows. We’ll have sickness. You know that Joyce and I lost a little boy. Our little boy died on Mother’s Day, one of those crib deaths, on Mother’s Day. I’d just preached on the glories of a Christian home. We left that Sunday afternoon to go from Fort Pierce to West Palm Beach, about sixty miles, to be with family. They called somebody else in to preach. Our pastorium was as close to the church as I am almost to Mark over here, just a little white frame house. And the church members had come

by. We'd not been in that church but just several weeks. And as Joyce and I backed out our automobile—they didn't have air conditioning in that church, the little white church building—I can see the yellow light as it was streaming out of the open windows, and the congregation was singing. You know what they were singing?

*No, never alone,
No, never alone,
He promised never to leave me,
Never to leave me alone.
I've seen the lightning flashing,
And heard the thunder roll,
I've felt sin's breakers dashing,
Trying to conquer my soul;
I've heard the voice of my Savior,
Telling me still to fight on,
He promised never to leave me,
Never to leave me alone.*

—LUDIE D. PICKETT

Conclusion

I would not take anything for the conscious presence of God, and this little phrase that speaks about Joseph's life: "And God was with him." God was with him. In prison, God is with him. In the pit, God is with him. In slander, God is with him. In business, God is with him. In pain, God is with him. In prosperity, God is with him. He's dying, God is with him. And I want to tell you that God is in Christ, and if you want God with you, you need Jesus.

Joseph: A Type of Christ

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: August 9, 1981

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 37; 41; 45

“And they took Joseph's coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood; And they sent the coat of many colours, and they brought it to their father; and said, This have we found: know now whether it be thy son's coat or no.”

GENESIS 37:31–32

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Conclusion

Introduction

I want you to take your Bibles, please, and turn to Genesis 37—Genesis 37. And oh, my friend, if you have a Bible today, you must use it. If you don't use it, you're going to not get nearly as much from the message as you will get if you use your Bibles, and that's true every Sunday. How do you know that I'm not preaching out of the encyclopedia or *The Reader's Digest* or something? And, you get your Bibles and follow along and search the Scriptures, you'll get so much more from it.

Now today, we enter into a new segment of our studies in the book of Genesis. For the last two or three Sundays, we've been studying about Jacob. We talked about Jacob's stairway to heaven—Jacob's ladder. We've talked about Jacob wrestling with the angel of the Lord. We've talked about Jacob going back to Bethel. But today, we begin to study about Joseph. And, you're going to find an interesting thing—that one-fourth of the book of Genesis deals with Joseph. So much is said about Joseph.

Now, that's an unusual thing for so much to be said about one person. When you think about the fact that when God describes the creation of the mighty universe, it says in five words, “[*And*] *he made the stars also.*” (Genesis 1:16) Now, you just think of that: think of the vast myriads of the stars, and galaxy piled upon galaxy, and worlds way out there. And, it just says, “[*And*] *he made the stars also,*” (Genesis 1:16) and He's finished with that. But, for chapter after chapter after chapter, we deal with the life of Joseph. Why? Well, I want to suggest several reasons.

A. **His Place**

First of all, because of his place—where he comes in history. You'll not really understand the book of Exodus unless you understand the book of Genesis, and you'll not understand the book of Genesis unless you understand the life of Joseph and the transition between Genesis and Exodus. So, one reason that the Bible deals so much with the life of Joseph is because of his place.

B. **His Purity**

Number two: Because of his purity. Did you know that Joseph is one young man in the Bible about whom nothing bad is said? No sin is recorded against the life of Joseph. Now, that doesn't mean, of course, that Joseph did not sin, but God the Holy Spirit chose not to record any sin about the life of Joseph, I believe, for the third reason.

C. **His Prophecy**

Not only his place and his purity, but his prophecy—Joseph was a type, an illustration, of the Lord Jesus Christ. And, you're going to see this, and what a wonderful blessing it's going to be to you as you see a picture, a prophecy, a type of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, the Bible tells us that certain Old Testament stories, and certain Old Testament

characters, and certain Old Testament happenings were illustrations of New Testament truths. For example, the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 10:11: *“all these things happened [to] them”*—that is, the Old Testament characters—*“for examples [to us].”* (1 Corinthians 10:11) And, the word *examples* is the word that we get our word *type* from. Actually, it says, “All these things happened to them for types unto us,” is actually what the Greek word says. They were types; they were pictures—prophecies—of truths that we can learn in the New Testament. Now, nowhere specifically in the New Testament is Joseph called a “type” of Christ. But, as we study today, I believe you’re going to have to be convinced, as I am definitely convinced, that our Lord has marvelously and wonderfully pictured the Lord Jesus Christ here.

Now, those of you who’ve been coming to Bellevue for some time will remember that a little more than a year ago I preached a series of messages called “Portraits of Christ in the Old Testament.” And, at that particular time, we studied the life of Joseph, and we called that message “The Gospel According to Joseph,” because we said as you studied the life of Joseph, you found a direct parallel between the life of Joseph and the life of the Lord Jesus. And, it is necessary and incumbent in our study in Genesis that we do that again—that we look again and see how the life of Joseph is a parallel, an illustration, a type, a picture, a prophecy, a promise of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. And friend, it will bless you.

It blesses me, number one, because I love Jesus, and anything that reminds me of Jesus is a blessing to me. Number two: I love the Bible, and it’s just a marvelous proof of the inspiration of the Bible, as I see how God has so cunningly and so beautifully and sweetly enfolded the Lord Jesus Christ in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, Jesus is enfolded. In the New Testament, Jesus is unfolded. In the Old Testament, Jesus is concealed. In the New Testament, Jesus is revealed. But, Jesus is there in all of the Bible. As I’ve said before, as you study the Bible enough, as you look at the Bible, as you love the Bible, as you meditate on the Bible, standing somewhere in the shadows you’ll find Jesus. He is there, ladies and gentlemen. It’s all about Him. Don’t get the idea that the Old Testament is about the Jews and the New Testament is about Jesus. All of the Bible is about Jesus.

Jesus is the hero of the Bible. Jesus said, *“Search the scriptures; for...[these] are they which [do] testify of me.”* (John 5:39) And, the scriptures to which Jesus referred when He made that statement were the Old Testament scriptures. And, the Bible says that on a particular day, He took two men and *“he [showed] them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.”* (Luke 24:27) It does not say that He showed them all the things in the Scriptures concerning Himself; it says, *“he [showed] them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.”* (Luke 24:27) That means in all of the Scriptures, you’re going to find things concerning Jesus. Jesus is there if you look long

enough. If you study reverently enough, if you think and meditate, you're going to find the Lord Jesus Christ there in the Bible.

Now, as we study the life of Joseph as we're going to begin to do in just a moment, starting in Genesis 37, you're going to find out, as we study the life of Joseph, that his life is divided into four principle divisions. Are you ready for them? Here they are: number one, you're going to find Joseph as the beloved son, just as the Lord Jesus is the beloved Son; number two, you're going to find Joseph as the rejected servant, just as Jesus was the rejected servant; number three, you're going to find Joseph as the exalted sovereign, just as Jesus now is exalted at the right hand of the Majesty on high; and then, number four, you're going to find Joseph as the seeking savior, just as Jesus today is the seeking Savior.

I. The Beloved Son

Now, in case you think that I'm reading into that or just simply using fanciful thought, let's just take our Bibles and see if those things are not true. Let's begin to read now, first of all, and think of Joseph, beginning in Genesis 37, as the beloved son. I'm reading here in Genesis 37:1: and the Bible says, *"And Jacob dwelt in the land wherein his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan. [And] these are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren."* (Genesis 37:1–2)

A. His Name

Now, right here I want to stop and speak to you about his name, Joseph. He is named Joseph. And, what does the name Joseph mean? It means "one who adds to; adder, multiplier; one who brings a blessing with him." You see, Jesus is God's great multiplier. The devil is the great subtractor: he comes to steal and to kill. (John 10:10) But, Jesus said, *"[I've] come that [ye] might have life, and...have it...abundantly."* (John 10:10) Friend, don't feel sorry for me because I'm a Christian here. Don't you say, "Well, the poor man—he had to accept Christ, and that just took so much out of his life." When I received Jesus, I received all of the fullness of God, for he is God's great One who adds to me.

A little boy came to church for the first time with his mother, going to what they call "big church." He looked up at the communion table, and on the communion table there was a cross. He didn't quite understand that it was a cross, but he said, "Mother, what is that plus sign doing on the communion table?" I want to tell you that Jesus is God's great plus sign. He's the One who "adds to."

B. His Nature

But, not only his name—I want you to notice also his nature. Look in the last part of

verse 2: and the Bible says, “[*And he*] brought [*to*] his father their evil report.” (Genesis 37:2) Now, Joseph has been down there with his brethren—out in the...out in the pasture. And, they’ve been sinning, and they’ve been carrying on and cavorting. They were wild, and vile, and wicked, and profane, ungodly young men, in many ways, and Joseph came back and told his father. Now, that doesn’t mean that Joseph was a tattletale. That’s not it at all. He was not a talebearer; he was a truth speaker. Joseph, by nature, had a hatred of evil. And again, here he reminds us of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let me give you a verse: John 7:7. Jesus said, “*The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.*” (John 7:7) Just as Jesus testifies against this world, so Joseph testified against the world and the sin of his particular day. Some say, dear friends, that Jesus came to find fault. He did not come to find fault, but He did come, dear friend, to reveal our thoughts, that we might find Him.

C. His Nurture

Now, I want you to see not only his name, Joseph, which means “one who adds”; I want you to see not only his nature—like the Lord Jesus, one that is opposed to sin; but I want you to see his nurture. Look, if you will, in verse 3: the Bible says, “*Now Israel loved Joseph more than all [of] his children.*” (Genesis 37:3) Oh, the nurture that he had! The love that his father had for him! Israel loved him more than all of his children. Now again, he reminds me of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is beloved of God the Father. And oh, I don’t believe you will ever know, my friend, just how much God the Father loves His own dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible says in Matthew 3:17 that God spoke from the glory and said, “*This is my beloved Son.*” (Matthew 3:17) And so, Jacob here—excuse me, Joseph—pictures the Lord Jesus. In his name he pictures the Lord Jesus. In his nature he pictures the Lord Jesus. In his nurture he pictures the Lord Jesus.

D. His Nobility

And, I want to say, in his nobility, he pictures the Lord Jesus.

1. Noble in Dress

Look also, if you will, in verse 3—the last part of verse 3: the Bible says, “*And he made him a coat of many colours.*” (Genesis 37:3) That is, his father made him, for Joseph, a coat of many colors, and this coat of many colors is, again, an intimation to me of the nobility of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. A coat of many colors was a coat that royalty would wear, that nobility would wear. It is showing here that Joseph is distinctive, that he stands out from all of the others round about him. It speaks of the variegated splendors of our Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, the multiplicity of all of the facets and all of the beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ! He was noble in his dress.

2. Noble in Dreams

He was noble in his dreams. Let's continue to read as we think about the nobility of this man. Notice in verse 5: *"And Joseph dreamed a dream, and...told it [to] his [brothers]: and they hated him yet the more. And he said...Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed: For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf. And his brethren said [unto] him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words. And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it [to] his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me. And he told it to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee [on] the earth?"* (Genesis 37:5–10)

Oh, he had a dream, and what a noble dream it was! It was a dream that dealt with sheaves and a dream that dealt with stars. Sheaves are stalks of wheat that have been cut in the field. And, Joseph said, "I had a dream. I dreamed that we were in the field cutting wheat; and I cut my wheat, and you boys cut your wheat. And, my sheaf of wheat stood up in the middle of the field, and all your sheaves of wheat came and bowed down to it." Then, he said, "I dreamed another dream, and," he said, "the sun and the moon and the eleven stars bowed down to me." What a noble dream that was! What did it represent? The sheaves, the grain, represented all of the earth's resources that were to be under Joseph's control. The sun, the moon, and the stars represented all the earth's rulers that were to be under Joseph's control. You remember there in the book of Genesis, the early chapters, where the sun and the moon were given to rule the day and the night and so forth? (Genesis 1:16) And, in the Bible, stars were spoken of as dignitaries and rulers. They understood what it meant. They said, "Do you mean we're going to come and bow down to you?" What it was saying is that the earth's resources and the earth's rulers were one day going to be under Joseph, and indeed, we're going to see that they were.

But, it went beyond that, dear friend. I believe it pictures the Lord Jesus Christ, because one day, bless God, everything in heaven above and earth beneath is going to bow to Jesus Christ—that God has *"given him a name [that] is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow... And...every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord."* (Philippians 2:9–11) And, things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth are going to confess His lordship and His rulership. So, we see him in his nobility. We see him in his noble dress. We see him in his noble dreams. And, here he is, I believe, picturing the beloved Son of Almighty God.

II. The Rejected Servant

But now, I want us to see something else: I want us to see young Joseph not only as the beloved son, but I want you to see also, as we continue this study of how Joseph pictured Jesus Christ in the Old Testament, I want you to see him as the rejected servant. Notice in verses 13–14, as we continue to read in this chapter: *“And Israel said unto Joseph, Do not thy brethren feed the flock in Shechem? come, and I will send thee unto them. And he said to him, Here am I. And he said to him, Go, I pray thee, see whether it be well with thy brethren, and well with the flocks; and bring me word again. So he sent him out of the vale of Hebron, and he came to Shechem.”* (Genesis 37:13–14)

A. The Sent One

The first thing I want you to see about the rejected servant is that he was sent—sent by the father on behalf of his brethren—sent to seek their welfare, and he was sent on an errand of mercy for their good. And here, as Joseph is sent by his father on behalf of his brethren, again, he pictures the Lord Jesus. First John 4:10: *“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son.”* (1 John 4:10) So, here Joseph is the sent one. And, notice how he reacts. His father says, “Joseph.” He says, *“Here am I.”* (Genesis 37:13) Again, he pictures the Lord Jesus, who said, *“I come to do thy will, O God.”* (Hebrews 10:9)

B. The Scorned One

But, not only was he the sent one; he was the scorned one. Oh, how they scorned him! How they hated him! Look in verse 4. We’ll go backward to verse 4 again: *“And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.”* (Genesis 37:4) Why? Because they were envious because of the special love that the father had for him. The Bible teaches that it was for envy that they crucified the Lord Jesus. Pilate said *“he knew that [it was] for envy [that] they...delivered him.”* (Matthew 27:18) But, they hated Joseph—they hated him. He was scorned.

And incidentally, I want you to know that not only did they hate the son, but they also hated the father. Notice this: *“And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all [of] his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.”* (Genesis 37:4) And, John 15, verse 24 says, *“If I had not done among them the works which none other...did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.”* (John 15:24) To hate Jesus is to hate the Father. Look in verse 8: *“And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed [rule] over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words.”* (Genesis 3:8) They said, “Do you think, Joe, that you’re going to rule us? Do

you think we're going to bow down to you and serve you? Son, we're not going to do it." Oh, they were incensed at Joseph. And again, they picture the crowd that rejected the Lord Jesus Christ. You read in Luke 19:14 where they said, *"We will not have this man to reign over us,"* (Luke 19:14) speaking of Jesus. You see, he was the sent one, Joseph was, but he was the scorned one.

C. The Suffering One

And then, he became the suffering one. Notice in verse 18 of chapter 37: *"And when they saw him afar"*—that is, when they saw Joseph coming—*"when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him."* (Genesis 37:18) The brothers put their heads together, and they said, "We're going to kill Joseph. We're going to put him to death." Does that remind you of anything? It reminds me, dear friend, of the conspiracy against the Lord Jesus to con—to kill—Him. Listen to Matthew 26:3–4: *"Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the place of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, And consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty, and kill him."* (Matthew 27:3–4) Can you see these men putting their heads together? Can you see the conspiracy that they have together? Exactly as Joseph's brethren conspired against him to kill him, Jesus' brethren—that is, those of His own—conspired against Him to kill Him and to put Him to death. Joseph, the one who was the sent one—becomes the scorned one, and the one who is the scorned one becomes the suffering one.

And so, I want you to notice what they do, beginning in verse 26. See what they do to the Lord—to Joseph—in verse 26. We continue to read here: *"And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood? Come...let us sell him to the Ishmeelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh. And his brethren were content. [And] there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted...Joseph [up] out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the [Midianites] for twenty pieces of silver: and they brought Joseph [to] Egypt."* (Genesis 37:26–28) Now here, I want you to notice what they did.

1. They Stripped Him

First of all, they took Joseph, and they stripped him out of his robe. In verse 23, it tells us that *"they stript Joseph out of his coat."* (Genesis 37:23) Verse 23: *"And it came to pass, when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stript Joseph out of his coat, his coat of many colours that was on him."* (Genesis 37:23) Oh, they hated that coat. But, you know, they stripped the Lord Jesus, also. And, it's very interesting here in verse 23 that the Bible says, *"They stript [him] out of his coat."* (Genesis 37:23) They didn't unbutton the coat; they stripped him out of it. They had to pull it off of him. "Well," you say, "what's significant about that?" Well, maybe I'm pushing a point here, but I

believe it was a seamless coat. You know, Jesus had a seamless robe, and they...and He had to be stripped out of it. It had to be pulled off of Him. But nonetheless, they stripped him of his garment.

2. They Shamed Him

And, they shamed him. That's the point. There he is naked, and then they cast him into a pit in verse 24: *"And they took him, and cast him into a pit: and the pit was empty, [and] there was no water in it."* (Genesis 37:24) Oh, it speaks of the horrors of the Lord Jesus, who descended into Sheol, who baptized His soul into hell for us, as here poor Joseph descends into this dark pit.

3. They Sold Him

Then, I want you to notice something else in verse 27: and they said, *"Come...[let's] sell him"*—"we'll sell him"—*"to the Ishmeelites."* (Genesis 37:27) And, they sold him for silver, but I want you to notice who it was that suggested that they sell him for silver. The Bible says that it was Judah who said, "Let's sell him for silver." Listen again: *"Come...let us sell him to the Ishmeelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh. And his brethren were content. [And] there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and [they] sold Joseph to the Ishmeelites for twenty pieces of silver: and they brought Joseph [to] Egypt."* (Genesis 37:27–28) But, the one who suggested that he be sold for twenty pieces of silver was the man whose name was Judah—in verse 26: *"And Judah said [to] his brethren..."* (Genesis 37:26) Now, Judah is the Old Testament name for the New Testament name Judas—same name. In the Old Testament, Judah—Judah—said, "Let's sell him for silver." In the New Testament, Judas sold the Lord Jesus for silver. And again, here you have a picture of the suffering servant. Here is this one who has really done no harm to his brethren and is sold into slavery. And there, he's taken to Egypt. So far as they know, he will die there in Egypt. And so, he becomes a picture of the rejected servant, the Lord Jesus—Joseph does, of the Lord Jesus.

D. The Slain One

I want you to notice that, in a figure, not only was he the sent one, not only was he the scorned one, not only was he the suffering one, but he was also the slain one. Look, if you will, in chapter 37:31. Are you ready? Let's look at this: and the Bible says, *"And they took Joseph's coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood; And they sent the coat of many colours, and they brought it to their father; and said, This have we found: know [ye] whether it be thy son's coat or [not]. And he knew it, and said, It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph...without a doubt [is] rent in pieces."* (Genesis 37:31–33) Now, what he meant is, without a doubt, Joseph is dead. Now, he was not dead, but I want you to see the figure; I want you to see the

simile here. I want you to see that here the bloody garment is presented to the father. Here's the blood-sprinkled garment presented to the father, because when the Lord Jesus Christ died upon the cross, that blood was sprinkled on the Mercy Seat in heaven. For the Bible says, "*Without [the] shedding of blood is no remission [of sin].*" (Hebrews 9:22) The point is, very clearly and very plainly, that Joseph, like Jesus, was a rejected servant. He was sent by the father on behalf of his brethren—the sent one, the scorned one, the suffering one, and, in a figure, the slain one.

III. The Exalted Sovereign

But now, I want us to move on to the third...the third category in the life of Joseph. Not only is he the beloved son, as Jesus is God's beloved Son; not only was he the rejected servant, as Jesus is the rejected servant; but I want you to see that Joseph became the exalted sovereign. He became the lord and master and ruler over all of Egypt. Turn to Genesis 41. Many things transpire that we're going to be preaching about in these days that will come—many interesting things. And so, I'm not going to try to tell you all that happened, but let me just say that Joseph was sold into slavery. He's carried down to Egypt. He becomes a servant in the household of one named Potiphar. He is accused of rape and adultery, and he's cast into prison. He languishes there in prison. And finally, he's brought out of prison and becomes, through a strange turn of circumstances and the providence of God, he becomes the Prime Minister of all of Egypt.

And, I want you to see now how Joseph is brought from the place of shame to the place of glory. I'm reading here in Genesis 41, and I begin reading in verse 38—Genesis 41:38: "*[Then] Pharaoh said [to] his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is? And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all [of] this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art: [And] thou shalt be over my house, and according [to] thy word shall all [of] my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand*"—that was that ring when...on that ring was the signet, which all the royal documents were sealed with—"and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck; And...made him...ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt." (Genesis 41:38–43)

Can't you see old Joseph taken out of prison? There he is—his face is white and sallow. His hair is disheveled. There he is in his prison rags. And, they bring him there, and Joseph, because the hand of God is upon him, revealed secrets that no one else could know. And, when the king realizes just how important Joseph is, he says, "Guards, dress him in fine linen. Put a ring on his hands. Put all of the accouterments of

royalty round about him. Put him in the gold-plated chariot, and send him riding through the streets of the nation of Egypt. And, wherever he goes, send a courier out in front; send an ambassador out in front. And, when they see Joseph coming, just send the message that everyone is to bow his knees to Joseph—bow the knee to Joseph.” I tell you, it just thrills my heart when I think about everybody bowing their knee to Joseph.

Look again in verse 43 of this thing, because I want you to get the sense: *“And [they] made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee.”* (Genesis 41:43) What does that remind me of? It tells me, dear friend, that Jesus, who suffered an ignominious death for us—Jesus, who was put to shame; Jesus, who was ridiculed; Jesus, who was beaten; Jesus, who was spat upon; Jesus, who had His very beard jerked from His face; Jesus, who became the lowest of the low—will become the highest of the high because He *“[submitted Himself to] death, even the death on the cross. Wherefore God...hath highly exalted him, and given him a name [that] is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow.”* (Philippians 2:8–10) You see it? Here’s old Joseph—out of prison now, no longer in prison, riding in that splendid chariot. And, the people are saying, “Bow the knee. Bow the knee.” And, the rich people bow, and the poor people bow. And, the princes bow, and the priests bow. And, the children bow, and the older people bow. And, everybody is bowing the knee to Joseph.

You know what that tells me, dear friend? One of these days, everybody in this congregation is going to bow the knee to Jesus Christ—everybody’s going to bow the knee to Jesus Christ. Those of you who are listening by television, one of these days you’re going to bow the knee to Jesus Christ. *“God...[has] given him a name [that] is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow.”* (Philippians 2:9–10) One of these days, Johnny Carson’s going to bow to Jesus Christ. One of these days, Adolf Hitler is going to bow to Jesus Christ. One of these days, dear friend, every Christ hater and gospel... Hugh Hefner is going to bow to Jesus Christ, and the righteous and the moral man who doesn’t get saved is going to bow to Jesus Christ.

You—listen—you may not walk down this aisle and give your heart to Jesus Christ; one of these days, they may roll you down this aisle in a casket or down a funeral home or somebody else—and some preacher will preach your funeral—or somebody else will say a few words over you, but your soul will be in hell before the undertaker hears you’re dead. And friend, the time is coming. The Bible says, *“The sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man.”* (Revelation 20:13) You’re going to meet Jesus Christ, and when you do, you’re going to bow the knee. It doesn’t mean you’re going to get saved, but you’re going to meet Him. You’re going to meet Him as Savior or you’re going to meet Him as Sovereign. You’re going to meet Him as Redeemer or you’re going to

meet Him as Judge. You're going to meet Him in mercy; you're going to meet in judgment. But, you're going to meet Jesus Christ. *"As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me."* (Romans 14:11)

A. He Is Given a New Name

You see Jesus here pictured by Joseph. You see him, first of all, given shame...taken from a name of shame to a name of fame. You see him now given this glorious spot; and then, they give him a new name. I want to show you something here. Look in verse 45. We're in Genesis 41:45: *"And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphnathpaaneah."* (Genesis 41:45) Zaphnathpaaneah—it's a hard name to pronounce. It has two meanings: it has an Egyptian meaning, and it has a Hebrew meaning. Are you ready for this? Do you know what the Egyptian meaning of the name is that they gave Joseph? "Savior of the world"—"savior of the world." That's the name that they gave Joseph. Do you know what the Hebrew meaning of the name is? "The revealer of secrets"—"the revealer of secrets." And, that's what Jesus Christ becomes to all of us. To those of us when we're lost, without hope, without God, without Christ, thank God He's revealed to us by His Egyptian name, Savior of the world. And, to those of us who do know Him, who love Him, who have received Him, He becomes the Revealer of secrets, because it is through Him that we enter into God's marvelous and wonderful truths, for all of the riches of the Godhead are in Christ. And, God reveals them to us because Jesus is the way and the truth. (John 14:6) He is God's great Revealer of secrets. And so, he's brought from shame to glory. He is given—Joseph is given—a brand new name.

B. He Is Given a Bride

But, not only is he given a brand new name; he is presented with a Gentile bride. Look, if you will, also in verse 45—in the last part of that verse, or the middle part: *"and he gave him to wife Asenath."* (Genesis 41:45) Now, who is Asenath? Well, we don't read much about her past because it's not her past that's important; it's her future that's so important. From this time on, this Gentile girl is the bride of the most important man in all of Egypt. You see, not only is he given a new name; he is given a bride. And, who does Asenath picture? It pictures you; it pictures me. You see, the Church is the Bride of Christ, the Bible tells us in Ephesians 5. (Ephesians 5:22–33) And, the Lord Jesus Christ is not only now a Savior and Prince, but He is given a Gentile bride. The Church is the Gentile bride of the Lord Jesus Christ, and He is our wonderful Bridegroom. Have you ever thought about, in the Bible, how the women in the Bible—the wives in the Bible—many of them picture the Church?

1. The Formation of the Church

For example, Eve, the Bible tells us, is a picture of the Church. Remember Eve was made out of Adam's side or rib—out of Adam's side? We studied that. And Eve, the

Bible tells us, having that...being made out of Adam's side, is a picture of the Church taken from the wounded side of Jesus Christ. And Adam, therefore, is a type of Christ, and Eve is a type of the Church. And so, Eve speaks to us of the formation of the Church.

2. The Faith of the Church

But then, you remember a little while later when we talked about how Isaac got a bride? You remember Isaac's bride's name? Rebekah. And, you remember how Abraham pictured God the Father? And, Abraham sent Eliezer—and the name Eliezer means “the helper of God”—to seek a bride for Isaac. Now Isaac, we showed you very clearly, is also a picture, a type, and a prophecy of the Lord Jesus. And so, when Abraham sent Eliezer to get Rebekah to be a bride to Isaac, there is also a picture of the Church. Now, if Eve pictures the formation of the Church, what does Rebekah picture? She pictures the faith of the Church, because remember what Rebekah did? Rebekah went to be with and to marry Isaac. She went with a man she'd never met to marry a man she'd never seen. She did it all by faith. And, that's exactly what we do, isn't it? *“Whom having not seen, ye love.”* (1 Peter 1:8) And see, we love the Lord Jesus because precious Eliezer, the Holy Spirit, has made Jesus real to us.

3. The Future of the Church

Well, if Eve represents the formation of the Church and Rebekah represents the faith of the Church, who does Asenath represent? Friend, she represents the future of the Church. I want you to see her right here at the right hand of the Majesty on high ruling with Him, because friend, that's exactly what we're going to do. If we suffer with Him, we'll also reign with Him, will we not? And, we're *“heirs of God, and joint-heirs with [the Lord Jesus] Christ.”* (Romans 8:17) And, in His exaltation and in His glory, He will have His dear bride by His side. And friend, that's shouting ground. Hallelujah! We are the bride of the Lord Jesus Christ. And, here we see just a glimpse—something of the future—of the Church in Asenath, this Gentile bride that is given to Joseph there in all of his splendor and in all of his glory to be by his side.

But, I want to tell you, it gets sweeter yet. I want you to see something else here that just—oh, my friend—it turned the joy bells loose in my heart when I studied it and looked at it: Genesis 41:53. Remember, there's a great famine in the land, and in Genesis 41:53, we read this: *“And the seven years of [plenteous, and] was in the land of Egypt”*—excuse me—*“And the seven years of plenteousness, that was in the land of Egypt, were ended.”* (Genesis 41:53) And, I'm reading in verse 53. And then, verse 55: *“And when all [of] the land of Egypt was famished”*—this is 41:55. You're still turning; I hear you—*“And when all [of] the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread: and Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, Go unto Joseph; [and] what he saith to you, do. And the famine was over all the face of the earth”*—not just in

Egypt now; I mean over all the earth—*“and Joseph opened all the storehouses, and [said] unto the Egyptians”*—*“and sold unto the Egyptians”*—*“and the famine waxed sore in the land of Egypt. And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn; because that the famine was...sore in all lands.”* (Genesis 41:55–57) Now, here’s a very interesting thing: they come to Pharaoh, and they say, “Pharaoh, look, we’re starving. We need food. We need grain. We need corn. We need bread. We’re starving. There’s a famine in the land.” And, he said, “Well, go to Joseph, and whatever Joseph says, do it. Nobody’s going to be fed if he doesn’t see Joseph, if he doesn’t come to Joseph. Only through Joseph are you going to be fed.”

Now, you say, “Brother Rogers, what does that mean?” Are you ready for this? A rejected Jew becomes the savior of the world. That’s what it means—that’s what it means. Listen, a rejected Jew is the only hope. They come to Pharaoh. He says, “Don’t come to me. Apart from Joseph, I can’t do anything.” And, I want to tell you, my dear friend, apart from Jesus, God the Father can’t do anything for you. Did you know that? You say, “Now, wait a minute. You’re limiting God.” God limited God. Let me tell you something, friend: *“[I’m] not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is...power of God unto salvation.”* (Romans 1:16) Apart from the gospel, God’s powerless. *“[I’m] not ashamed of the gospel of Christ...it is the power of God unto salvation.”* (Romans 1:16) And, when you come to God, God’s going to say, “Go to Jesus. Go to Jesus. You hungry? Go to Jesus. You starving? Go to Jesus.”

You say, “Well, wait a minute. What if he’d not had enough to feed everybody?” Well, I want to show you something here, if you’ll just go back, if you will, a few verses and look in verse 49 and see something here: *“And Joseph”*—this is chapter 41:49—*“And Joseph gathered corn as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left numbering; for it was without number.”* (Genesis 41:49) Friend, nobody came to Joseph and was turned away. Not one person who came and said, “I’m hungry” was turned away—oh, no. *“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.”* (Matthew 5:6) “For out of His infinite riches in Jesus / He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again.” (Annie J. Flint)

And, all that you need and all that you can want is in Jesus. Friend, He has it all. It belongs to Him. And, when you come to God the Father, He’s going to say, “See Jesus. Whatever He says to you, do it.” And, this rejected Jew, this One who was stripped of His robe, this One who was lied about, this One who was scorned is now the One who is in control of the world’s rulers and the world’s resources. *“[For] God...[has] given him a name [that] is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth.”* (Philippians 2:8–10)

IV. The Seeking Savior

Well, I must close our message, but I want to end on the fourth point. You see, we saw Joseph as the beloved son. Then we saw Joseph as the rejected servant. And then, we saw Joseph as the exalted sovereign, and it would be a beautiful picture if it just ended there. If that were all there were to it, if it just ended there, we'd say, "Glory, hallelujah!" But oh, friend, God the Holy Spirit puts a masterstroke on this beautiful story. I want you to see Joseph as the seeking savior—as the seeking savior. It would have been enough had he been there enshrined in all of his glory for people to come to him and to beg from him and to ask of him and get what they need, but I want you to see how he revealed himself to them—how he sought out those who were in need and how he sought to share, out of his grace and out of his love, his bountiful provisions.

Notice here—go to chapter 45 with me for a moment. And, there's so much material that we'll come back to later on, but I'm trying to give you an overview right now; and then, we'll come back later and put the leaves on the trees. Right now we just put the limbs on. But, here's Joseph, and Joseph now has his brothers—remember, the same brothers that sold him to the Ishmeelites that sold him into slavery. Now, there's a famine in the land of Egypt, and as God's providence would have it, those brothers now have come down to Egypt to get food. Oh, here's Joseph; he's ruling over everything. But, they don't know it's Joseph. The years have passed. And, of course, they would not think of looking—they wouldn't think of looking—for him there as the Prime Minister of all the land of Egypt. And so, they're having to deal with Joseph, but Joseph's heart is so full of love for his brothers. I mean, those who wronged him, those who lied about him, those who would have killed him, those who sold him for silver, those who stripped him out of his robe and shamed him, those who abused him—he stills loves them.

And, I want you notice something here in chapter 45:1: *"Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren."* (Genesis 45:1) Friend, do you catch that? Joseph's heart is about to burst. The Bible says he couldn't restrain himself any longer. (Genesis 45:1) The love that he had for these pitiful brethren!

A. He Revealed Himself to His Brethren

And, he says, "Get out of here. Everybody get out of here." And then, he takes his brothers; he says, "Look, I'm your brother. I'm Joseph," and he revealed himself to them. Now listen, friend: the only way that you're going to know Jesus is for Him to reveal Himself to you. Did you know that? You see, it's not that we love God but that He loved us. *"We love him, because he first loved us."* (1 John 4:19) We know Him because He reveals Himself to us. You see, you cannot come to Jesus apart from

revelation. Now, God is revealing Jesus to you today through this Bible. God is revealing Jesus to you today through this preacher. Friend, I prayed that God would anoint me today, and God is speaking to you. And, this One that I'm confronting you with today is Jesus, and Jesus is trying to make Himself—yea, indeed, is making Himself—known to you.

B. He Redeemed His Brethren

But, not only was he the revealer; he was also the redeemer. Continue to read here and see what he did when he revealed himself to his brethren, these who did not deserve it. Notice verse 4: *“And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me”*—friend, that's what He's saying to you today—*“Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me”*—*“that [you] sold me hither: for God did send me”*—*“before you to preserve life.”* (Genesis 45:4–5) *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but [should] have everlasting life.”* (John 3:16) And, and, Joseph says, “Look, the reason that it all happened—even though you were the ones that did it, God was over it all.” And, even though we nailed Jesus to the cross, yet *“God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.”* (John 3:16) Mystery of mysteries that God did such a wonderful thing, that His brethren might be redeemed, that their lives might be redeemed from death. And so, Joseph becomes the seeking savior. He becomes the revealer. He becomes the redeemer.

C. He Commissioned His Brethren

But then, my dear friend, I want you to notice that not only did he reveal himself to his brethren, and not only did he redeem his brethren from death, but I want you to see that he commissioned his brethren, and I want you to pay attention. He gave them a very straight commission. I want you to see what it was. In verse 9—chapter 45:9: and he said, *“Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, [and] tarry not.”* (Genesis 45:9)

And then, I want you to read, if you will please, in verse 26. And, we're skipping much material we'll fill in later on. And, they go to old...they go to old Jacob now. *“And [they] told him, saying, Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all [of] the land of Egypt.”* (Genesis 45:26) Can you imagine what it must have meant to Jacob to think that his son was dead and to find out that he's still alive? Can you imagine that? And then to find out not only is he alive, man, he's the governor of Egypt! *“And they [took]”*—you know, what good... How our feet ought to be swift to tell the good news of Jesus, amen? I mean, can you imagine? They said, “Boy, daddy won't believe this. Wait 'til we

get home and say that he's still alive, and not only is he alive; he's the ruler of all of Egypt"—*“And they told him...the words of Joseph...”* (Genesis 45:27) Well, let's...let's... *“[He's] the governor [in] all [of] the land of Egypt”*—verse 26—*“And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not”*—it was just unbelievable—*“And they told him all the words of Joseph”*—friend, that's what we're to do, is to preach the gospel—*“which he had said unto them: and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived”*—and oh, my dear friend, I would pray that your spirit today would be revived in the Lord Jesus—*“And Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is...alive: I will go and see him before I die.”* (Genesis 45:26–28)

Conclusion

And, I want to tell you, friend, it is enough for you, too, to know this. Do you know the message? Do you know the message that Joseph sent for his brethren to tell? Are you ready for it? Here's what it is, because it's the same commission He's given you.

“Number one: I am not dead; I'm alive.” Friend, He rose from the dead, the Lord Jesus did. “Number two: I am in a highly exalted position at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Number three: I've made ample provision for you, and I want you to come and live with me.”

The Gospel According to Joseph

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: October 8, 2000

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 37; 41; 45

“Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours.”

GENESIS 37:3

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Introduction

Would you find Genesis chapter 37? And when you’ve found it, I want you to look up here, if you will. And may I tell you about the Word of God this: It is an absolutely amazing, astounding book. Now, to some people, the Bible is a mystery. And I want to give you a key, a golden key, that will help to unlock the Bible and let the truth of the Bible dance from the pages into your heart and into your life. The key is a man, a

person—and more than a man. His name is Jesus. And the Bible is all about the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ Himself said, concerning the Old Testament, “*Search the scriptures; for...[these] are they which testify of me.*” (John 5:29) Now I remind you that the Old Testament was written before Jesus Christ ever touched down in a human body upon this earth. And those were the Scriptures that Jesus was talking about when He said, “*Search the scriptures; for...[these] are they which [do] testify of me.*” And one of these scriptures that testify of the Lord Jesus is the life of Joseph.

Joseph became a prophecy, a portrait, a figure, an illustration of the Lord Jesus Christ, not by happenstance, but by divine providence. The more I study the Bible, the more I stand in awe of the Word of God. And I pray God, before the service has closed today, that you too, if you will have an open Bible in your hand, will stand in absolute awe and amazement as we look into the Old Testament and see a hidden portrait of the Lord Jesus Christ. What a confirmation, both of the inspiration of the Word of God and the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ! You will stand in awe.

I asked Larry Thompson—I said, “Larry, while I’m doing these messages on Joseph, I wonder if you could find somewhere a picture of Joseph in his multi-colored coat, his coat of many colors.” And he said, “Well, I’ll look for a picture.” And he brought a picture, and he said, “Now, wait a minute. I’m not sure about this picture.” He said, “It says ‘a coat of many colors,’ but,” he said, “when I look at it, it doesn’t look like a seventeen-year-old lad. Why, look at the face. It looks like an artist’s depiction of Jesus.” And then he said, “Look at the hands. The hands have a nail print.” And I put that picture aside. And then I thought of it, and I said, “Aha! I know what the painter of that picture was doing. He was showing that Joseph in his coat of many colors was but a prophecy, a portrait.”

Not with the brushstrokes of an artist, but painted with words, we’re going to see a portrait of the Lord Jesus Christ. You know, God loves His Son so much that He wants to give us many snapshots, many portraits of Him. And God wants us to be saved so much that He gives us so many illustrations of salvation.

Now in the life of Joseph, you’re going to see Joseph as he is his father’s favorite. Then, you’re going to find him as he is misused and abused by his brethren. Then, you’re going to find Joseph as he rises to be the prime minister of Egypt, the most powerful nation on the face of the earth. And then, you’re going to find Joseph as he receives his brothers back and forgives them, restores them, and commissions them. Four great episodes in the life of Joseph. Here they are. I write them on your heart. Don’t you dare forget them. First of all, Joseph, the beloved son. Secondly, Joseph, the suffering servant. Thirdly, Joseph, the exalted sovereign. Fourthly, Joseph, the seeking savior, as he sought his brothers to forgive them and to restore them.

Now you would have to be deaf, blind, and dumb not to see an illustration and a

picture of Jesus Christ, our dear Savior. So we're going to think on those four things this morning. Are you ready? All right, keep your Bibles open, because my only concern today is that I'll not have time to say all that I want to say about Joseph, a portrait of Christ: "The Gospel According to Joseph."

I. Joseph, the Beloved Son

Point number one: I want you to see a portrait of Jesus now, the beloved Son, in the life of Joseph. Genesis chapter 37, verses 1 through 3: "*And Jacob dwelt in the land wherein his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan. These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah*"—by the way, these were slave wives—"his father's wives: and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report. Now Israel"—that's another name for Jacob—"loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours." (Genesis 37:1–3)

Now we're thinking of Jesus, the beloved Son, as pictured in the life of Joseph. Three things stand out here in these few verses that I want you to see.

A. His Father's Devotion

First of all, as we think of Joseph, think of his father's devotion—his father's devotion. Verse 3 tells us that Joseph, of all of his brethren, is specially loved—specially loved. (Genesis 37:3) He was his father's beloved. Now, what does that tell us about the Lord Jesus Christ? Well, my friend, of Jesus, in Matthew chapter 3, verse 17, at His baptism, God the Father spoke out of the glory: "*And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*" (Matthew 3:17) And when the Lord Jesus Christ was on the Mount of Transfiguration, again the voice spoke from heaven—Matthew 17, verse 5: "*Behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of [heaven], which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*" (Matthew 17:5) God has a Son. His name is what? Jesus. And He is beloved of the Father. And *this world will never settle the sin question if it ignores the Son question*. Jesus is the Son of God. And the Bible says, when we honor the Son, we honor the Father. (John 5:23)

And so Jacob had given to Joseph a special name. Like Jesus, Joseph had a special name. Do you know what the name *Joseph* means? It means "abundance." It means "one who adds to." It means "a multiplier." And that's what Joseph was. What does the name *Jesus* mean? It means "Jehovah saves." And He is the One, also, whose life is full of abundance. You see, Jesus said of Satan, "The thief comes not but to kill, and to steal, and to destroy." Who is the thief? Satan. He is the great subtracter. But Jesus said, "I've come that you might have life, and have it abundantly." (John

10:10) He is the Joseph who adds to, who multiplies, who gives abundance. And so, again, Joseph is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, the beloved Son.

A little girl had come from the children's church to the main church. And they had a communion table up front. And the little girl had just been learning arithmetic: the plus sign and the minus sign. And she looked up there and she saw the cross on the communion table. And she said to her mother, "Why is the plus sign there?" Well, I want to tell you, that is the plus sign, Jesus Christ, who died for us upon that cross to give us life and to give it abundantly.

And so, first of all, you see Joseph—a portrait of Jesus—who has, number one, his father's devotion. You got that?

B. His Faultless Distinction

Number two: He has a faultless distinction. Look, if you will, here in this passage of Scripture in verse 2. And it says that he, Joseph, brought unto his father his brothers' evil report. (Genesis 37:2) That is, here is Joseph. He is distinct from all of his brethren. They are evil; he is not. I'm sure he was a sinner, but do you know that there's not one sin mentioned about Joseph in the Bible? That is amazing. We have the sins of Moses, we have the sins of Paul, these great believers, but no sin is ever mentioned about Joseph. Why? Because he is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Put in your margin Hebrews chapter 7, verse 26. It speaks of Jesus, "*who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.*" (Hebrews 7:26) Joseph brought unto his father the evil report of his brethren. Joseph brought unto his father the evil report. Joseph was not a talebearer. Joseph was a truth speaker. Why does the world hate Jesus? Put in your margin John 7, verse 7. Jesus said, "*The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.*" (John 7:7) Just as Joseph brought an evil report, Jesus has testified that this world is evil. I've told you before, the world does not hate the baby Jesus. The world does not hate the Jesus who fed the multitudes. The world does not hate the Jesus who healed the sick. The world hates the Jesus who testifies of it that its works are evil.

Here is this boy. He has his father's devotion. He has his faultless distinction. He is separate, undefiled—separate from his brothers. And a mark of that distinction is a coat of many colors. You see it in verse 3. (Genesis 37:3) This is the mark of his distinction: that his father, realizing that Joseph is absolutely different and unique, gives him this coat. And it must have been a splendid coat. The Bible delineates that coat of many colors, and to me, it speaks of the multiplicity and the variegated splendors of the Lord Jesus Christ when He came to this earth. The Bible says, "*We beheld His glory...full of grace and truth.*" (John 1:14)

What do you think of when you think of Jesus? Do you think of some drab, pale, sanctimonious, religious recluse? Oh, no! No, Jesus was the One with a coat of many

colors. Jesus is the happy Savior. The Bible says, *“God has anointed Him with the oil of gladness above His brethren.”* (Psalms 45:7; Hebrews 1:9) Little children love to come and sit at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ. Have you ever wondered why those who are in the ministry dress in black? I happen to be wearing black this morning. Maybe I should have worn a bright coat this morning. You know, so many times we think of a preacher—we think of somebody in a black suit, black tie, black socks, and dandruff. Jesus is a happy Christ. He’s the Jesus of the coat of many colors, distinct and different in this world.

C. His Future Dominion

And so you see, not only his father’s devotion, his faultless distinction, but you also see his future dominion. Joseph had a dream, and he told that dream to his brothers. He said, “I dreamed that you all were bowing down to me, and the sun, the moon, and the stars were doing obeisance to me.” (Genesis 37:9) Boy, did that tick them off—the idea that they were going to bow down to Joseph! Why, they were repulsed by the idea.

Does that speak to you of the Lord Jesus? Genesis 37, verses 5 and 6: *“And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it [to] his brethren: and they hated him yet the more.”* (Genesis 37:5) Well, just look in the New Testament—Matthew chapter 26 and verse 64: *“Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.”* (Matthew 26:64) And they hated Jesus because Jesus spoke of His coming dominion.

I’ve often asked the question, “What’s the world coming to?” I’ve answered that question, “It’s coming to Jesus.” Amen? Say amen. It is coming to Jesus. Things are out of place right now. My heart goes out to what is happening in Israel at this moment, and I believe the battle for Jerusalem has begun. I believe that the precursor of Armageddon is here. We’re living in these frightful moments. Do you know why the world’s in such a mess? Friend, things are out of place. Jesus is the King, and He belongs upon the throne. Satan is the criminal, and he belongs in prison. And the Church is the bride, and she belongs with her groom. And soon that’s all going to be back into place. Jesus is going to be on the throne; Satan is going to be in prison, and we’re going to be with Jesus. Thank God for that. Hallelujah! And so here’s the beloved son: his father’s devotion, his faultless distinction, and his future dominion. That’s what Joseph pictures, as he pictures the Lord Jesus Christ.

II. Joseph, the Suffering Servant

Now, let’s move to the second thing. Not only do we see a portrait of Jesus, the beloved Son, but we also see a portrait of Jesus, the suffering Servant. Now, let me show you the parallel between Jesus and Joseph, and Joseph and Jesus.

A. The Sent One

For example, like Jesus, Joseph was the sent one. Say, “sent.” All right now, you’ve focused your mind. Now he’s the sent one. Look, if you will, in chapter 37, verses 12 and 13: *“And his brethren”—that is, Joseph’s brothers—“went to feed their father’s flock in Shechem. And Israel”—that is, Jacob—“said unto Joseph, Do not thy brethren feed the flock in Shechem? Come, and I will send thee unto them. And he said to him, Here am I.”* (Genesis 37:12–13) “Here am I, father.” Jacob says, “Go to your brethren.”

Well, does that remind you of Jesus? Put 1 John chapter 4 and verse 10 down: *“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son.”* (1 John 4:10) Jesus is the sent One. You see, Jacob not only loved Joseph, but he loved his other sons, also. And so he sent Joseph to minister to the other sons. And, thank God, Jesus, as the suffering servant, first of all, was the sent One.

B. The Scorned One

But not only was Joseph the sent one; he was the scorned one. Say, “scorned.” Sent and then scorned. Look, if you will, in Genesis 37 and verse 4: *“And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him”—they hated who? Joseph—“and could not speak peaceably unto him.”* (Genesis 37:4) Now, likewise, our dear Savior, Jesus, *“came unto his own, [but] his own received him not.”* (John 1:11) They scorned Him, and they hated Him. Put down John 15, verse 24. Jesus said, *“If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.”* (John 15:24) Jesus, the very Son of God, the One who created it all, the One who is infinite love, came to His brethren, and they hated Him, and they scorned Him. And the message is clear: to hate Jesus is to hate the Father.

Why did they hate Jesus? Because they were arrogant. They were full of pride. Look in Genesis 37 and verse 8, and you’re going to find out why they hated Joseph: *“And his brethren said [unto] him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words.”* (Genesis 37:8) They said, “We are not going to let you have dominion over us, Joseph.” Well, why has this world turned against Jesus? Well, because this world will not have Jesus to rule over it. Put down Luke 19, verse 14: *“But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us”* (Luke 19:14)—speaking of Jesus, the same thing. The world today does not want to bow the knee to Jesus. Most of the people in America and the world are peacocks, strutting to hell, thinking they’re too good to be damned.

C. The Suffering One

Jesus, like Joseph, was the sent One. Jesus, like Joseph, was the scorned One. Jesus,

like Joseph, was the suffering One. Say, “suffering.” All right: sent, scorned, and suffering. How did Joseph suffer?

1. He Suffered Conspiracy

Well, first of all, there was the suffering of a conspiracy. Look in verse 18—Genesis 37, verse 18: *“And when they saw him afar off”—that’s Joseph—“even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him.”* (Genesis 37:18) He suffered a conspiracy. Well, did Jesus suffer a conspiracy? Put down in your Bible Matthew 26, verses 3 and 4: *“Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, And consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty, and kill him.”* (Matthew 26:3–4) Exactly the same. Here’s a conspiracy against Joseph; here’s a conspiracy against Jesus.

2. He Suffered Abuse

Now, not only did he suffer conspiracy, but he suffered abuse. Now, what did they do to Joseph? Genesis 37, verses 23 and 24: *“And it came to pass, when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stript Joseph out of his coat, his coat of many colours that was on him; and they took him, and cast him into a pit: and the pit was empty, there was no water in it.”* (Genesis 37:23–24) That is, he’s put there in an empty pit that he cannot get out of; no sustenance. He is put there to die. Actually, they are trying to kill him.

What a picture of the sufferings of Christ! Notice Matthew chapter 27, beginning in verse 26: *“Then released he”—that is, “Then Pilate released”—“Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified. Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head.”* (Matthew 27:26–29) Joseph is stripped out of his coat of many colors; Jesus is stripped out of His seamless robe. Joseph descends into the pit, and Jesus goes down into the very pit of death.

3. He Suffered Betrayal

What a picture—what a picture—of Jesus, who suffered! The Lord Jesus suffered conspiracy, as Joseph did. The Lord Jesus suffered abuse, as Joseph did. The Lord Jesus suffered betrayal, as Joseph did. Joseph was betrayed. Look in chapter 37, verse 28: *“Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmeelites for twenty pieces of silver: and they brought Joseph into Egypt.”* (Genesis 37:28) Now here he is betrayed. His brothers are selling him, betraying him.

Do you know whose idea it was to sell Joseph for silver? It was Judah’s idea. Do you know what the New Testament name for Judah is? It is Judas, the one who sold Jesus for silver. Matthew chapter 26, verse 14: *“Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot,*

went unto the chief priests, And said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver.” (Matthew 26:14–15)

D. The Slain One

Joseph is the sent one. Joseph is the scorned one. Joseph is the suffering one. And now Joseph is the slain one. The parallel with Jesus is so incredible. Joseph is slain in a figure, in a type, not in reality. But what did they do? Notice here in chapter 37, verse 31: *“And they took Joseph’s coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood; And they sent the coat of many colours, and they brought it to their father; and said, This have we found: know now whether it be thy son’s coat or no. And he knew it, and said, It is my son’s coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without a doubt rent”—or “torn”—“in pieces. And Jacob [tore] his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days.” (Genesis 37:31–34)*

In the mind of Jacob, Joseph is dead. Can you imagine? Here’s the old patriarch, whose favorite son is Joseph, the son of Rachel, his wife, his true beloved, and they bring to him this coat that shows his distinction, the father’s mark that’s set upon him, that the birthright was upon him, and they bring this blood-sprinkled coat and give it to old Jacob. And he says, “My son is dead. He’s dead.” And in the eyes of his brothers, he was dead also. They expected him to die. Later on—and you can find this, and we’ll not turn to it now—they said, “We put him to death. His blood is upon us. He is no more.” They figured he was dead. Here is the blood-sprinkled garment brought to the father.

Friend, one day long ago, the blood of God’s Son, the Lord Jesus, was brought to heaven and sprinkled on the Mercy Seat there in front of the Father. Notice the parallels here that are incredible. Here is Joseph, the sent one, the scorned one, the suffering one, the slain one. What a picture of Jesus!

III. Joseph, the Exalted Sovereign

Now, let’s move to the third thing. Hey, don’t drop out on me now; don’t you drop out. God wants to speak to you today. And you may not even be a Christian, but this, oh, how this applies to you! First of all, we see the beloved son. Then, we see the suffering servant. And now we see a portrait of Jesus, the exalted Sovereign.

A. He Is Exalted

Joseph goes through all kinds of ignominious shame. I don’t have time to tell you what happened to him as he’s falsely accused and cast into prison. All kinds of terrible, horrible things happen to him. But by the providence of God, the hand of God is upon him, and God takes him from the pit and from the prison, and God exalts him and gives

him a name which is above every name. Joseph now is lifted up. I want you to see in Genesis 41—fast-forward to Genesis chapter 41, and let's look in verse 38: *"And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is? And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art: Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it on Joseph's hand, and [robed] him in vestures of fine linen,"*—and that's pure white—*"and put a gold chain about his neck; and he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him"*—before Joseph, riding along in that chariot—*"Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt."* (Genesis 41:38–44)

What a transformation! This Jewish boy, despised, rejected, slain, in a figure, languishing in prison, is brought up, brought out, enthroned. What a picture of our dear Savior Jesus! Say amen. First Peter chapter 3, verse 22, it speaks of Jesus, *"Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him."* (1 Peter 3:22) The same parallel. And, again, I love Philipians 2, verses 9 through 11: *"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him,"*—Jesus—*"and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."* (Philipians 2:9–11)

As Joseph is riding along there in the chariot, there goes a herald out there and says to every one, "Bow the knee! Bow the knee! Bow the knee!" A man says, "I don't want to bow." He says, "You will bow. That's Joseph. Bow the knee." Saddam Hussein will bow the knee. Hitler will bow the knee. Jay Leno will bow the knee. You will bow the knee—you will. "As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow...and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." (Romans 14:11) And just like Joseph riding in that chariot, someday the heavenly herald will say, "Bow the knee to Jesus." Well, friend, I don't want to wait till then to bow my knee. I've already done it this morning, and I'm glad to do it now and say,

*All hail the power of Jesus' name! Let angels prostrate fall;
Bring forth the royal diadem, and crown Him Lord of all.*

—EDWARD PERRONET

B. He Is Given a New Name

Now, listen. We're talking about the exalted sovereign. He is now glorified. He is now given a new name. Look, if you will, in Genesis chapter 41, verse 45: *"And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphnathpaaneah."* (Genesis 41:45) Good night! What a name! Well, that's Egyptian. Get ready for a blessing. Do you know what that means? It means "savior of the world"—that's what it means. That's the new name he's given: "savior of the world." Taylor, however, in his translation, gives it this way: "He has the godlike power of life and death." That's the name given to this man Joseph: "He has the power of life and death"—given a new name.

And our glorified Savior also is given a new name. In Revelation chapter 19, verse 12, the Bible says He's given "a name written, that no man knows, except he who receives it." (Revelation 9:12) Jesus will mean something to you that He doesn't mean to this world, in His new name.

C. He Is Presented with a Gentile Bride

Now, here's the next thing. We're talking about our glorified Lord now and how He's pictured by Joseph. He is exalted. He is given a new name. And now he's presented with a Gentile bride. Look, if you will, in Genesis 41, verse 45: *"And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphnathpaaneah; and he gave to wife Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On. And Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt."* (Genesis 41:45) Now he's given, not a Jewish bride, but he's given a Gentile bride. After his exaltation he is given a bride.

Who is the bride of Jesus? He has a Gentile bride, the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, and you can find that in Ephesians chapter 5. (Ephesians 5:23–25) That's why I love the Church, because the Church is the Bride of Christ; not this building; we, the people. If you want to have trouble with Adrian, you abuse his bride. Don't do that. I'll tell you, don't abuse the Bride of Christ. Jesus loves His bride. He loves us. He's working on us, that "He might present us to Himself a spotless bride, without spot or blemish or any such thing." (Ephesians 5:27)

D. He Becomes the Only Hope of a Dying World

We're talking about the exalted sovereign. Notice this one now who is exalted. Notice this one who is given a new name. Notice this one now who is given a Gentile bride. What is the culmination of all of it? He, my friend, is the only hope of a dying world. The only way that this world could have been saved back in Joseph's time was what Joseph had done when he made provision. Notice Genesis 41 and verse 55: *"And when all the land of Egypt was famished,"*—that is, the people are dying—*"the people cried to Pharaoh for bread: and Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, Go unto Joseph; what he saith to you, do. And the famine was all over the face of the earth: and Joseph opened*

all the storehouses, and sold unto the Egyptians; and the famine waxed sore in the land of Egypt. And all countries came to Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn; because that the famine was so sore in all lands.” (Genesis 41:55–57)

Is not this absolutely amazing? Here’s Joseph, a despised and rejected Jew, the only hope of all the world—a despised and rejected Jew, the only hope of all the world. They go to Pharaoh. Pharaoh says, “Go to Joseph, and he has plenty. His supply is without number.” Go back to Genesis 41, and look, if you will, in 49: *“And Joseph gathered corn as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left numbering; for it was without number.”* (Genesis 41:49) Joseph, the only hope in that day.

Who’s the only hope in this day? What’s His name? Jesus. The Bible says, in Acts chapter 4, verse 12, *“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”* (Acts 4:12) And I want to tell you that there’s no shortage to the supply of Jesus, either. And,

*Out of His infinite riches in Jesus,
He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again.*

—ANNIE J. FLINT

And the Bible says, “For the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.” (Romans 10:12)

IV. Joseph, the Seeking Savior

Now, let’s move to the fourth thing, because we’re quickly running out of time. I want you to see a portrait of Jesus now, the seeking Savior.

A. He Revealed Himself to His Brothers

You see, like Jesus, Joseph revealed himself to his brothers—turn to chapter 45 now—by a set of circumstances that I’m going to speak about next week. Oh, the message next week is something, not because I’m preaching it. I want you to see how Joseph revealed himself to his brothers, but notice he does reveal himself to his brothers.

Genesis 45, verse 1: *“Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me.”* He’s there in the palace, and he says, “All the attendants, go away.” *“And there stood no man with him”*—now, watch this—*“while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren.”* These are the ones that put him to death, in a figure. These are the ones that scorned him, conspired against him. *“And he wept aloud:”—*that is, Joseph—*“and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard. And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence.”* (Genesis 45:1–3)

Listen. Joseph now reveals himself to his brothers. May I tell you something? They

would never have known who Joseph was, had Joseph not revealed himself to them. He's now older. He's dressed like an Egyptian. He is there speaking the Egyptian language. The only way that they could know him was for him to say, "Look, I'm Joseph."

The only way that you'll know Jesus is for Jesus to reveal Himself to you. You'll never figure Him out. But you've been brought by divine providence here this morning that God the Holy Spirit might speak to you. And Jesus is saying unto you, "I am Jesus. I'm the Son of God. I want to save you." So you lay your intellectual pride in the dust and let Him reveal Himself.

B. He Forgave and Restored His Brothers

Now, like Jesus, Joseph revealed himself to his brethren. Like Jesus, Joseph forgave and restored his brothers. Look in chapter 45, verses 4 and 5: "*And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.*" (Genesis 45:4–5) What love and what grace! Tragedy has become triumph.

Notice in these verses he gives an invitation. He says, "Come to me," and they came. They responded, and they came to him. I'm going to give an invitation on behalf of Jesus, and I'm going to ask you to come to Jesus. And I hope you'll do what the brethren of Joseph did when they came to Joseph.

Now, when Joseph said, "Don't feel bad," he's not trying to minimize their sin. What he is doing is maximizing the grace of God. Calvary, from man's viewpoint, was earth's greatest tragedy. From God's viewpoint, it was heaven's greatest triumph. "You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good." (Genesis 50:20) And when hell was doing its worst, God was doing His best, when Jesus died upon that cross.

C. He Commissioned His Brothers

Do you see the picture here? Do you see the parallel? Not only did he convict his brothers and reveal himself to them, not only did he forgive them and restore them, but here, finally, he commissioned his brothers. Notice in verse 4 what he says here. He says, "*Come.*" (Genesis 45:4) And then, if you'll go to verse 9—look in verse 9: "*Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not.*" (Genesis 45:9) Our faith is summed up in this: "Come to me. Go to all the world." Joseph said to his brothers, "Come to me. Come here. I will forgive you. I will restore you. Now I want you to go, and I want you to tell the message." And what were they to tell? Look in Genesis 45, verse 26: "*And [they] told him*"—that is, their father—"saying, Joseph is yet alive, he is governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not.

And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them: and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived.” (Genesis 45:26–27) They are going now as evangelists. His brothers, the ones who put him to death, have now been forgiven and restored.

And here’s the message. You want to know what your message is? If you’re a child of God, here it is. We once rejected Him. Now He has been raised on high. Now He’s been given a name which is above every name. Now the world is at His feet. He is the fairest of ten thousand. He has forgiven our sins. He wants us to be with Him and share His glory. And that’s the message that they preached. They preached Joseph risen, rich, and reigning. And that’s the Jesus that I’m preaching today.

Conclusion

That’s the gospel according to Joseph. Isn’t it amazing? I say, is that not amazing? Do you think all of that happened by just chance? Give God a hand! Yes, that is amazing! That’s the Word of God. Only ignorance scoffs at this book. How could God, so long ago, in the first book of the Bible, paint such a portrait of the Lord Jesus Christ?

God wants you saved. He wants you to know Jesus. And what Joseph said to his brothers—“Come to me”—He’s saying to you. If you’ve never come, come. And what Jesus said to those who have come, He’s saying, and what Joseph said to those who have come, Jesus is saying to you: “Go tell the others. Tell them that I’m not dead, that I’m alive. I’m now at the right hand of the Majesty on high. I have made provision for you, and I want you to come and live with me forever.”

How to Make Your Dreams Come True

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: January 17, 1988

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 37:1–11

“And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.”

GENESIS 37:4

Outline

Introduction

I. Dare to Be a Dreamer

II. The You That You See Is the You That You’ll Be

III. Learn to See Your Problems as Possibilities

Conclusion

Introduction

Find Genesis chapter 37 in God’s Holy Word, would you, please—Genesis chapter 37. If you didn’t bring a Bible with you, there should be one in the pew rack before you. Genesis chapter 37—that’s the first book in the Bible. It ought to be fairly easy to find. If you’ve found it, look up here.

Some years ago, I was in the airport, and I saw one of the most poignant scenes that I believe I’ve ever seen. There was a young soldier. He was dressed in a soldier’s uniform, and he was an exceedingly happy young man. Square-jawed, broad-shouldered, athletic-looking physique, he was there with his wife and his little children. His little children were hugging him around the knees, his wife had her arms around his neck, and they were all weeping. It was obvious that this man was saying goodbye to his family. He was a soldier. It was back during the Vietnam conflict, and he was saying goodbye. Also, there was a gray-haired man and a gray-haired woman that I assume were his mother and his father.

And you’ve seen those scenes. I felt almost like I was intruding, just watching. Yet I could not take my eyes from it. It was so poignant as that little child hugged her daddy around the knees. He would pick her up and kiss her and set her back down, hug his mom and dad. I began to pray for that young man. I began to envision what may be taking place: that he was going overseas, and perhaps he was

going to a battlefield; perhaps this was the last time on earth they would ever see their son—this husband, this father. And I confess to you that I wept as I watched. Then I prayed, and I said, “Dear God, let that man sit by me on this airplane. Give me an opportunity to share with that man.”

When I got on the airplane and sat down, there was a seat vacant next to mine. And who came and got on but that same soldier and sat absolutely next to me. I said, “Thank you, Lord, for answered prayer.” And I turned to the young man, and I said, “Sir, are you going overseas?” He said, “Yeah, I am.” I said, “Do you think that you’ll see combat?” He said, “I expect to.” I said, “Well, I was noticing you there in the airport. Was that your mom and dad?” He said, “Yes.” “Your wife and children?” He said, “Yes.” I said, “That’s a beautiful and a lovely family.” I said, “Have you thought about the possibility of perhaps not seeing them again?” He said, “Yes, I have.” I said, “Have you thought about the possibility of perhaps death on the battlefield?” He said, “Yes.” He said, “I surely have.” And I said: “Well, sir, if that should happen to you, how would you deal with it?” Friend, I never shall forget what he said to me. “Oh,” he said, “mister, I want you to know I’ve already settled all of that. You see, sir, there was a time when I invited Jesus Christ into my life. He is my Lord and Savior.” And then he said to me, “Sir, He is more precious to me than anything else on earth.” And he said, “My family is a Christian family, and my wife knows the Lord. My mom and dad know the Lord, and my little children know about Jesus.” And he said, “I have committed everything to Him, and if in His providence, and if in His will, I do not come back, that is all right, because...” He said, “Sir, I’m a young man, but...” He said, “I’ve already had a wonderful life.” And then he said to me this, and I shall never forget it. He said, “Mister, I have learned that life is not lived in length; it’s lived in depth. It is not the length of life that counts; it is the depth of the life that counts.”

And I got to thinking how many shallow people I know, how many churches are filled—a full church with empty people—people who have lived shallow lives. And I suppose the greatest tragedy on earth would be to come to one’s deathbed and find out that he has never really lived. I don’t want that to happen to you, and I want to talk to you this morning and again tonight about “How to Make Your Dreams Come True”—“How to Make Your Dreams Come True”—because everyone of us ought to have a God-given dream, and then by the power of God, and by the grace of God, and the providence of God, we ought to see the realization of that dream.

I’m reading here in Genesis chapter 37 and verse 1: “*And Jacob dwelt in the land wherein his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan. These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father’s wives: and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report.*” Joseph is with his brothers, and he’s

reporting back to his father the sins of his brothers. Now Joseph is not a talebearer; he is a truth speaker. He *“brought unto his father their evil report,”* that is, their unsatisfactory behavior. *“Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours. And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him. And Joseph dreamed a dream...”*—just underscore that—*“Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more. And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed: for, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf.”* Now the word *obeisance* means that they “bowed in respect.” *“And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words. And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me. And he told it to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth? And his brethren envied him; but his father observed”*—that is, took notice of—*“the saying.”* (Genesis 37:1–11)

Now, look up here. Joseph was a dreamer. The life of Joseph is a remarkable life. He’s one of the most Christ-like men in the Old Testament, and indeed will serve as an example as we study his life this morning and again tonight to learn how to make our dreams come true, because every one of us needs a God-given dream, and every one of us deserves to see that dream come true.

So I want to give you some principles. I’ll give you three of them this morning. And, God willing, and the Rapture does not come, and other things do not interdict, I will give you the second two this evening.

I. Dare to Be a Dreamer

But, first of all, let me say this—that the very first principle I want to speak to you about is this: Dare to be a dreamer. That’s it—that’s the first principle. Just dare to be a dreamer.

Now, if you want your dreams to come true, then you’re going to have to dare to have a dream. And God wants to give a dream to you. When I’m talking about a dream, I’m talking about the vision that God has laid into your heart of His plan for you and His welfare for you. Now Joseph’s dream was a remarkable dream. And we don’t have time this morning to look into it and study it in particular, but let me say, if I were to just put it in a nutshell, God said to Joseph, “Joseph, the time is coming when all of the world’s

rulers and all of the world's resources are going to be at your command." That's what this dream meant: "The world's rulers and the world's resources are going to be at your command." And Joseph told this dream; and when Joseph told this dream, he wasn't bragging, because it was a God-given dream. It was not for Joseph; it was for God's glory, and the welfare, actually, of his brothers, and the welfare, actually, of his father. But it was a God-given dream. And that's so important that you understand. This was not something that Joseph cooked up. It was something that God gave Joseph.

I was studying about dreams, and I was doing some Bible research, and I found out that the Bible warns us against man-made dreams. As a matter of fact, in Jeremiah 29 and verse 8, there's a solemn warning that says, "*Neither hearken to your dreams which ye cause to be dreamed.*" (Jeremiah 29:8) That is, God has not promised to fulfill our fantasies, okay? God has not promised to fulfill our fantasies. God has not promised to make our daydreams to come true. God has not promised to undergird our carnal ambition.

When I'm talking about making your dreams come true, I'm not saying that you decide that you want to be chairman of General Motors and ask God to come along your side and help you. Your dream must be a God-given dream. And it will be for the glory of God, and it will be for the welfare of others. But God does give dreams.

Jeremiah 29, verse 8, says, "Don't have any man-made dreams." But Jeremiah 29, verse 11, is tremendous. Now I read it in several versions, and I read it in the King James—and of course many of you use King James—but I want to read it to you in the NIV, the New International Version—Jeremiah 29, verse 11, where verse 8 says, "Don't have your own dream," but then chapter 29, verse 11, says, "'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the *LORD*." (Jeremiah 29:11) Isn't that wonderful? God has a plan for us, and God knows it—" 'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the *LORD*, 'plans to prosper you...'"—now prosperity in the Bible is not wealth, but it is the fulfillment of God's plan for you—"plans to prosper you..."—the Bible says, "*The LORD ...hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant*" (Psalms 35:27)—"plans to prosper you and not to harm you..."—never be afraid of the will of God. The will of God is not something, dear friend, that you have to do; it's something that you get to do. You'd want to do the will of God if you knew from God's viewpoint. The will of God definitely is a plan "to prosper you, not to harm you,"—and then He says—"plans to give you a hope and a future." (Jeremiah 29:11) I think the saddest thing with so many people is that they're just simply drawing their breath and drawing their salary. They have no real hope, they have no future, and they are simply existing and trying to get through.

Now in the New Testament the Bible also speaks of having dreams. As a matter of fact, that marvelous prophecy in Acts chapter 2 was a fulfillment of Joel chapter 2 and verse 28. And hear what Joel said, pointing toward the time in which we shall live and

the times in which we do live: *“And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions.”* (Joel 2:28)

God is saying, “I’m going to speak in these last days. Your old men even will dream dreams, not just the kids like Joseph.” Joseph was seventeen, but, friend, you’re never too old to dream, as we’re going to see a little bit later. And so we’re not talking about carnal ambition. How can I know whether my dream is a God-given dream? You know, some of us are in danger of unrealistic expectations, because the dream that we have is not of God; it’s something that we’ve cooked up. But how can I know whether my dream is of God?

Well, first of all, you need to learn how to test your dream. You see, God told Mary, for example, that she was going to be the mother of the Messiah. What a dream! What a fulfillment that she had been chosen by Almighty God! Now she never resisted that. She said immediately, *“Be it unto me according to thy word.”* (Luke 1:38) But then the Bible says, in Luke 2, verse 19, that, *“But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.”* (Luke 2:19) That is, she went over them and over them again. She didn’t just take that as something to be lightly taken in and then easily dismissed, but she pondered it in her heart.

Now, if you feel that God has given you a dream, ponder it; pray over it. One of my favorite verses is in Proverbs chapter 4 and verse 18—and this is what it says: *“But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.”* (Proverbs 4:18) Now, what does that mean? It means that finding your dream, knowing the will of God for you, is very much like a sunrise. *“The path of the just is as the shining light,”*—a shining light, he’s talking about the sun—*“that shineth more and more unto a perfect day.”*

Now perhaps you’re trying to walk through the woods, and there’s a path in the woods, but you can’t see it, because it’s dark. There’s no light there, and you’re just stumbling along, not knowing which way to go. And then the sun begins to come up, and it’s just gray dawn. Now you can see the trees, but you can’t see the leaves on the trees. You just begin to see things very faintly. There are just some shadows and outlines. And then the sun comes up more, and there are long shadows, which you can see not quite as well, because there are shadows in dark places. And then, finally, the sun is up, and it is high noon, and you can see, and it’s very clear. You see, *“The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto a perfect day.”* And it turns from darkness to gray dawn to high noon in your life.

I had that happen in my own life when I was about the age of Joseph. Joseph, when he had this happen to him, when he had his dream, was about seventeen years of age. As a youngster, I began to pray, “God, what do you want done in my life? What do you

want me to do?” And listen, folks. I told the Lord this: “Lord, I’ll do anything you want me to do—anything.” I don’t know whether you’ve told Him that or not; but, friend, that’s the starting place. You can’t say, “Lord, show me your will for my life, and then I’ll make up mind whether I want to do it.” You can’t do that. You just simply hand God a blank sheet of paper, your name, sign it at the bottom, and you say, “Now, Lord, you fill it in. Here it is, Lord: anywhere, any time, any cost.” Sign your name, all right?

I was in darkness. I didn’t know what God’s will for my life was. But then the sun came over the horizon just a little bit, and I began to feel that God might want me in his special service, possibly to preach. Now, folks, that was a frightening thought to me, and it was a strange thought, because none of my close friends were preachers. And I was just a kid, and none of the members of my family—I didn’t come from a pastor’s home or anything. But I got that germ thought down in my heart, in my life, and I began to mull it over.

And then after a while, the sun was a little brighter, and the path became a little clearer, and I said, “Lord, I think you want me to preach.” And then after a while, it was about ten in the morning, figuratively speaking. There may have been some shadows, but I was praying this way: “Lord, if you don’t want me to preach, you’d better let me know.” And then one day, bless God, it was high noon, and I said, “God, you want me to preach, and that’s what I’m going to do.” And, friend, when I made that decision, it was clearer to me than even my salvation that God had called me to preach His gospel. And I thank God for that. Now it was a gradual thing, but there came a time when the God-given dream was like high noon in my heart.

I had a missionary call me yesterday, and he said, “Adrian,” he said, “I have a very, very big decision that I need to make. And,” he said, “I want the will of God, and I just thought I would call you. Would you tell, please, how that I might know God’s will for my life?” I felt very troubled that this man, whom I respect and admire very much, would call me. And I told him, I shared with him a verse that I’ve shared with all of us so many times—Romans chapter 12, verses 1 and 2. And here is God’s formula for discovering your dream. Here it is. It’s so plain; it’s so clear: *“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, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”* (Romans 12:1–2)

Such a wonderful formula! Such a fine step! First of all, the word *presentation*: *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies.”* (Romans 12:1) You just simply present yourself to the Lord. You say, “Here I am.” Now until you present yourself a sacrifice, you cannot expect to have the leadership of Almighty God. You present yourself. You say, “Here, Lord. Here, I give myself to you.”

Presentation, all right? Presentation plus transformation, for the Bible says, “When you present yourself, you’ll not be conformed to this world, but you will be transformed.” (Romans 12:2) And how does God transform us? By the renewing of our minds. When I present myself to Him, God renews my mind. “Be transformed”—He says—“by the renewing of your mind.” God gives me a new value system, and God gives me a new intuition, and God gives me new tools to think with. Don’t be afraid to use your mind, friend, if you presented yourself to Jesus, for the Bible says, “*We have the mind of Christ.*” (1 Corinthians 2:16) A Christian can think God’s thoughts after Him. James said, “*If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God...and it shall be given him.*” (James 1:5) And we just thank God for that. So presentation turns to transformation. We have a new mind to think with, and that presentation plus transformation equals realization, because he says, and then you will know “what is that good, perfect, and acceptable, will of God.” (Romans 12:2)

Oh, friend, I hope you have a dream for your life. I hope you have a plan for your life. You may not see it all the way through. And for Joseph it was shadowy. He didn’t know all that God was going to do. He didn’t know every detail. If he had known that—my goodness!—it would have taken all of the romance out of it. Joseph, if he knew all of the difficulty that that dream entailed, he might have said, “Lord, no thanks. You keep it.” But he was willing to do all God’s will, I’m certain.

II. The You That You See Is the You That You’ll Be

So, number one: Dare to be a dreamer—dare to be a dreamer. Seek the will of God above all things; nothing else, nothing less, and nothing but the will of God. Now, number two, second principle I want you to remember if you would make your dream come true: that the you that you see is the you you’ll be—the you that you see is the you that you will be. It is so important that you get the right concept of yourself. Many people never see the fulfillment of their dreams because they feel themselves unworthy, unable, insufficient, or whatever. The you that you see will be the you that you’ll be.

Now, if you think that I’m talking about mere positivism, if you think that I’m talking about pop psychology, you’re wrong. I’m talking to you, my dear friend, about a spiritual truth. You need to understand just who you are.

Now Joseph, in the scripture that I read to you, was the highly favored, the beloved of his father, and as a result, his father gave him a robe of many colors. All of us know the story of Joseph’s robe of many colors. Now a robe of many colors, like this particular robe that is spoken of here in these first several verses, was a mark of noble birth. It was a robe that would be worn by royalty. And what Joseph was doing here was Joseph was saying to himself, and God was saying to him, “Joseph, you’re different. You are distinct. You’re not like other people. You are a very special person, Joseph.”

Now, folks, Joseph understood this, and it wasn't pride; it was actual spiritual wisdom that enabled him to be who he was. He didn't run with his brothers and their vile deeds. They said, "Hey, Joseph, take a drink of this. Hey, Joseph, let us fix you up with this girl." He wouldn't do that. Joseph was different. Joseph dared to be different. Now in that verse that I gave you, in Romans chapter 12, verses 1 and 2, where the Bible says, "*Present your bodies a living sacrifice,*" then it says, "*Be not conformed to this world.*" (Romans 12:1–2) Don't be conformed to this world. The world resents the nobility that we have in Christ. The world resents it, and the world sees our difference as a threat to them. The world sees the possibility of your spiritual success as marking it out for its failure. So the world always loves to see a Christian stumble.

You know, the obscene comics have had a big time with the PTL scandal. They've loved that. They enjoy it so much if they can find somebody that is supposed to be a Christian, a child of God—if they can just bring that person down and squeeze them into their mold. Why? Because when you live a godly life, it's a threat to them. But when they say, "He's just like we are," then it's not a threat to them. You see, there are plenty of wet blankets. Listen. There are plenty of wet blankets who will try to smother out the fire of your dream. We live in a very negative world.

Paul Harvey, the news commentator, who is also a professing Christian, did an analysis, and he said that 97.2 percent of the news is negative. Think of it: the news that you read in the media, 97.2 percent is negative. Well, let me just give you a test. When was the last time that you can remember reading good news in the headlines? Can you remember it—picking up your paper and reading good news in the headlines? I think the last time I remember was 1945, good news in the headline. Friend, this is a negative world, and the world just wants to squeeze you in.

And just think: Most people don't read the Bible in the morning; they read the newspaper in the morning—murder, rape, rebellion, fire, arson, earthquake, famine, disease. I mean, that's what they load upon before they finish their first cup of coffee. And then they go out to face the world with all of this negativism. You even read the weather report: twenty percent chance of rain. They don't say eighty percent chance of sunshine. Twenty percent chance of rain. You're driving down the road and they call that thing a stoplight. Why don't they call it a go-light? I mean, really, think about it. It's not there to stop you; it is there to cause traffic to flow. You could call it a flow-light, a go-light, but we call it a stoplight. I mean, this world is a negative world. Joseph's brothers hated him, and they resented him, because he was different, because of the nobility that he had. And the world wants to squeeze us in.

I read something very interesting about a French naturalist. He studied what is called the processionary caterpillar. There are certain caterpillars called processionary caterpillars, who just travel behind the caterpillar in front of them. They move in single

file: one caterpillar will start out, and another one will follow him. So this man with a kind of a twisted sense of humor wanted to see what would happen. He got the saucer of a flowerpot and took these caterpillars and put them on the rim of that saucer, one behind the other. So the first caterpillar started out, the next one behind him, the next one behind him, the next one behind him, the next one behind him, until the leader was following the last caterpillar. And they began to go around the rim of that saucer. They went around the rim without stopping for twenty-four solid hours. Now a processionary caterpillar likes pine needles, so he took some pine needles, and he put them in the middle of that saucer so they'd have food to eat. But they never broke rank. Day after day after day after day they went around in circles until they died of starvation with food inches away.

Now I think I'm preaching to a lot of processionary caterpillars who are just somehow caught up in this round of life with the thing that really matters so close and yet so far away, because they're conformed to this world rather than being transformed by who we are in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Joseph knew who he was. He knew that he had the mark of nobility upon him. Now you might think, dear friend, that, when we say that, we're being proud. Oh, no, no, no! That's not pride. You know, when we were in Romans chapter 12, verses 1 and 2, what does verse 3 say? Verse 3 says this: *"to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think..."*—if you think more highly than you ought to think, friend, that's pride—*"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"*—listen—*"hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."* (Romans 12:3) Now, what does all of that mean? Well, it means this: God has given grace to everyone of us, and I am what I am by the grace of God.

Now humility is not thinking lowly of yourself. You're a child of God. *"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God."* (1 John 3:1) Do you know what humility is—true humility? True humility is saying to yourself what God has said about you—what God says about you, accepting what God says. Let me tell you something, dear friend. The grace of God will exalt you without inflating you, and it will humble you without debasing you.

When you think of yourself, don't think of yourself in sinful exaggeration, or false humility, but think soberly, in sober estimation: "I am what I am by the grace of God." Joseph knew who he was. He dared to believe who he was. Friend, you show me the concept that you have of yourself, and I'll tell you how you're going to behave. You need to understand that you are a child of God, a royal blueblood, twice-born. And God has a divine destiny for you. And don't think that God is just merely speaking of other people. It's not pride to understand who you are in the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. Learn to See Your Problems as Possibilities

Now I want to give you the third principle this morning, and we'll get the last two, God willing, this evening; but, number three, if you would make your dreams a reality, if you would turn your dreams into reality: Learn to see your problems as possibilities—learn to see your problems as possibilities.

Now I love the ocean. I love sailboats. I have an old sailboat. I haven't sailed it for years. because we don't have a proper place to sail it. It's got ice in it now, alongside the house—a little sailboat. But I love to sail, because there's something great about sailing, getting out in nature. But, you know, there's a strange thing about a sailboat. You can be out on a lake and see one sailboat going this way and another sailboat going that way and both of them driven by the same wind. You figure it out. If you are a sailor, you can figure that out, but somebody wrote this little poem:

*One ship drives East, and another drives West
With the self-same winds that blow
'Tis the set of the sails and not the gales
That tells us the way to go
Like the winds of the sea are the ways of fate
As we voyage along through life
'Tis the set of a soul that decides its goal
And not the calm or the strife.
—ELLA WHEELER WILCOX*

Now you say, "Well, some people see their dreams come true because they don't have any problems." That's where you're wrong, my dear friend. If you're in this thirty-seventh chapter of Genesis with me, I don't even have time to elucidate all of the problems that this young man had, but, in verse 8, you can find that he was scorned by his brothers. (Genesis 37:8) In verse 18, his brothers had a conspiracy against him. In verse 24, they stripped him of his clothing and put him in a pit to die. (Genesis 37:24) And then, in verse 28, he was sold as a slave and put in a caravan going down to Egypt. (Genesis 37:29) In chapter 39, you find him accused of rape—falsely accused. (Genesis 39) In chapter 40, you find him languishing in prison. (Genesis 40)

But all of these things were what God was using to mold the man and to make the man and actually to help the man's dream come true. And Genesis chapter 50 and verse 20 is one of the great, great verses in all of the Bible. As Joseph looks back on his life of difficulty and problems and heartaches and hardships, this is what he says to his brothers: "*But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good.*" (Genesis 50:20) Isn't that beautiful?

Do you know the counterpart verse of that? Again, back to the book of Romans chapter 8 and verse 28: "*And we know that all things work together for good to them*

that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” (Romans 8:28) “You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good.” *Where God does not rule, God overrules.* You see, dear friend, when God gives you a dream, God’s not keeping you out of difficulty; He’s probably leading you into difficulty. God’s goal for you is not an easy life; God’s goal for you is an exciting life.

Here’s what General Douglas MacArthur wrote in the last days of the war in the Philippines. I think Douglas MacArthur is a great American and a great man, and I love to read things about Douglas MacArthur. But here’s what he said in those desperate days. He wrote this as he thought about his son, and he said this: “Build me a son, O Lord, who will be strong enough to know when he is weak, and brave enough to face himself when he is afraid; one who will be proud and unbending in honest defeat, and humble and gentle in victory. Build me a son whose wishbone will not be where his backbone should be; a son who will know thee and that to know himself is the foundation stone of knowledge.” And then listen to this part of his prayer: “Lead him, I pray, not in the path of ease and comfort, but under the stress and spur of difficulties and challenge. Here let him learn to stand up in the storm; here let him learn compassion for those who fail. Build me a son whose heart will be clean, whose goal will be high; a son who will master himself before he seeks to master other men; one who will learn to laugh, yet never forget how to weep; one who will reach into the future, yet never forget the past.” And then the great general went on to pray: “And after all these things are his, add, I pray, enough of a sense of humor, so that he may always be serious, yet never take himself too seriously. Give him humility, so that he may always remember the simplicity of greatness, the open mind of true wisdom, the meekness of true strength. Then I, his father, will dare to whisper, ‘I have not lived in vain.’ ”

What did this seasoned soldier know? He knew that he could not develop a son and have a son that would be the son that he ought to be unless that son had some difficulties and hardships in life. And what does the Heavenly Father know? The Heavenly Father was planning for Joseph to be the prime minister of Egypt, as we’re going to see tonight. The Heavenly Father had tremendous plans for Joseph, and the Heavenly Father has him in a school of discipline. What a shame it would have been had Joseph tucked tail and run! God had a wonderful plan for Joseph. And God has a wonderful plan for you, as we’re going to see tonight.

My friend, let me just stop here and tell you that some of you are saying, “Pastor, it’s too late for me. Joseph was seventeen when he found his dream. You were in high school when God showed you His dream for you. I’m retirement age. Too late for me.” My friend, that’s where you’re wrong. Our God is a healer of broken dreams, and in that prophecy in Joel that I read to you, Joel said, in 2:28: “*Your old men shall dream dreams.*” (Joel 2:28) Just a few verses before that, Joel said, “*And I will restore to you*

the years that the locust hath eaten.” (Joel 2:25) Isn't that wonderful?

I mean, right now, whoever you are, friend, if you've got six months to live, live them for Jesus. Find a dream for those six months, whatever it is; let the Lord take your life. *“Your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions.”* (Joel 2:28) And that dream begins with knowing Christ as your personal Savior.

Conclusion

A man was giving a testimony on a street corner meeting. The Salvation Army was there, and this man was giving a testimony to what Jesus had meant to him. A heckler in the crowd yelled, “Sit down! You're just dreaming!” The heckler felt a pull at his coattail. It was a little girl with a pretty face. She said, “Sir, that is my daddy up there talking. My daddy used to be a drunkard. He used to beat my mama. She cried all of the time. But that's my mother over there singing. You see the happy woman? That's my mother.” She said, “I didn't used to have clothes to wear to school. Do you see this pretty dress? My daddy bought me this dress. He's the best daddy in the whole world now. Mister, if my daddy is dreaming, please don't wake him up.”

It's not a dream. Friend, let me tell you, salvation is not make believe; it is real. But you will never have a true dream until first you know Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior. If I could give my heart to Jesus for you, I would, but I cannot. But I want to encourage you today to give your heart to Christ. If I had a thousand lives, I'd give every one to Jesus. I would—I would. Being a Christian is not a penalty that you pay to get to heaven. God says, “I know the plans that I have for you; they are for your welfare, to give you a hope and a future.” (Jeremiah 29:11) And I want you to have it, dear friend.

Discover Your Destiny

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: August 16, 1981

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 37:1–28; 39:1–23

“And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren.”

GENESIS 37:5

Outline

Introduction

- I. Exhibit Your Distinctiveness
- II. Explore Your Dreams
 - A. Presentation
 - B. Transformation
 - C. Revelation
- III. Expect Your Difficulties
- IV. Exercise Your Dependency
 - A. The Lord Was with Him in His Servitude
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Conclusion

Introduction

Today, I want you to think with me on this subject: “Discover Your Destiny.” Say, God has a wonderful plan for your life. I love that little booklet *The Four Spiritual Laws* because of the way it begins: “God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.” Well, I want to tell you, dear friend, God does have a divine destiny for you. God has a wonderful plan for your life. And, what a shame it would be if you missed it. Now, I’m not just saying that God has a plan for Tom Clayton’s life, or John; God has a plan for Jim Whitmire’s life or for my life. God has a plan for your life. You—God has a wonderful destiny for you, and I don’t want you to miss it. And, I believe as we study the life of Joseph today, we’re going to find some things about his life that we can certainly apply to ours as we learn how to discover our destiny.

Last week, we talked about Joseph as being a type of Christ, and we gave an overview of the life of Joseph. Now, let’s come back and look at the life of Joseph in a more practical way—not that that was impractical, but I mean in a...in that we will apply it to our own lives in a very special way. In Genesis 37:1: *“And Jacob dwelt in the land wherein his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan. [And] these are the*

generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, and...Zilpah, his father's wives: and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report. Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours. And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.” (Genesis 37:1–4)

Now, let's just stop right there and think about some ways that you can discover your destiny—some things that were true about young Joseph and some things that ought to be true about you. And incidentally, may I say that Joseph was seventeen years of age when all of this began to transpire? What a wonderful age that is, seventeen—about the age of many of these in the choir, about the age that people graduate from high school. And, what a life he had in front of him! It has often been said, “Oh, if only youth would, if only old age could.” Well, I want to tell you, dear friend, youth will and old age can by the grace of God. And, as we look back upon our lives, we will not have to say that youth was a blunder, that maturity was a struggle, and that old age a regret—not if we find God's destiny for our lives, not if we find God's plan for our lives, not if we find God's blueprint, that we might discover our destiny. May I mention four things in the life of Joseph that may be true and should be true in your life if you would discover your destiny?

I. Exhibit Your Distinctiveness

Number one: Exhibit your distinctiveness if you would know your destiny. Exhibit your distinctiveness. As we read these first four verses, we find out that Joseph was distinct. Joseph dared to be different. He was different in his devotion. He was different in his demeanor. He was different in his dress. We see this “*coat of many colours,*” (Genesis 37:3) which was the kind of a coat that royalty would wear, and this was just significant of the fact that Joseph was different. We read that Joseph did not participate in the things that his brothers participated in. Contrariwise, he “*brought [to] his father their evil report.*” (Genesis 37:2) It was not that he was a tattletale. He was not a taleteller; he was a truth speaker. Joseph dared to be different, and because Joseph dared to be different, he was a man of destiny.

You know, the world doesn't like us to be different. The Bible says that “*his brethren...hated him.*” (Genesis 37:4) And, you know why they hated him? Because they couldn't squeeze him into their mold. Have you ever thought about Romans 12:1–2? “*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service*”—now, watch this part—“*And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.*” (Romans 12:1–2) Do you know what that means? Don't let this

world squeeze you into its mold. Now, the world wants to do that. Joseph's brothers wanted to squeeze him into their mold: "Hey, Joey, come over here. Have a drink of this, Joe. Take a puff of this, Joe. Hey, Joe, have you heard this one? Hey, let's get little Joey a date with you-know-who." But, Joe wouldn't do any of that. Brother Joe was different. Joseph stood pure. He stood clean. He was different. He dared to be different, and because he dared to be different, they resented him.

Did you know that it is a trait of nature—human and other kinds of nature—to make everybody conform? We all have the herd instinct. We speak, for example, of a flock of sheep. We speak of a pack of wolves. We speak of a swarm of bees. We speak of a covey of quail. We speak of a pride of lions, a gaggle of geese, a bevy of women, a gang of boys. We just like to be in the crowd. We want to be a part of everything. As a matter of fact, I was interested to read where some scientists were trying to discover why fish swim in schools, so they took a fish and, with skillful surgery, did sort of a lobotomy upon him. That is, they cut away a part of his brain that would enable him to have the school instinct. And then, they put him back in the water and monitored him. They wanted to see if he would play hooky from school or if he would continue to swim in a school. They were wondering why fish swim in schools. Well, true enough, once they had done this surgery on this witless wonder, he just swam off by himself. But then, they noticed all of the other fish followed him—and they were still swimming in schools, but now they were following him. And, I thought, "Oh, my! How much like the people today! They'll follow any brainless fish. It doesn't matter where he's going. They just want to be together." That is the cult of conformity—the cult of conformity. We're just following one another around.

I read also of a French naturalist who did some experiments with what they call the Processionary caterpillar. Do you know what a Processionary caterpillar is? He is a little caterpillar that follows the caterpillar in front of him. If you put a caterpillar in front of him, he'll just follow that other caterpillar around wherever he goes. Well, this man—this Frenchman—took some of them and put them around the base of a flowerpot in a circle—about a dozen of them in a circle around the base of this flowerpot. And, the first one followed the next one, which followed the next one, which followed the next one, which followed the next one, which followed the next one, which followed the first one, and around and around they went, each one following the other. They did this for twenty-four hours. He then took some pine needles, which is the food upon which they feed, and placed them in the middle there of that little pot so they could easily get to it—only a few inches away. But, they kept going on around there twenty-four hours, forty-eight hours, on and on, one day, two days, three days, four days, five days, six days, seven days. And, they starved to death going around in circles with food just a few inches away, but they could not break the pattern—going around in circles. Does that

remind you of anyone you know? Oh, you wake up in the morning and you go in and bathe and comb your hair, brush your teeth, shave your face, gobble down your breakfast, go off to work, draw your breath, draw your salary, come home, take an aspirin, watch the news, go to bed, wake up—listen, friend—over and over again, just going around and around in a circle. You don't have any plan for your life. You do it because everybody else does it.

You see, the chief religion in America is the cult of conformity. The god of that religion is the crowd. The chief sin is to be different. The code of that religion is the latest fad. The family worship center is the television. The high priest is Madison Avenue, and the hymn is “Everybody’s doing it, doing it, doing it.” Joseph was different. Joseph dared to be different. Joseph exhibited his distinctiveness, and Joseph knew that the answer was not in conformity but “transformity.” *“Be not conformed to this world: but be transformed.”* (Romans 12:2)

Now, when I say he was different, I don't mean that he was odd. One man said to his friend—said, “With which hand do you stir your coffee?” He said, “I stir my coffee with my left hand.” He said, “I knew there was something odd about you. I stir mine with my spoon.” Well, Christians are not to be odd; they're to be different. Jesus called us to be a peculiar people, not an odd people. Now, I see too many flaky Christians, but let me tell you, it's not because they're Christians. Whatever was odd about a man—whatever is odd about a man—because he's a Christian was probably odd about him before he got saved. When I talk about being different, I'm not talking about being whacko, I'm not talking about being strange, I'm not talking about being weird. You want to be different? You want to be distinctive? Return good for evil. Show love. Refuse to participate in debauchery and sin. Live a godly life. Exhibit your distinctiveness. *“Be not conformed to this world: but be transformed...[then you'll] prove what is that good, and [perfect], and [acceptable] will of God.”* (Romans 12:2) Joseph did—he exhibited his distinctiveness.

II. Explore Your Dreams

Number two: Not only should you exhibit your distinctiveness; you ought to explore your dreams—explore your dreams. Continue to read here, and let's look in verse 5: *“And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it [to] his brethren: and they hated him yet the more. And [they] said unto [him], Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed: For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood [up]; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my [sheaves]. And his brethren said [unto] him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt [thy] indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words. And he dreamed yet another dream, and told...his brethren, and said,*

Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars [did] obeisance to me. And he told it to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come [and] bow down ourselves to thee to the earth? And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying.” (Genesis 37:5–11)

He was a seventeen-year-old boy, and he was dreaming dreams. But, these were not daydreams. These were not foolish imaginations. These were not hellish nightmares. There were God-given dreams. God had revealed His will and His plan to this youngster, and God had set His mark upon the life of this man. And, he now begins to explore his God-given dream. He talks about the fact that he was out in the field in the dream, and they were gathering wheat. And, he said, “My sheaf of wheat stood up straight, and your sheaves of wheat,” speaking to his brothers, “came and bowed down before my sheaf of what.” (Genesis 37:7) Then, he said, “I dreamed another dream, and the sun and the moon and the eleven stars bowed down to me.” (Genesis 37:9) And, what was it a prophecy of? It was a prophecy of, one day, that the world’s resources, represented by the sheaves of wheat, and the world’s rulers, represented by the sun, the moon, and the stars, would one day bow down to Joseph. Indeed, they did! God had a destiny for this young man. Thank God that he discovered his destiny, because he was willing to explore his dreams. Youth is a wonderful time to dream. God called me to preach about the same age as Joseph was when he had his dream. I remember how God stirred in my heart and God gave me a dream. God put it in my heart that I was to preach His gospel. It’s important that you learn how to dream. It’s important that you have a dream.

I found out that some technicians were able to measure brainwaves, and they put sensors on a man’s brain and were able to tell just the moment when this man and the other subjects were going to sleep. And, they could register that on their meters, and they could also tell by the brainwaves when that person was beginning to dream. And so, they performed an experiment: they would let the subjects go to sleep and let them sleep as long and as soundly as they wished, but the moment they started to dream they were awakened. The dream was interrupted; and then, they could go back to sleep. Again, the moment they started to dream they were awakened. They slept the allotted time, the full time, but when they awakened, they were a little grouchy. The next time they went to sleep the same thing happened. Then, they were downright ornery and mean because they were not allowed to dream. And, after seventy-two hours of not being allowed to dream, they were becoming psychotic. They were seeing things. They were seeing double. They were acting with erratic behavior. And, they stopped the experiment right there and then let these people go back to sleep and sleep normally

and let them dream. And, after only eight hours of sleep dreaming, they were almost back to normal, and after twenty-four hours, with sixteen hours of sleep, were back to normal. Now, what does that tell us? Well, it tells us, in the physical realm, that dreams somehow are beneficial, that they help us; they do something for us. I want to tell you, it is even more true that in the spiritual realm you need to dream.

Now, I'm not talking about having foolish hallucinations; I'm talking about having God-given dreams. You say, "Brother Rogers, is that the way God's going to reveal His self—Himself—to me: I'm going to go to sleep tonight, and I'm going to dream a dream?" Well, friend, I hope some of my dreams don't come true. I'll guarantee...tell you, I have some weird ones. And, is that God's normal way of speaking to you? Not necessarily so. You see, we New Testament Christians have the Holy Spirit to lead us in a way that Old Testament saints did not have the Holy Spirit to lead them. But, the point of the matter—here's the point of the matter: God revealed Himself to Joseph, and the same God that revealed Himself to Joseph is the God that wants to reveal Himself to you. God has a destiny for you, and God wants you to be in on it.

Now, let me tell you how to discover your destiny by discovering your dreams. How can you know the will of God? Let me give you a formula. Are you ready for it? Here's the formula: presentation plus transformation equals revelation—presentation plus transformation equals revelation. Now, you get it, and then I'll explain it. Presentation plus transformation equals revelation.

A. **Presentation**

Now, our text is the one I just mentioned, and we'll see it come all the way through this message. Romans 12:1–2: *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God."* (Romans 12:1) That's presentation. "Here I am, Lord. I give myself to you." You're never drafted in God's army; you are a volunteer. You come saying, "Here, Lord. I give myself to you." It's as all...it's as though God is praying to you: *"I beseech you therefore, brethren."* (Romans 12:1) Now, Paul is speaking, but he's speaking by inspiration, so it is God's prayer to man: *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God"*—because of what Jesus has done for you—*"that [you] present [yourself]..."* (Romans 12:1)

B. **Transformation**

Now, when you present yourself, what's going to happen? Presentation plus transformation. You see, when you present yourself a living sacrifice, then it says, *"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed."* (Romans 12:2) That's the transformation. Now, what is that word *transform*? It comes from our...the word we get our word *metamorphosis* from. The Greek word means "a metamorphosis." As a matter of fact, it sounds like our word *metamorphosis*. "Be ye metamorphized," if that's a word.

Let a metamorphosis take place in you.

You say, “Well, what is a metamorphosis?” That’s the kind of transformation he’s talking about. Well, a metamorphosis is a process by which the inward nature of a thing of an individual comes to the surface.

For example, what is the real nature of that ugly caterpillar? It is a Monarch butterfly. Now, you can look at a caterpillar and never dream that he was really a butterfly, but that’s what he is. And, he goes into the cocoon, and a metamorphosis takes place; and that inner nature comes out.

Do you remember reading about the Lord Jesus being transfigured on the Mount of Transfiguration? And, exactly the same word is used here that is translated “transfigured” as is used here: “to be transformed.” It’s the same word. He was metamorphized. Now, what does that mean? What was the inner nature of the Lord Jesus? Deity. And there, on the Mountain of Transfiguration, His inner nature came to the surface and you saw that glory that was His as His raiment shone and the voice from heaven said, “*This is my beloved Son.*” (Matthew 3:17; 17:5; 2 Peter 1:17) Now, what is the inner nature of a Christian? Jesus—Jesus. But, you see, that inner nature does not come to the surface—we do not have that “transformity”—until we make that presentation.

C. **Revelation**

And, when we make that presentation—when I say, “Here, Lord. I present my body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto you”; that presentation plus that transformation—I now have the mind of Christ. My mind is renewed. I am “*transformed by the renewing of [my] mind.*” (Romans 12:2) I think new thoughts because I am now having the nature of Jesus—not just down deep within, but it comes to the surface. I am no longer conformed; I am transformed. Now I can know. Transformation—presentation plus transformation—equals revelation. “*Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed...that ye may [know]*”—revelation—“*what is that good, and [perfect], and [acceptable], will of God.*” (Romans 12:2) You see, you don’t find the will of God; the will of God finds you. It’s not some sort of an Easter egg hunt. You just simply say, “Here I am, Lord. I give myself to you. Here’s a blank sheet of paper. I’ve signed it at the bottom. Take it. Fill it out, Lord.” Presentation plus transformation equals revelation.

Oh, I hope that you’ll have a dream—I hope you’ll have a dream. Have you stopped dreaming? When you stop dreaming, you’ll start to die. Some of you have stopped dreaming. Don’t lose your dream. You say, “Well, you’re talking to young people.” Well, I want to tell you, dear friend, the prophet Joel said, “Your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.” (Joel 2:28) You’re never too old to dream. You’re never too old to think of big things for God.

Don't you have dream for our church? I do. Do you know what our Long-Range Planning Committee is? Here's the chairman of our Long-Range Planning Committee. Stand up, Roland. Let's see him. All right, right there. He doesn't know it. Isn't he good looking? Turn around. All right. Boy, you'll hate me for this. All right, he is the chairman—Roland is the chairman—of our "Dream Committee." That's what it is—our "Dream Committee," as God gives us a dream. That sounds more exciting than a Long-Range Planning Committee, doesn't it? "A Dream Committee." Oh, "your young men shall see visions, and your old men"—like Roland—"will dream dreams." (Joel 2:28) Explore your dreams. Who was it said, "If God is in your plan, plan big"? Don't stop dreaming. Don't stop dreaming for your family. Don't stop dreaming for yourself. Don't stop dreaming for your church. Oh, discover your destiny! Here...here was a man who exhibited his distinctiveness. Here was man who explored his dreams—his God-given dreams.

Oh, there are plenty of human wet blankets who want to smother the fires of your dreams. His brothers, and even his father, wanted to throw cold water on his dreams.

I remember God called me to preach and set my heart ablaze as a youngster, but I remember being in the bedroom of my house—my father was talking to a man I admired so very much on the patio of our home—and that man said to my father, speaking of me (he didn't know I was listening), "That boy will never make a preacher"—"That boy will never make a preacher."

Oh, there are plenty of human wet blankets who would like to smother your dream, but let God give you a dream. I'm not talking about something you cooked up, but be in contact with God so however God wants to speak to you, He can. And, I believe the way that God wants to speak to New Testament Christians is presentation plus transformation equals revelation, that we might know the things that God has prepared for us.

III. Expect Your Difficulties

Now, I want to say thirdly, not only should we exhibit our distinctiveness—dare to be different. Don't be squeezed in. Don't join the cult of conformity—but secondly, explore your dreams—find out what God's plan is for you—thirdly, thirdly, expect your difficulties—expect your difficulties. Now, if you're looking for a cheap way, if you're looking for an easy way, if you're looking for a lazy way to serve God, forget it. The Apostle Paul says we are to "*endure hardness, as...good [soldiers] of Jesus Christ.*" (2 Timothy 2:3)

And, right after Joseph had his dreams, then his difficulties started. Look in verse 8: "*And his brethren said unto [them]*"—"unto him"—"*Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his*

dreams, and for his words.” (Genesis 37:8) And, as you continue to read... And, I’ll just give you the references, and you’ll have to read at home. He was scorned by his brethren in verse 8. (Genesis 37:8) He was conspired against, that they might put him to death in verse 18. (Genesis 37:18) He was put into a pit in verse 24. (Genesis 37:24) He was sold as a slave in verse 28. (Genesis 37:28) In chapter 39, he is accused of rape. In chapter 40, he is forgotten in prison. I mean, he had difficulties—real, tremendous difficulties.

But, as you see that God had a plan through all of this, when you get to the end of the story—and friend, don’t stop reading ’til you get to the end of the story—when you get to the end of the story, you find out that he was exalted to be the Prime Minister of all Egypt and literally became, in the physical sense, the savior of the world. And, Joseph looked back on the difficulties that he had, and in Genesis 50:20 he says this, speaking to his brethren who sold him as a slave: *“But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.”* (Genesis 50:20) Do you know what Genesis 50:20 is? It’s the Old Testament illustration of the New Testament truth of Romans 8:28—that *“all things work together for good to [those who] love God...who are the called according to his purpose.”* (Romans 8:28) To his brethren, he said, “You meant to do me harm. You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good.”

You see, God allows us to have difficulty in our lives. Life is not supposed to be easy; it’s supposed to be exciting. God wants it to be exciting for you. Why...why did God allow Joseph to have this difficulty? Because he was in training. Have you ever seen a football player in training? What does he do—just sit around and eat ice cream? Do you ever see a boxer in training? You see, when God wants us training, it’s because He wants us hard; He wants us real. You see, you don’t sharpen an ax on a pound of butter, and the only way that your life is going to have the keen edge is for some abrasiveness, some difficulty, some pain, some discipline to come into your life.

One of my heroes is General Douglas MacArthur. I like a lot of things MacArthur said, but MacArthur, in those desperate days of the Pacific War, took time to sit down and write a prayer for his son. And, I want you to notice that when MacArthur wrote this prayer, he did not ask that his son might have a life of ease, like many of us would want for our children but God the Heavenly Father does not want for His children—nor did Douglas MacArthur want for his son. Listen to what MacArthur wrote: “Build me a son, O Lord, who will be strong enough to know when he’s weak and brave enough to face himself when he is afraid; one who will be proud and unbending in honest defeat and humble and gentle in victory. Build me a son whose wishes will not take the place of deeds, a son who will know thee and that to know himself is the foundation of knowledge. Lead him, I pray, not in the paths of ease and comfort but under the stress

and spur of difficulties and challenge. Here let him learn to stand up in the storms, and here let him learn compassion for those who fail. Build me a son whose heart will be clear, whose goal will be high; a son who will master himself before he seeks to master other men; one who will reach into the future and yet never forget the past. And, after all these things are his, add, I pray, enough sense of humor so that he may always be serious yet never take himself too seriously. Give him humility so that he may always remember the simplicity of true greatness, the open mind of true wisdom, and the meekness of true strength.”

Now, I want to repeat a paragraph in that: “Lead him, I pray, not in the paths of ease and comfort but under the stress and spur of difficulties and challenge. Here let him learn to stand up in the storms, and here let him learn compassion for those who fail.” Joseph learned to stand through the storms, and he also learned compassion for his brothers who had failed. You see, God was teaching Joseph something. And, in order for Joseph to discover his destiny, he had, dear friend, to expect his difficulties. Have you been asking God to take away your difficulties when perhaps you ought to be asking God to give you greater strength? God forbid—God forbid—that we should shrink back. Here was a young man who loved God, and evidently, there was nothing that he had done wrong. As a matter of fact, as you read the Bible, you’ll not find one sin charged against Joseph. Surely, he sinned, but that was not the characteristic of his life. And yet, his life was a life that was marked with difficulties. MacArthur said, “If all of these things are true about my son, then I, his father, will dare to whisper, ‘I have not lived in vain.’”

IV. Exercise Your Dependency

Fourthly and finally, not only—not only—should you exhibit your distinctiveness, and not only should you explore your dreams, and not only should you expect your difficulties, but, my dear friend, you ought to exercise your dependency—exercise your dependency.

Now, we’re going to skip chapter 38. It doesn’t deal with Joseph. It’s a sordid story, but we’re going to skip it and go to chapter 39 that takes up the life of Joseph again right where we left off. And, the Bible says, “*And Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, [brought] him—“bought him”—“of the hands of the Ishmeelites, which had brought him down thither. And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man.”* (Genesis 39:1–2) Now, I want you to notice that phrase: “*And the LORD was with Joseph.*” (Genesis 39:2) Just underscore it because it’s a key phrase. As a matter of fact, I believe it is the one phrase that epitomizes and characterizes and encapsulates the life of Joseph. As you read his life, you see that this is a key phrase. “*The LORD was with Joseph.*” (Genesis

39:2) Look in verse 3, and it is repeated: *“And...the LORD was with him.”* (Genesis 39:3) Look in verse 21 of this same chapter, and it is repeated: *“But the LORD was with Joseph.”* (Genesis 39:21) Look, if you will please, in verse 23 of this same chapter: *“The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the LORD was with him.”* (Genesis 39:23) That is, the Lord was with Joseph.

Over and over again, it is said. As a matter of fact, the New Testament, commenting on the life of Joseph, says in Acts 7:9: *“And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him.”* (Acts 7:9) Over and over again, the Holy Spirit says, “The Lord was with him. The Lord was with him.” Isn’t that neat? Isn’t that wonderful? Boy, I just love that. I say, “Lord, that’s what I want”—“that’s what I want.” I want it to be said about Adrian Rogers: “The Lord’s with him. The Lord’s with him. The Lord is with him.” Joseph had learned to depend upon the Lord. Oh, he, dear friend, was depending upon God. He exercised that dependency. And, I want you to see, in just a few moments that we have left, how he depended upon the Lord in servitude, how he depended upon the Lord in self-control, and how he depended upon the Lord in suffering. Oh, he...he exercised his dependency.

A. The Lord Was with Him in His Servitude

First of all, I want you to see how he depended upon the Lord in servitude, because the verses that I just read to you in chapter 39:1–3 tell us that he was a slave, a servant. Remember he was sold for twenty pieces of silver? The Ishmeelites take him down to Egypt. I imagine he sees all kinds of strange things he’s never seen before. He sees the Sphinx. He sees the pyramids. He sees all of the things of Egypt, and he finds himself there, this handsome young man, on the slave block. “What am I bid for this boy, seventeen years old? Look how handsome he is. Look at his countenance.” “I’ll give you fifteen pieces of silver.” “What? I paid twenty.” “I’ll give you thirty for him.” After a while, he’s sold to a man named Potiphar, and Joseph realizes he’s just been sold to the head of the Egyptian KGB. I mean, he is...he’s over Pharaoh’s guard. He’s a part of the storm troopers. He is a tough man, evidently.

But, Joseph doesn’t complain. As a matter of fact, the Bible says something very strange about Joseph, this servant. The Bible says that God was with him, and he prospered. (Genesis 39:3) Here’s a slave prospering. Why? Because the Bible says in Psalm 1 that the righteous man is *“like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall”*—what?—*“prosper.”* (Psalms 1:3) The Bible says God *“[takes] pleasure in the prosperity of his [servants].”* (Psalms 35:27) And, here he is, now, a servant, a slave, but he’s prospering. Now, I want you to see that not one word of grumbling comes from him—not one word of bitterness, not one word of hatefulness. He is not

sullen. He is not morose. He is not sitting around licking his wounds. But, this man, who knows that he has a divine destiny, says, “If God wants me to be a slave, I’ll be the best slave the world knows anything about.” And, he understood the New Testament truth that “[*whatever*] thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.” (Ecclesiastes 9:10) And, he made his servitude a temple of devotion.

And, what a testimony it was to Potiphar, because the Bible says in verse 3 that Potiphar took notice of this young man. (Genesis 39:3) I can hear Potiphar as he goes to work and says, “Boy, man, I’ve got some kind of slave. I’ve turned everything over to him, and I tell you, since I’ve turned everything over to him, things are prospering more than ever. You know, he worships a God named Jehovah. I wish all my slaves did.” I tell you, if people started living like that on Monday, they’d start believing what I preach on Sunday. Amen? You know, that’s what the Bible says we’re to do: we are to “[*be obedient to them that are our*] masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers” (Colossians 3:22) but with good will as serving the Lord. That’s what Joseph did. God was with him in his servitude, and God used him.

Now, why was God with him in his servitude? What was Joseph doing there in the house of Potiphar? I’ll tell you what he was doing: he was getting experience that would one day make him the Prime Minister of Egypt. And, let me tell you something, friend: you’ll never be a ruler until first of all you learn to be a servant. Joseph learned to be a servant so God could make a ruler out of him. You know what the Bible says? “*He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in [that which is] much.*” (Luke 16:10) And, many of you are complaining, and you are—I’ll use an inelegant word—bellyaching about where you are, complaining. Joseph didn’t. Joseph had a bigger view than that. Joseph was able to take the long look, and Joseph said, “Whatever my hand finds to do, I’ll do it with my might.” And, because he was willing to be humiliated, he could also be exalted. Because he was faithful in that which was least, he could be faithful also in that which was much. I say, dear friend, that he exercised his dependency. God was with him in his servitude.

B. The Lord Was with Him in His Self-Control

But, not only was God with him in his servitude; God was with him—quickly; we must hurry—in his self-control. Look, if you will, in verse 6: “*And he left all that he had in Joseph’s hand*”—that is, Potiphar did—“*and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat*”—that is, he didn’t even know his bank account; only Joseph knew that—“*And Joseph was a goodly person, and well favoured*”—that means, friend, that he was a handsome dude; he really was. “Goodly person.” That’s what it means: “good looking”—“*And it came to pass [that] after these things, that his master’s wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me*”—that is, she wanted him to commit

adultery with her—*“[And] he refused, and said unto his master’s wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand; There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?”* (Genesis 39:6–9)

Now, he realized his sin would not be against Potiphar, not be against Potiphar’s wife, not even against his own body, primarily, but he saw sin for what it is—an affront to God. Not only do we break God’s law; we break God’s heart when we sin. And, the God that had been so great to him... He said, “How can I do this?” And, God was with him in his self-control. And, from that time on, Joseph made it a habit not to be there when Potiphar’s wife was there. The Bible says that he avoided her. When she would go this way, he’d go that way.

But, one particular day, this conniving woman saw that Joseph had to be in the house; and she came in there also, and she noted that there were no men in the house. And so, now her vile lust has erupted, and she takes him by the coat as if to pull him into the bed with her. And Joseph, in his haste to get out of there, Joseph left his coat. She’s clutching at his garment. And, Joseph runs, and he gets out of there. Joseph understood what the New Testament meant when it says, *“Flee...youthful lusts.”* (2 Timothy 2:22) Joseph understood what the New Testament means when it says, *“Flee fornication.”* (1 Corinthians 6:18) He wasn’t like some foolish people I would...I know, who would have said, “Now, Mrs. Potiphar, let’s you and I kneel by the bed and pray about this.” He had more sense than that. He just simply picked them up and put them down. You see, look, he left his coat, but his character was worth more than his coat. He lost his job, but his purity was worth more than his position. You see, the Bible says that *“there hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man”*—he was a red-blooded young man—*“but God is faithful, who will not suffer [us] to be tempted above that [which we] are able; but will with the temptation...make a way to escape.”* (1 Corinthians 10:13) And, in this instance, the way to escape was the king’s highway—two legs and a hard run. He saturated that place with his absence. He got out of there. Now, don’t laugh at him, because he’s still pure—still pure. How was he able to do that? How was he able to overcome? He exercised his dependency. The Lord was with him—the Lord was with him.

C. The Lord Was with Him in His Suffering

But, not only was the Lord with him in his servitude, not only was the Lord with him in his self-control; the Lord was with him in his suffering. You know what she did—this old hussy, Potiphar’s wife? Boy, she realized that he’d made a fool out of her. Boy, was she angry. Shakespeare said, “Hell hath...knows no fury like a woman scorned.” When she

saw what had happened, she was so angry. She realized she had his garment in her hand, so a foul idea came. She took her hands, perhaps, and scratched her face some. She disheveled her hair. She tore her blouse a little bit. And then, she said, “Help! Help!” And, the guards came running in there. “Look what this man tried to do to me. Call my husband.” Potiphar comes home. Joseph is thrown in prison.

You better be careful what you believe, dear friend. You say, “Well, I got it from the horse’s mouth.” Horses lie. Oh, how the devil loves to slander good people! And, the only defense Joseph had was God. That’s all—just God. But, God was with him. Joseph is thrown into prison, this man who had a reputation for godliness. Can you imagine how he felt thrown into prison not for doing wrong but doing right? They laugh at him: “Ha! Hey, Holy Joe, you old rascal. Rapist, huh?” Thrown into prison. But, as you study that story, you find out before it’s over, he’s running the prison—I wish I had time to show it to you—running the prison. God is getting him ready for his divine destiny. He exercised his dependency upon God.

Conclusion

God has a divine plan for your life. I hope you don’t miss it. Let’s pray. Father, I pray, Lord, that you’ll help us to learn from the life of Joseph some things we need to know. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

The Gospel According to Joseph

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: June 3, 1980

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 37:2–4

“Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours.”

GENESIS 37:3

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Introduction

Turn now to Genesis chapter 37. We're going to be talking today on this subject: “The Gospel According to Joseph”—“The Gospel According to Joseph.” Now the Old Testament is full of pictures of the Lord Jesus. We call these pictures in the Old Testament *types*—the Greek word *tupoj*, which is translated “examples” in 1 Corinthians

chapter 10, verse 11: *“Now all these things happened unto them for examples [unto us]”* (1 Corinthians 10:11), or “for types.” That is, that tucked away in the Old Testament we have a literal historical happening, or story, or event, or thing, but that event, or happening, or thing, is a portrayal of a deeper spiritual truth that the Bible calls “examples” or “types.” And it’s going to be our joy in this new series of messages to explore some of these and to find how God in the Old Testament painted some marvelous portraits of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And let me tell you, incidentally, that when you read the Bible, always look for the Lord Jesus Christ somewhere. It’s all about Him. It’s His Book. I call it the “other Hymn (Him) Book,” because it’s about Him, about the Lord Jesus Christ. This Old Testament says, “Somebody is coming.” The Gospels say, “Somebody has come.” The epistles and the Revelation say, “Somebody is coming again.” And that Somebody is the Lord Jesus. When you study the Bible, keep your spiritual antennae up. Standing somewhere in the shadows, you’ll find Jesus.

And I want you to see now the marvelous parallel between the life of Joseph and the life of Jesus, because I believe that Joseph is a type and a picture and a prophecy and a portrait of the Lord Jesus Christ. We’re going to see that as we make this parallel. And let me just tell you something of the life of the Lord Jesus and see if you will not agree with me that the Lord Jesus is portrayed in the Bible first of all as Son, and then He’s portrayed as servant, and then He is portrayed as sovereign, and then He is portrayed as Savior. First of all, we see Jesus as He is God’s beloved Son. And then we see Jesus as He becomes the suffering servant who came to earth to die. Then we see Jesus raised as the exalted sovereign. And now we know Jesus as the wonderful Savior of the entire world.

Now keep those four events and those great divisions of the life of Christ in your mind as we look now at the life of Joseph and the message that we’re going to call “The Gospel According to Joseph.”

I. The Beloved Son

First of all, I want you to notice how Joseph was the beloved son of his father, Jacob. I’m reading Genesis 37 and verse 2: *“These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren; and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father’s wives: and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report. Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours”* (Genesis 37:2–3).

A. His Name

Oh, I want you, as we think about the beloved son, I want you, first of all, to think about his name. Do you know what the Hebrew name Joseph means? It means, “the one who adds to; the one who multiplies; the one who adds, rather than the one who subtracts.” You see, almost immediately we see there something of a picture of the Lord Jesus, for Jesus is the great adder. Adam was the great subtracter. Adam lost everything for us. And the Lord Jesus came to bring it back. That’s the reason Jesus said, in John chapter 10, verse 10, “I’ve come that you might have life and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). And the wonderful thing about it is this: that we gained more in Jesus than we ever lost in Adam.

You know, friend, I’m not inviting you to something negative; I’m inviting you to something positive. I am inviting you to life.

A little girl came to church for the first time. She had been in the nursery school up until that time, but in the big church she saw the communion table. And on the communion table there was a wooden cross. She asked her mother, “Mother, what is that plus sign up there?” Well, I want to tell you, the cross is a plus sign, for the Lord Jesus Christ is the great adder. He is the One who multiplies blessing upon blessing for us. And don’t you feel sorry for me today because I’m a Christian and because I know the Lord Jesus Christ.

B. His Nature

Now not only do I want you to notice his name, but I want you to notice his nature. I want you to notice the hatred that he had for evil. And the Bible says in the last part of verse 2, “*And Joseph brought unto his father their evil report.*” Now it was not that Joseph was a talebearer. It was that Joseph was a truth speaker. His brethren were wicked and evil, and he brought that report to his father.

Now, incidentally, may I say that the entire life of Joseph, as you read it through the Bible, does not mention any personal sin that Joseph ever committed. I’m sure that Joseph did commit sin, for the Bible says, “*All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*” (Romans 3:23). But I am also feeling that the Holy Spirit, by inspiration, left out any record of Joseph’s sin, that we might see him more fully as a picture and a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. But Joseph was one who had a hatred for evil; and because Joseph had a hatred for evil, his brethren had a hatred for him.

I want you to see how perfectly that parallels the life of the Lord Jesus Christ, because people hated Christ because of His hatred for evil. John chapter 7 and verse 7—listen to it—Jesus said, “*The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth,*”—and why did they hate Jesus?—“*because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil*” (John 7:7).

This world that loves evil will always hate God’s Son, and that’s the reason some

people can't find God's Son. That's the reason some people don't know the Lord Jesus Christ. *Some people can't find Christ for the same reason a thief can't find a policeman*, amen? You see? Look. They don't want to find Him. Jesus said, "Their deeds are evil and therefore they will not come to the light" (John 3:19–20). That's the reason the world hates the Lord Jesus Christ.

C. His Nurture

But notice not only his name, and his nature, but I want you to see the nurture that he had from his father—his father's love. Look, if you will, please, in verse 3: "*Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children*" (Genesis 37:3). And I want to tell you again here, he's a marvelous, beautiful picture of the Lord Jesus Christ because of the love that God the Father has for God the Son. And when God the Son was baptized there in the river Jordan and He came up out of the water, there came a voice from heaven; and the Bible tells us, in Matthew chapter 3, verse 17, that God the Father said, "*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*" (Matthew 3:17).

And so again, as Joseph was loved of his father, the Lord Jesus Christ is greatly loved of His Father. And I want to tell you this, my dear friend: to refuse God's Son is to insult the Father of Glory, because God loves Him. And the One whom God loves, we should dearly love.

I see again, in verse 3, that his father gave to him a coat of many colors. Joseph's coat of many colors, radiant in splendor, glorious in beauty, was the coat of many colors. And, again, it reminds me of the Lord Jesus Christ, for the Bible tells us in another place, in 2 Samuel chapter 13 and verse 18, that a coat like this was given often as a sign of royalty; it was a coat of distinction that was given to those who were of royal lineage. And this coat of many colors pictures to me the multiplicity of splendors that belong to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Oh, what a beautiful Savior He is! And how we ought to love Him! And how we ought to pray that by faith our eyes shall see the King in His beauty! I'm so grateful that all of the splendors of the rainbow are tied up in the Lord Jesus. He is the colorful Christ. I like what He said when He said, "I've come that you might have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10). He's not the pale Galilean with milk for blood. He is the virile, colorful, beautiful, splendorous Christ. And so we see Him there in this first episode in the Book of Genesis. We see Joseph, as he is the beloved of his father. And I believe he is a wonderful picture of Jesus to us all.

II. The Rejected Servant

But now I want you to see, secondly, not only was he the beloved son, but he became the rejected servant. Look in Genesis chapter 37 and verse 13: "*And Israel...*"—now

Israel, remember, is the father of Joseph—*“And Israel said unto Joseph, Do not thy brethren feed the flock in Shechem? come, and I will send thee unto them. And he said to him, Here am I. And he said to him, Go, I pray thee, see whether it be well with thy brethren, and well with the flocks; and bring me word again. So he sent him out of the vale of Hebron, and he came to Shechem”* (Genesis 37:13–14).

A. He Was Sent by the Father

Here Joseph, the son, was sent by the father on behalf of his brethren. And, again, what a marvelous picture of the Lord Jesus Christ! In 1 John chapter 4 and verse 10 we read these words: *“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son”* (1 John 4:10). God the Father sent His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And notice what Joseph said when his father said, “Go to the brethren.” He said, “Behold, Father, here am I.” Notice his submissive spirit. And, oh, the Lord Jesus sought not his own will, and the Lord Jesus came and said, “I come to do thy will, O God” (Hebrews 10:7).

B. He Was Scorned by His Brethren

And how did his brethren receive Joseph? The same way this world received the Lord Jesus Christ. Look at the attitude they had toward Joseph, in Genesis chapter 37 and verse 4. Notice how he was scorned by his brethren: *“And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him”* (Genesis 37:4). How was Joseph received by his brethren? He was received with hate. How was the Lord Jesus received by this world? John chapter 15 and verse 24—listen to it. Jesus said, *“If I had not done among them the work which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father”* (John 15:24). Jesus came, doing works that no one else did. Jesus exposed their faults, and Jesus exposed their sin, and Jesus pulled back the veil of hypocrisy, and this world hated the Lord Jesus. Just as Joseph was hated, Jesus was hated.

And because they hated him, they rebelled against him. Look in verse 8: *“And his brethren said unto him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words”* (Genesis 37:8). They were saying to Joseph, “You’re not going to rule us! You’re not going to have dominion over us! We’re not going to bow down to you, Joseph, and serve you!”

What did they say about the Lord Jesus Christ? Look at it in Luke chapter 19 and verse 14. This is what they said: *“We will not have this man to reign over us”* (Luke 19:14). Again, Joseph was refused and scorned and rebelled against. Jesus was refused and scorned and rebelled against. And those people to whom Jesus came, in whose hearts the milk of human kindness had curdled, said, “We will not have Him to

rule over us!” And the world is going to be filled with proud, arrogant sinners who refuse to bow the knee to Jesus Christ.

C. He Was Conspired Against

But not only was Joseph sent forth by the father, and scorned by his brethren, but Joseph was also conspired against. There came to be a conspiracy against Joseph. Look, if you will, in verse 18 of chapter 37: *“And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him”* (Genesis 37:18). His brethren got their heads together. While he was yet afar off, they said, “We’re going to put him to death.”

Does that remind you of anything in the New Testament concerning the Lord Jesus? In Matthew chapter 26, verses 3 and 4—listen to this: *“Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, and consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty, and kill him”* (Matthew 26:3–4). There was a conspiracy to kill the Lord Jesus Christ. These people put their heads together; they consulted. That means they conspired. It was a conspiracy. They were going to do it by subtlety. Joseph was conspired against, that he might be killed. Jesus was conspired against, that He might be killed.

D. He Suffered Shame

And as a result of that conspiracy, Joseph suffered ignominious shame. Notice what they did to Joseph. Look, if you will, in verse 23 of this chapter: *“And it came to pass, when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stript Joseph out of his coat, his coat of many colours that was on him; and they took him, and cast him into a pit: and the pit was empty, there was no water in it. And they sat down to eat bread: and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a company of Ishmeelites came from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt”—the place of death. Balm and myrrh, embalming spices. And here they are carrying these spices down to Egypt, down to this place of degradation. “And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood? Come, let us sell him to the Ishmeelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh. And his brethren were content”* (Genesis 37:23–27).

Now the Bible says that Judas said this in verse 26. Do you know what the Greek name for Judah is? Judas—Judas. That’s the same word: in the Hebrew, Judah; in the Greek, Judas. “Judas said, ‘Let us sell him.’”

Now, what did they do after they conspired against him? Well, the first thing they did, they stripped him out of his robe. Notice they didn’t unbutton the robe. They stripped him out of his robe. That tells us it was a seamless robe. Our Lord Jesus was stripped of His seamless garment. Our Lord Jesus also was suffering the shame, the

ignominious shame, of being left naked. He descends into a pit, for the Lord Jesus Christ descended into Hades. And there was no water in that pit, for the Lord Jesus cried upon the cross, *“I thirst”*—*“I thirst”* (John 19:28).

And then these brethren, these false brethren, are so filled with hypocrisy. Now, notice in verse 27 of this same chapter the hypocrisy of these false brethren who put him in the pit: *“Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmeelites, and let not our hand be upon him”* (Genesis 37:27). The Jewish leaders brought the Lord Jesus and said, “It’s not lawful for us to slay Him. You put Him to death!” (John 18:30–31). They wanted Him dead, but they didn’t want to do it. They wanted their hands to be clear and clean. Oh, what a picture of what happened to the Lord Jesus Christ, as Jesus was nailed up on that cross and descended into the pit of death for me and for you!

E. He Was Slain

And Joseph was slain, figuratively—not literally, but figuratively. He was slain. Look, if you will, in verses 31 and following of this same chapter: *“And they took Joseph’s coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood; and they sent the coat of many colours, and they brought it to their father; and said, This have we found: know now whether it be thy son’s coat or no”*—whether or not this is Joseph’s coat. *“And he knew it, and said, It is my son’s coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces”* (Genesis 37:31–33).

Now, again, I think we see here a glimmer of what is happening when the Lord Jesus Christ died upon that cross, when Jesus died in agony and blood. There in the glory was the blood sprinkled. They bring this blood sprinkled coat to Joseph’s father and present it to him. I’m so glad that when the Lord Jesus Christ died in that temple in heaven, in that tabernacle which God pitched and not man, there on the mercy seat was the sprinkled blood that was presented to the Father. For the Bible tells us, in Hebrews chapter 9 and verse 22, *“Without shedding of blood is no remission [of sin]”* (Hebrews 9:22).

III. The Exalted Sovereign

So we see Joseph, first of all, as the beloved son. And then we see Joseph as the suffering servant, the rejected servant, put to death in a figure, as it were; ignominiously shamed by brethren who betray him and sell him, led by one named Judas. And now I want you to see Joseph, thirdly, not only as the son, and as the servant, but now I want you to see Joseph as the sovereign, the exalted sovereign.

Turn now to Genesis 41—we’re going to skip some chapters, because certainly we cannot go verse by verse—Genesis chapter 41 and verse 38. Are you with me still? I hope so. Now I want you to see what happened to Joseph in the fullness of time.

Joseph, of course, languishes in prison, and all kinds of things happen to him, but Romans 8:28 is still working, and all things are working together for good. And, finally, Joseph is recognized as a man of great, great wisdom—Genesis 41 and verse 38: *“And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is...”*—now he’s just finding out who Joseph is. And notice he’s saying, “Does no one like this man? This man is unique”— *“Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?”* Oh, he was so impressed with this man! And as we continue to read: *“And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art: thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph’s hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck; and he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt.”* And now, notice verse 44. *“And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt”* (Genesis 41:38–44).

A. He Is Given an Exalted Position

Now Joseph, who was betrayed, Joseph, who languished in prison, is now delivered. He is exalted. He is on the right hand of the majesty. And now he is ruling. Oh, he is brought from shame to glory! And that gory story becomes a glory story. And Joseph now, with the linen robe upon him, with the gold chain around his neck, with the ring on his finger, is now exalted. And not a finger is lifted without his permission. Not a foot is lifted without his permission, because now he is sovereign. He is lord!

Again, what a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, who became obedient unto death! But the Bible says, *“Wherefore God...hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every knee name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow”* (Philippians 2:9–10). Don’t you like that part of the story where Joseph goes riding along in the chariot, and there goes out someone before him, a herald, to say, “Bow the knee! Here comes Joseph!” and all over the land of Egypt, everywhere that Joseph went, people would bow their knee (Genesis 41:43, 46).

What is it a prophecy of? I’ll tell you what it’s a prophecy of. It’s a prophecy of Philippians chapter 2. “God hath highly exalted Jesus, and given Him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow.” One day, Madalyn Murray O’Hair will bow the knee and say, “Jesus is Lord.” One day, Adolf Hitler will bow the knee and say, “Jesus is Lord.” One day, Johnny Carson will bow the knee and say, “Jesus is Lord.” One day, you will bow the knee and say that Jesus is Lord. For every

knee will bow and every voice will join that sad chorus of hell and say that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

I just pray God that you'll bow the knee today and say, "Jesus is my Lord and Savior today," because you're going to meet Him. If you don't meet Him in salvation, you're going to meet Him in judgment. If you don't meet Him as Savior, you're going to meet Him as sovereign. If you don't bow in repentance, you're going to bow in judgment. But I'll guarantee you, *"As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God"* (Romans 14:11). So then every one of us shall give an account of himself unto God.

B. He Is Given a New Name

Oh, but my heart leaps with joy as I think of Joseph, the exalted sovereign now! He comes from shame to glory, and he's given a brand new name. Look in chapter 41 and verse 45—chapter 41 and verse 45: *"And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphnath..."*—it's hard to say—*"Zaphnathpaaneah"* (Genesis 41:45). Well, why such a difficult name? That's as bad as Adrian. Why would somebody be named Zaphnathpaaneah? Well, it's an Egyptian name. And do you want me to tell you what it means? It means "Savior of the World"—"Savior of the World." That's the name that of Pharaoh gave to Joseph: Savior of the World, because, you see, he is now in an exalted position.

And notice the wonderful parallel here. First of all, a gold chain is put around him, and around his neck, and a linen robe. And he's given authority. First of all, he's made a prince. And then, he is given a name that means "Savior." Does that fit in with the New Testament? Notice the chronology in Acts chapter 5, verse 31: *"Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour"* (Acts 5:31). Isn't it beautiful? First of all, Jesus is made the Prince, the Lord of Glory; therefore, He is the Savior of the world.

C. He Is Given a Gentile Bride

And the story sweetens and gets even more wonderful! Not only is he given an exalted position at the right hand of the majesty on high, not only is he given a name which means "Savior of the world," but now he is presented with a bride. And this bride is a Gentile bride. Look again in verse 45, if you will: *"And he gave him to wife Asenath"* (Genesis 41:45)—Asenath, a Gentile bride! And, of course, that's a picture of the Church. The Church is the bride of Christ. We are that Gentile bride prophesied and painted so long ago in this Old Testament portrait of the Lord Jesus Christ. And as Joseph loved his bride, so Jesus loves His bride, for the Bible says, *"Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it"* (Ephesians 5:25).

Now, listen to what I said a while back. I said, dear friend, if you're going to love the Father, you must love the Son, amen? And I'm going to tell you something else. If

you're going to love the Son, you must love the bride.

Don't tell me that you love Adrian Rogers if you don't love my Joyce. Listen. If you love me, you'd better love Joyce. And I'm going to tell you something else. If you say something bad about Joyce, you've got me to deal with.

And I'm going to tell you something else. Christ loves the Church. And the Church is more precious to Him than your bride is to you. Jesus loves the Church. This business of saying, "Well, I love Jesus, but I just don't care for the Church; Christianity is all right, but I don't care for the Church": where did you get that business? Friend, it is His Church. He said, "Upon this rock I'll build my Church" (Matthew 16:18). He didn't say, "You'll build my Church." He didn't say, "I'll build your Church." He said, "I'll build my Church." He loved it. He gave Himself for it. He washed it with His blood. He's coming again for the Church. And here was Joseph given a Gentile bride; again, a wonderful picture of Jesus Christ, who has a bride. The Bible tells us that bride is the Church, in Ephesians chapter 5, verses 31 and 32 (Ephesians 5:31–32).

And so, because he is at an exalted position with all authority, and all power given unto him, because he has a name which means "Savior of the world," because he now has a Gentile bride, he is the only hope for a dying world. Remember, it was Joseph who knew that the famine was coming, and it was Joseph who told Pharaoh to lay up all of that grain for those lean years that were coming. And notice what happened in Genesis chapter 41, and beginning in verse 55: "*And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread:*"—and do you think Pharaoh gave them any bread? Not one smidgeon! What did Pharaoh tell them to do?—"and Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, Go unto Joseph; and what he saith to you, do" (Genesis 41:55).

Jesus said, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me,*" (John 14:6) amen? God is not going to deal with you apart from His Son, the Lord Jesus. And you come crying to God the Father, and God the Father is going to send you to God the Son, and He's going to say, "Whatever He says to you, do it." He is the only hope of a dying world. Isn't it an amazing thing, back in the Book of Genesis, a rejected Jew became the hope of the world? I want to tell you, the same thing is true today—the same thing is true today. He was "*despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows*" (Isaiah 53:3). But I want to tell you the only hope of the world is the Lord Jesus Christ. He and He alone is the hope of this dying world.

And there was no shortage of his supply. Look, if you will, please, in verse 49: "*And Joseph gathered corn as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left numbering; for it was without number*" (Genesis 41:49). I want to tell you there was plenty for everyone who came. And there's plenty for you today when you come to the Lord Jesus Christ. For out of His infinite riches in Jesus, He giveth and giveth and giveth again. And all that

you need is in the Lord Jesus. And there's no other place that you can go, for He alone bears that name, "Savior of the World." And the Bible tells us, in Acts chapter 4, verse 12, "*Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*" (Acts 4:12). Thank God for the exalted Sovereign who is the only hope of a dying world!

IV. The Seeking Savior

And now we come to the last point and the last section of Joseph's life. First of all, we see him as the beloved son. Then, we see him as the rejected servant. Then, we see him as the exalted sovereign. And, finally, we see him as the seeking savior. It's so interesting that here he goes to seek for his brethren, the ones who sold him into slavery, the ones who did him so badly; he now is pouring out his love toward them. They've come to Egypt because there's a famine in the land. They don't know; they don't recognize that Joseph is now the sovereign. So far as they're concerned, Joseph is long since dead. He was dead in a figure. They figured that the Ishmaelites would toy with him, use him, kill him, and they figured "Well, he's dead." But now they come to look for food. They're dealing with a man they do not know. They have a need for him, but he realizes he cannot meet their need without first of all revealing himself.

And so, look, if you will, in Genesis chapter 45 and verse 1: "*Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried,*"—oh, Joseph, what a heart full of compassion he had! He looked at his brethren, and though they had sinned against him, and though they had betrayed him, and though they were so filled with hypocrisy, his heart is broken. And he says—"*Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him,*"—all of the people of the court went out—"*while Joseph*"—watch this now—"*made himself known to his brethren*" (Genesis 45:1)—while Joseph made himself known to his brethren.

A. He Revealed Himself to His Brethren

How did they recognize him? Not by the eyes, and not by the ears of flesh, but only as he revealed himself to them. How are you going to know Jesus? You'll know Him by revelation, or you won't know Him at all. You see, we know Him because He reveals Himself to us. Some of you out there are not Christians, and you're very intellectual people. So what you're doing, you're trying to figure the Lord out. You've got your mind working and your brows all knitted up, and you're just working on this situation. You're trying to figure out whether there is a God. You're trying to figure out whether the Bible is the Word of God. You're trying to figure out whether Jesus is the Son of God. I want to tell you, friend, you'll wake up in hell and you still won't have it figured out. Just mark it down. Why? The Bible says God has "*[hidden] these things from the wise and*

prudent, and [God hath] revealed them unto babes” (Matthew 11:25; Luke 10:21).

Do you know how you’ll know God? You’ll know God by revelation, as God reveals Himself to you. But wonder of wonders, and glory of glories, he was willing to reveal himself to those who sold him for a death; and He is willing to reveal Himself to that heart that wants to know Him today. You put away your slide rule; you put away your test tube; you put away your geometric formulas and the rest of it; and you lay your intellectual pride in the dust and say, “Lord Jesus, I want to know,” and He’ll show Himself to you—He’ll show Himself to you. He will reveal Himself to your heart, “for God hath hidden these things from the wise and the prudent, and He hath revealed them unto babes.”

B. He Forgave His Brethren

He revealed himself to his brothers. And why did he reveal himself to his brothers? So he could forgive his brothers. Look, if you will, in chapter 45, in verse 5: *“Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life” (Genesis 45:5).* He speaks a word of comfort to them, a word of forgiveness. And even though they did him in and put him to death, in a figure, again, it’s the spirit of the Lord Jesus: *“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).* And they really didn’t. Oh, they really didn’t. In their blindness, in their sin, in their rebellion, in their stupidity, they nailed the Son of Glory to the cross. But God was over it all, and Jesus did not die by accident. It was in the plan of God that Jesus would die. And I want to tell you, dear friend, that Calvary, though it was an incident, was not an accident.

And I want to tell you that the Lord Jesus Christ looked beyond the cross just as Joseph was able to look beyond all of that suffering and to know that God was in it, bringing the world to Himself. Jesus revealed himself to me. And then Jesus forgave me even though I helped nail Him to the cross.

C. He Commissioned His Brethren

Then I want to say, not only did Joseph reveal Himself to His brethren, and not only did Joseph forgive His brethren, but when he did reveal himself, and when he forgave them, finally, Joseph commissioned his brethren. Now, pay attention. This isn’t just what God has done. It’s what God is doing. This isn’t what God has said. It is what God is saying. And I want you to see the commission that the brethren received. Look at it here in Genesis 45, verses 9 and 10. This is what Joseph said to them after they were restored: *“Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not: and thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children’s children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast:”—and notice*

why he wants them all to come to be near him. And he says here in verse 11—*“and there I will nourish thee; for yet there are five years of famine; lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty”* (Genesis 45:9–11).

What did he tell them to do? He said, “Go out and gather those that I’ve made provision for and bring them to me. Just go get them and bring them, because I’ve made provision for them! I want to nourish you.”

D. He Admonished His Brethren

And then, after he commissioned them and sent them forth, then he admonished them. And I want you to see what he admonished them, because this is what I want to admonish you. Look in verse 24: *“So he sent his brethren away, and they departed: and he said unto them, See that ye fall not out by the way”* (Genesis 45:24).

Just put a star by that, will you? I don’t want you just to get a notebook full of notes today. I want you to get a commission and an admonishment. Joseph said, “You go and bring those that I have made provision for, and bring them to me that I might nourish them, that they might be near me.” And then he said, “And see to it that you fall not out by the way!” That is, “You stick to the task.” And why should they stick to the task?

1. Don’t Fall Out Because of Your Provision

Number one: because of their provision. I’ve given you all that you need to get the job done. Look in verses 19 and 20 of this same chapter: *“Now thou art commanded, this do ye; take you wagons out of the land of Egypt for your little ones, and for your wives, and bring your father, and come. Also regard not your stuff; for the good of all of the land of Egypt is your’s”* (Genesis 45:19–20). Do you know what he said? He said, “Look. I’m going to send you forth. And when I send you forth to get this job done,” he said, “don’t worry about finances. Don’t worry about your stuff. Everything in the land of Egypt is at your disposal.”

What do you think Jesus meant when He said, *“All [authority] is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore . . . and, lo, I am with you always”* (Matthew 28:18–20)? The resources of heaven are behind the man who has submitted to heaven and who is willing to go commissioned by the exalted Savior.

2. Don’t Fall Out Because of Your Position

And so, dear friend, don’t fall out because of your provision. You’ve gone from famine to riches when you come to Jesus. And don’t fall out because of your position. Look, if you will, in verse 24: *“So he sent his brethren away, and they departed: and he said unto them, See that ye fall not out by the way.”* What is their position? His brethren. They have come now from shepherds to royalty. He calls us brethren. Let us not disgrace His holy name. If we fall out by the way, dear friend, we betray our position. He calls us His brethren.

3. Don't Fall Out Because of Your Proclamation

And I tell you, we need not fall out because of our provision. We need not fall out because of our position. And we need not fall out because of our proclamation. What are we to say? Look in verses 26 and following: *“And told him, saying, Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob’s heart fainted, for he believed them not. And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them: and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived: and Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is alive: I will go and see him before I die”* (Genesis 45:26–28).

Hallelujah! Oh, fall not out because of your proclamation! What did Joseph tell them to tell the world? Number one: “I am not dead. I’m alive.” Number two: “I’m at a highly exalted position at the right hand of the majesty on high.” And, number three: “I’ve made ample provision for you, and I want you to come and live with me.” And, dear friend, that’s a message worth telling, isn’t it? That’s exactly what Jesus is telling us to tell this old sin-cursed world: “I’m not dead. I’m alive. I am at a highly exalted position at the right hand of the majesty on high. I’ve made ample provision for you, and I want you to come and live with me.”

Conclusion

We need to preach Christ risen, Christ reigning, and Christ rich. And we need not fall out by the way. Oh, friend, let’s not fall out—let’s not fall out. It’s not going to be long till the sands of time run out for this generation. I want to tell you something. Tucked away here in the Old Testament is the gospel according to Joseph that tells us about our Savior Jesus. And I’m so glad that it does.

Learning to Practice God's Presence

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: Jnauary 17, 1988

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 39

“And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the Lord blessed the Egyptian’s house for Joseph’s sake; and the blessing of the Lord was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field.”

GENESIS 39:5

Outline

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Introduction

We're continuing the message that we began this morning: "How to Make Your Dreams Come True." I want us in just a moment to look in Genesis chapter 39. When you have it, however, just look up here, and let me see your faces for a moment. Let me recapitulate what we've already said: that it would be a tragedy indeed for you to be upon your deathbed ready to die and to look back and find out that you'd never lived, that you simply existed, drawing your breath, and drawing your salary, but you never really had a dream and saw that dream come true. We tried to tell you that God has a plan for everyone's life including yours. God wants that plan to burn in your bosom as a dream and then to see that dream come true. It is true that He doesn't give us all of the details of the dream, but it is true that our God plants ambitions in our hearts. They're not carnal ambitions. God has never promised to fulfill our fantasies, but He does say in His Word that, *"Your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions."* (Joel 2:28) God pours out His Spirit as a fulfillment of that dream, as a means of fulfilling that vision.

Jeremiah tells us that we're not to dream things up ourselves then ask God to rubber

stamp them. But he does tell us—and he tells us wonderfully and beautifully—that He has a plan for us. Jeremiah 29, verse 11: “‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the *LORD*, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’” (Jeremiah 29:11) God is a God of plans. “*The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD.*” (Psalms 37:23) And I wanted to give you five ways to make your dream come true. The very first of these is this: that you need therefore to dare to dream; you need to find the will of God for your life. We told you how you could do that, how you could know the will of God by presenting yourself to God, letting God transform you “*by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*” (Romans 12:2) Remember what we told you this morning, that presentation plus transformation equals realization. If you present your body a living sacrifice that transforms your mind, then you have the mind of Christ and you’re able to think God’s thoughts after Him.

And then, my dear friends, we told you that not only should you dare to dream, but we told you that it is very, very important that you get a proper self-concept. Joseph knew who he was. He was different; he stood out from his brethren. And we told you that the second principle therefore is: the you that you see is the you you’ll be. And we talked to you about a good self-assessment.

Now we’re not saying that that is swaggering or bragging when you say that you know who you are in the Lord. The Apostle Paul said, “*But by the grace of God I am what I am.*” (1 Corinthians) The Bible says, “*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) We told you this morning that the grace of God will exalt you without inflating you and it will humble you without debasing you. You don’t need to think of yourself in sinful exaggeration or false humiliation, but in sober estimation. We are what we are by the grace of God.

Joseph knew who he was. His coat of many colors spoke of his nobility. And we have even a greater nobility in the Lord Jesus Christ. The world will try to squeeze us into its mold just as Joseph’s brothers resented him because he was not like them. But we must dare to be different—dare to dream, dare to be different. Let God plant a dream in your heart, and then understand that the you that you see is the you that you’ll be.

And then the third principle we gave you this morning was this: You need to learn to see problems as possibilities—you need to learn to turn your problems into possibilities. Now God’s plan is not to give you an easy life; God’s plan is to give you an effective life, an exciting life. Joseph had many troubles. We spoke of some of the troubles in Genesis chapter 37—here we’re going to review them very briefly—but you remember that he was scorned by his brothers. He was actually stripped of his beautiful coat,

thrown in the pit, later on sold to a caravan going to Egypt. Later on, he was lied about, thrown in prison, and languished in prison. He had all kinds of trouble, but he said to us, in Genesis chapter 50 and verse 20, that those who did that to him meant to do evil, but, he said, *“God meant it unto good.”* (Genesis 50:20) God will use the trouble in your life to strengthen you and mature you.

I. Learn to Practice the Presence of God

Now that’s where we had to stop this morning, and now we’re going to get into the rest of the message. I want to give you now what I’m going to call the fourth principle, and it is this: Learn to practice the presence of God—learn to practice the presence of God. I’m reading now in Genesis chapter 39, and I begin to read in verse 1: *“And Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hands of the Ishmeelites, which had brought him down thither. And the LORD was with Joseph...”*—underscore that phrase—*“And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. And his master saw that the LORD was with him,”*—underscore that again—*“and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand. And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand. And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian’s house for Joseph’s sake; and the blessing of the LORD was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field. And he left all that he had in Joseph’s hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was a goodly person, and well favoured.”* (Genesis 39:1–6)

Now I want you to notice a phrase in verse 2: *“And the LORD was with Joseph.”* (Genesis 39:2) Notice that phrase again in verse 3: *“The LORD was with him.”* (Genesis 39:3) Look in verse 21 of this same chapter: *“But the LORD was with Joseph.”* (Genesis 39:21) Look in verse 23, the last part of verse 23: *“The LORD was with him, and that which he did, the LORD made it to prosper.”* (Genesis 39:23) *“And the Lord was with Joseph.”* *“The LORD was with him.”* *“The LORD was with him.”* *“The LORD was with him.”*

Do you get the idea God’s trying to tell us something? Let me tell you this phrase is so important that in the New Testament, when the writer in the New Testament summed up the life of Joseph, in Acts chapter 7 and verse 9, it says this: *“And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him.”* (Acts 7:9) That’s what the New Testament says. And over and over again in the Old Testament it says, “God was with him,” “the Lord was with him,” “the Lord was with him.” Friend, the reason that Joseph’s dream came true is that Joseph had learned to practice the presence of God.

I want to look into the situation here tonight and point out three times how God was with Joseph, and the times that He must be with you if indeed you're going to fulfill your dream.

A. In Service

For example, the Lord was with Joseph in a time of servitude. Now what happened is this: Joseph is sold into slavery. The Ishmaelites have taken him down to Egypt, and they put him on the slave block. Now I want to tell you over and over again the Bible tells us that Joseph was handsome. Keep this in your mind. It's going to play in the story a little later. He was handsome. He was virile. The Bible says he *"was a goodly person."* (Genesis 39:6) I did a little study, and that speaks of his handsomeness. It also speaks of his physique. As the kids would say today, he was a hunk. He was a good-looking man. Joseph was a man's man. He was very athletically built and very strong. And so they were glad to have this young man as a slave.

They take him and put him on the slave block down there in Egypt. Can you see poor Joseph as he's lashed to that caravan and he's pulled through the desert sands down to Egypt? And then he's chained and put on the slave block, and an auctioneer says, "What am I bid for this fine specimen? Look at those bulging muscles! Look at that handsome physique! And look at his keen eyes! What am I bid for him?" A whip whistles through the air and falls on Joseph's back. The auctioneer says, "Lift up your head and let them see you!" About that time, there's a man there named Potiphar. He was the head of Pharaoh's guard. He was a tough man. You'd have to be, to be the chief officer to protect the king. And he saw in Joseph something that was unique, and he bought him. I don't know what he paid for him. Let's say twenty pieces of silver: "I'll give you twenty pieces of silver." "All right, sold! Sold to Potiphar!" Potiphar takes Joseph, and Joseph is put into Potiphar's house.

Now I want you to notice something very important, those of you who want your dreams to come true. Do you know what Joseph did? Look in verse 2: *"And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian."* Now, watch verse 3: *"And his master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand. And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he"—Potiphar—"made him"—Joseph—"overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand."* (Genesis 39:2–4)

Now Joseph is serving Potiphar. Potiphar is his slave master. But Joseph serves him, not with rebellion, not with sullenness. What Joseph did is this—and how important it is if you're going to succeed in life: Joseph made his job, number one, his temple of devotion, and number two, his lampstand for witness. And I would to God every man and every woman that goes to work tomorrow in Memphis, Tennessee, would do the same two things!

You say, “Well, I don’t work in a Christian organization.” Maybe that’s exactly why God has you there. Do you think that Joseph was working in a Christian organization, in a godly organization? No, you don’t put a lighthouse in downtown Manhattan. You put it out on a rocky, craggy barren coast where it is needed. And it may be that God has you particularly where He wants you. God puts you there, number one, to let that job be your temple of devotion. And did you know in your so-called “secular” employment that God may have put you just right where He wants you—in that office, in that business, in that factory—so that the difference can be seen in a Christian? As you serve there, no matter what you’re doing, don’t do it as unto man, but as unto God.

Colossians chapter 3 has much to say about being obedient to our masters according to the flesh. And then Paul says this: *“Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.”* (Colossians 3:24) In your normal ordinary job, make it your temple of devotion. Do what Joseph did and say, “Lord, he thinks I’m doing it for him, but I am doing it for you.”

And when you make your job your temple of devotion, then your job is going to be your lampstand of witness. You see, listen. If Christians would go out tomorrow and live that way on Monday, people in this city would believe what I preach on Sunday. Do you know that? They really would. People wanting to witness, you can start tomorrow morning at eight a.m., or whenever it is that you go to work. Look at verse 3: *“And his master saw that the LORD was with him.”* (Genesis 39:3) Isn’t that wonderful? Isn’t that wonderful? Here was an unsaved man, here was a pagan, but he *“saw that the LORD was with him.”* What a testimony! Those that we work for ought to see God’s mark upon our lives. And the Bible says that in everything that happened to this man Potiphar, there was prosperity. Notice verse 2: *“And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.”* “All that he did,” verse 3 says, “the Lord made to prosper in his hand.” (Genesis 39:2–3) Do you know what old Potiphar said? He looked at Joseph, and he said, “I can’t figure it out, but after Joseph has come to my house, prosperity has come to my house. And this man worships a God named Jehovah.” Then I’m quite certain that Potiphar must have said, “Boy, I wish all of my servants worshipped the same God named Jehovah.” There is something different about Joseph.

Now, listen. How was Joseph able to do this? How was Joseph as a slave able to take such a faithful part and to work so diligently and so faithfully as unto God so that a pagan took note? I’ll tell you how. He practiced the presence of God. He did it as unto the Lord. *“And the LORD was with him.”* (Genesis 39:3) The Lord was with him in service. Now, listen. God wanted Joseph to be a ruler. But before any man can be a ruler, he’s got to be a servant. If you’re not willing to be a servant, you will never be a ruler. God always makes servants before He makes rulers.

B. In Self-Control

There's a second illustration of where the Lord was with Joseph. Not only did Joseph depend upon God and practice the presence of God in service, but he also practiced the presence of God in self-control. Begin to read here in chapter 39 and verse 6: *"And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was a goodly person,"*—that means he was a handsome person—*"and well favoured"*—that is, he was gifted. *"And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me..."*—that is, she tried to entice him into a sexual liaison—*"Lie with me. But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand; there is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"* (Genesis 39:6–9)

Now Joseph was handsome, in verse 6, and here is a woman who tries to entice him into an act of fornication and adultery. I want to remind you, friend, this was not a fictitious test. This was a real test. Joseph was a virile young man, with things coursing through his blood that these young men in our service tonight have. And you know that the devil spoke to Joseph. You know that you know that the devil said to him, "Joe, listen. Why don't you do this, friend? You're a stranger here. Nobody will ever know. Hey, Joe, you've worked hard. Don't be a fool, Joe. You've had it hard long enough, Joe. Go ahead and do it."

But in verse 8 the Bible says that he steadfastly refused. And in verse 9 here's the reason that he steadfastly refused. He said, "I cannot sin against God." (Genesis 39:9) The sin of fornication, like all sins, is primarily against Almighty God. Now, when he said that to her, "I cannot sin against God," she threw all restraint to the wind. Notice in verse 10: *"And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her."* (Genesis 39:10) Now he's not listening to her. He's not getting near to her. He's making a detour around her. Time she'd come in, he'd go out.

Now, notice verse 11: *"And it came to pass about this time, that Joseph went into the house to do his business; and there was none of the men of the house there within. And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out."* (Genesis 39:11–12) Amen and amen. Joseph, when he saw what was happening, saturated that place with his absence; he just got out. To Joseph it was better to lose his coat than to lose his character; better to lose his position than to lose his purity. He knew that she would be angry, but he still simply left; he ran.

Now the Bible says to *"Flee fornication."* (1 Corinthians 6:18) That's exactly what Joseph did. *"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but*

God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.” (1 Corinthians 10:13) *This time the way to escape was the king’s highway, two legs, and a hard run*—just simply get out of there; just get out.

There are some of you who need to listen to this if your dream will ever come true. God cannot bless a person who has moral impurity in his or her life. If you cannot pass the service test, you’ll never see your dream come true. And if you cannot pass the self-control test, you’ll never see your dream come true. How was Joseph able to stay pure? How is any man able to stay pure in this day and this age? Any woman? There’s only one way, and that is for God to be with them.

Now Joseph, you say, “He sure took a chance; he took a chance with his job.” Indeed he did. He lost his job. There are some of you, it would be better for you to move out of that office and to quit your job than to lose your purity. If you’re in a neighborhood and you’re having difficulty in that neighborhood, you need to sell that house. You say, “I’d take a licking on it.” It doesn’t make any difference. Friend, there is no price too great to pay for your purity—none! Joseph was willing to pay a price. Why? How did he do this? He practiced the presence of God. And over and over in this chapter the Bible says, “*the LORD was with him,*” “*the LORD was with him,*” “*the LORD was with him.*”

C. In Suffering

Not only did he practice the presence of God in service, and not only did he practice the presence of God in self-control, but he practiced the presence of God in suffering. Notice what happens, in verse 13: “*And it came to pass, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and was fled forth, that she called unto the men of her house, and spake unto them, saying, See, he hath brought in an Hebrew unto us to mock us; he came in unto me to lie with me, and I cried with a loud voice: and it came to pass, when he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled, and got him out. And she laid up his garment by her, until his lord came home. And she spake unto him according to these words, saying, The Hebrew servant, which thou hast brought unto us, came in unto me to mock me: and it came to pass, as I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled out. And it came to pass, when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spake unto him, saying, After this manner did thy servant to me; that his wrath was kindled. And Joseph’s master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king’s prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison.*” (Genesis 39:13–20) This is not an ordinary prison, friend. This is the one where the king’s prisoners were bound, and he was there in the prison.

But now, notice verse 21: “*But the LORD was with Joseph.*” (Genesis 39:21) Now you’re getting some idea of why God would bless this man, because, not only do you see him in service, and not only do you see him in self-control, but now you see him in

suffering. He's lied against. Hell knows no fury like a woman scorned. Potiphar's wife has been made a fool of, so she musses her hair, she tears her clothes, perhaps she bruised her face a little bit, and then she accuses Joseph of assault and attempted rape.

How do you think Joseph felt? Do you know what Joseph was suffering for right here? He wasn't suffering for doing bad. He was suffering for doing good. He was suffering for being pure. Can you imagine the whispering? Can you imagine the embarrassment when he's thrown into jail? Can you imagine what some of the fellows must have done with a smile on their face? There comes Holy Joe: "Joe, you old devil." They got a bang out of it, laughing at this man who claimed to be a servant of God. That just brings me to say this, dear friend: You be careful what you believe about God's servants. You say, "Well, I got it from the horse's mouth." Well, the horse might be telling a lie. You just be careful about what you believe. How the devil loves to slander good men!

But I want you to see, friend, what is happening here. He's thrown into prison. In verse 21: *"But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it. The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the LORD was with him, and that which he did, the LORD made it to prosper."* (Genesis 39:21–23) Friend, God is training Joseph to run the nation. Everywhere he goes he runs into difficulty. And God uses that difficulty as a school to make this man strong.

You will never be a leader if you flee from difficulty. Learn, as Joseph did, to turn your problems into possibilities. *"All things work together for good to them that love God."* (Romans 8:28) Practice the presence of God wherever you are, in whatever difficulty. Remember that God is with you. God is with you—God is with you.

II. It Is Always Too Soon to Quit

Now, here's the fifth and final principle I want to give you. If you would make your dream come true, not only must you practice the presence of God, but you must remember this, dear friend: It is always too soon to quit—it is always too soon to quit. Look in chapter 40, if you will, and in verse 23: *"Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him."* (Genesis 40:23) That verse just simply sums up the entire chapter. Joseph, in prison, thinks that somebody is going to take a message and get him out of prison, but when the butler that Joseph helps gets out of prison, he leaves Joseph in prison.

Joseph is there, but I want you to see something else, dear friend, in chapter 41 and verse 46. Even though Joseph seems to be forgotten, God had not forgotten. *"And*

Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt...—Joseph starts out as a seventeen-year-old boy; now he is a thirty-year-old man—*“And Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt.”* (Genesis 41:46) And we’re going to see in a moment that Joseph becomes the prime minister of Egypt. Joseph refused to quit. Joseph kept on keeping on, because he knew that his heart was right.

Let me give you a verse of Scripture—Psalm 37, verses 5 and following: *“Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday.”* Joseph was righteous. God said, “Joseph, just commit your way to me. I’m going to take care of it.” And then he says, *“Rest in the LORD ...”*—listen to this. Oh, how we need to learn this—*“Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil. For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth.”* (Psalms 37:5–9) Beloved friend, it’s always, always, always too soon to quit. God knows what He’s doing. God is not as interested in time as you are.

Now, friend, God has His schedules. The Lord came to Joseph in due time. The Bible says that Jesus came to this world “in the fullness of time.” (Ephesians 1:10) He is coming back, the Bible says, in His own time. (Matthew 24:36; Mark 13:32) God has His schedule, but with God, timing is far more important than time. Let me give you another verse. And how this applies to us today, and how it illustrates the life of Joseph! First Peter chapter 5 and verse 6: *“Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.”* (1 Peter 5:6) That’s exactly what happened to Joseph. Joseph seems to be buried alive. He’s forgotten by his brothers; he is forgotten by the evil woman who lied about his character; he’s forgotten by Potiphar; he’s forgotten by the butler; but he is not forgotten by God. The Bible says, *“They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength.”* (Isaiah 40:31) Oh, my dear friend, learn to wait upon God. God had given Joseph a dream, and he never forgot the dream.

Let’s continue to read here in Genesis chapter 41 and verse 46 again: *“And Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt. And in the seven plenteous years the earth brought forth by handfuls. And he gathered up all the food of the seven years, which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities: the food of the field, which was round about every city, laid he up in the same.”* (Genesis 41:46–48)

And then the Bible tells us how God took Joseph and made Joseph a man of great

wealth and a man of great power and a man of great fulfillment. It's an amazing thing what God had done for Joseph. Notice in chapter 41, and I begin in verse 38: *"And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is? And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art: thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck; and he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt."* (Genesis 41:38–44)

Now, folks, God had shown Joseph this when he was a youngster: "Joseph, one of these days the world's rulers and the world's resources are going to be in your command." It's always too soon to quit. Joseph comes from prison to the palace. You, my dear friend, may be in deep discouragement right now. I beg you, don't quit. If God has given you a dream, *don't doubt in the dark what God has shown you in the light*. God did not fail Joseph, and God will not fail you. Joseph had a slave's hand, but it's now wearing a royal ring. Joseph was wearing prison garb, but now he has fine linen garments. No longer does he have the iron chains of bondage; there's a gold chain about his neck.

You know, as I read this story, I get to thinking about this. Just think with me for a moment. Joseph is the supreme ruler in the land of Egypt: unlimited power, in control of everything that Pharaoh has. Now, who was Pharaoh's chief guard? Potiphar. Imagine Potiphar coming home to supper that night. He says to Mrs. Potiphar, "Mrs. Potiphar, do you remember a slave boy long ago? I bought him in a slave market. His name was Joseph. And do you remember you said that he attacked you, he assaulted you, and tried to rape you? Do you remember that young man?" "Oh yes, I remember him." "Well, sweetheart, I hope you were telling the truth, because tomorrow morning I report to him."

Friend, listen. God knows what He's doing, and you can wait on God. Never get in a hurry—never get in a hurry. Don't demand to understand. Don't push providence. *"Wait, I say, on the LORD."* (Psalms 27:14) *"And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday."* (Psalms 37:6) Let God give you a dream. Dare to dream. Then understand who you are: the you that you see is the you that you'll be. When you have difficulty and problems, learn to turn those problems into possibilities. *"All things work together for good."* (Romans 8:28) And Joseph said, *"Ye thought evil*

against me; but God meant it unto good.” (Genesis 50:20) Let God take those difficulties and those problems and make something good out of them.

How can you do that? Practice the presence of God wherever you are. God was with him. God was with him. God was with him. In service, in self-control, in suffering, God was with him. That’s how he turned problems into possibilities. My friend, it’s always too soon to quit. You may be in the dungeon right now. That’s all right. It’s always too soon to quit.

Conclusion

Let me tell you a story that I shared with you several years ago, but it’s still in my heart and in my mind. I was talking to Senator Jesse Helms. And Senator Helms said to me, “Adrian, I want to tell you a story that Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn told me.” Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn was that brilliant Russian dissident, a literary genius. The Russians did not like him because of his faith in God and his ideas about freedom, so they put him in a concentration camp, a labor camp. Solzhenitsyn said to this United States Senator, he said, “I hope you never know what real repression is.” He said, “Let me tell you what it was like in that camp. We were cut off from all contact with the outside world: not a letter could come in; not a letter could go out. We had no newspapers. We had no books. We had no writing material. We had no telephone calls. We had no radio. We had no television. We were cut off from the outside world. We were not even able to communicate with one another—the prisoners; they would stop us from doing that. On top of that, we were put into forced labor, where we worked hard manual labor; grueling, excruciating labor, day after day.”

He said, “I got to wondering, does anybody know I’m here? Does anybody care? It began to work on my mind. After a while,” he said, “I said to myself, ‘I’d rather die than stay in this prison camp. I’ll take my own life.’” By this time, his mind was becoming twisted and warped, and he said, “I will take my own life.” But then he said, “My Christian faith would not allow me to do it. I knew that was wrong, but my mind became so warped that I decided I would do this. I decided that I would try to escape. And when I ran and tried to escape, I knew they would shoot me. But it wouldn’t be my fault; it would be theirs.

“On a particular day, we were out on a work detail. The sun was blazing hot. For Russia that was unusual, but the sun was blazing hot. The guard had given us just a moment of respite to sit under a tree. I was sitting there. I saw the guard with the gun. I said, ‘This is the time. I will spring up and run. He’ll take that gun. He’ll shoot me between the shoulders. It will be over.’ I flexed my knees. I put my hands on the ground. I was ready to spring up. I was ready to run, when another man came, a prisoner. I suppose he was a prisoner. I don’t ever remember seeing him before, but he came and

stood in front of me.”

Remember they were not allowed to talk, not allowed to communicate. “He had a stick in his hand, just a twig off of a tree.” Solzhenitsyn said, “That man looked into my eyes with a look of compassion, a look of understanding and love, and it was as though he looked into my very soul, as if to say, ‘I know everything that you’re thinking, and what you’re thinking is wrong.’ And then the man with that stick, as though he were just simply doodling in the ground, drew a cross and turned and walked away.” Solzhenitsyn said, “I don’t know who he was, or what he was, but for me he was an angel of God. I knew that what I was doing was wrong, and I settled back and committed it to the Lord.”

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn said, “Little did I know that all over the world people were praying for me and writing letters, and inside a week I would be a free man in Geneva, Switzerland.” Inside one week, friend. It’s always too soon to quit—it’s always too soon to quit.

Joseph was in prison one day. The next day he’s the ruler of Egypt. Let God put a dream in your heart—not a fantasy, not some carnal ambition. Just let God put a dream in your heart. And then practice the presence of God. And then wait on God and see your dream come true.

What to Do When Your Dreams Dissolve

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: January 13, 1991

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 39–41

“And Joseph’s master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king’s prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison.”

GENESIS 39:20

Outline

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Introduction

Turn with me, please, to the book of Genesis, chapter 39—Genesis 39. “What to Do When Dreams Dissolve.” What do you do when you’re trying to serve the Lord, when you’re living clean, when you’re praying, when you’re trusting, when you’re obeying and doing the best you know how, and number one, everything seems to go wrong, and number two, nothing seems to make sense? Now, if you haven’t been in that place, sooner or later, you’re going to be there. Everything just seems to unravel. It goes wrong, and nothing seems to make sense. Well, if you belong to the world and you don’t know the Lord, you’ll get some sort of a little slogan, a little proverb. You’ll say, “Well, when the going gets tough, the tough get going.” Or, maybe you’ll do better than that. You’ll say, “When you come to the end of your rope, tie a knot in it and hang on.” Or, maybe you’ll just say, “Well, cheer up. Things will get better.” Or, maybe you’ll just simply say, “Grin and bear it.” But, dear friend, not if you know the Lord, not if you’re saved, not if you’re a child of God. God has something better for you when dreams dissolve and you find yourself in a prison, as Dale sang, of not of your own making.

I want you to look here at a story of one of the most Christ-like characters in all of the Bible. His name is Joseph. Now, I’m sure that Joseph, because he was a son of

Adam, had sin in his life, but as I read the Bible, I cannot find any sin mentioned against Joseph. Joseph was a man of God—I suppose the most Christ-like character in the Old Testament. And yet, this man Joseph found himself the victim of slander. False charges are raised against him, but even before that, he’s been sold as a slave by his brothers. And now, prison doors slam shut behind him. He’s in prison—not because he deserves to be in prison. Indeed, he doesn’t. He’s been accused of molesting a woman. He’s been accused of the high crime of attempted rape. He’s absolutely pure, absolutely innocent, but he is thrown into prison.

And, that’s where the story takes up tonight in Genesis 39:20: *“And Joseph’s master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king’s prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison”*—I take that to mean it was an extra-secure prison. But, notice in verse 21—*“But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph’s hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it. The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the LORD was with him”*—that is, the Lord was with Joseph—*“and that which he did, the LORD made it to prosper.”* (Genesis 39:20–23)

Well, let me give you, tonight, five principles. I can call them, tonight, “prison principles”—five things that happen when your dreams seem to dissolve. The reason why I say, “your dream”—because Joseph was known in the Bible as the dreamer. He had a destiny to fulfill. God had called him. God had ordained him, and God had a function and a future for this man. And, his brothers called him “the dreamer.” And, God had given him a dream, and now it just seems that his dream is dissolving.

I. Don’t Be Dismayed by Darkness

Principle number one: Don’t be dismayed by darkness—don’t be dismayed by darkness. When you don’t understand, don’t demand to understand. Don’t be dismayed when dark times come. You don’t have to always understand. When this happened to Joseph, he had not sinned against God. You read the passage, and there’s no apparent cause why God should allow him to be cast into prison. It didn’t make sense. Satan surely whispered in Joseph’s ear, “Now, where is your God?” I’m telling you, ladies and gentlemen, there are times when things make sense. There are times when we say, “Isn’t God wonderful? He did this, and He did that. And, look how it worked out.” But, you may as well admit it: there are times when it doesn’t make sense; you’re in darkness.

Isaiah 50:10–11 is the key verse here. If this verse is not marked in your Bible, I suggest that you turn to it right now and mark it. Isaiah 50:10–11—Isaiah asked this question: *“Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his*

servant, that walketh in darkness”—now, that doesn’t seem to come together, does it? Here’s somebody who fears the Lord, who obeys God’s servant, and yet that man—*“walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God. Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow.”* (Isaiah 50:10–11) Now, that says, in plain English, “When you find yourself in darkness, don’t light your own fire.” Don’t, dear friend, be dismayed by the darkness. This verse teaches that darkness can come to the child of God. You can be fearing God. You can be obeying God. You can be like Joseph walking the straight and narrow and be plunged into stygian darkness, where you won’t be able to see your hand before your face. And, it is darkness that God has allowed.

Somehow we’ve tried to get across the idea to people that, if you’ll get saved, that it is constant brilliant sunlight all the way, but it is not. The late, great Dr. Vance Havner said this: “Don’t get the distorted idea that if you serve God, it will be all joy, light, sweetness, and roses. Don’t get the idea that you’re going to move through the world in an ever-ascending scale of health, success, happy family life, serene old age, and then a glorious exit.” And then, Dr. Havner said, “There’s no need to deny it. Thousands of saints are perplexed and in despair.” He said, “We tend to paint the clouds with sunshine. We tend to wear rose-colored glasses and say, ‘God is in His heaven, and all’s right with the world.’ Yet there are times when it doesn’t make sense. The child of God is in darkness. This is one who has been obeying the Word of God.” And, what Dr. Havner said is so true. It was true in the life of Joseph. It didn’t make sense to Joseph.

You read the Bible—Job, a perfect man who feared God with all of his heart and hated evil, he was perplexed. The prophet Habakkuk prayed to God and said, “God, I don’t understand.” (Habakkuk 3:8) John the Baptist... Jesus said, “Not a greater was born of woman than John the Baptist.” (Matthew 11:11; Luke 7:28) And, John the Baptist, in prison, came to a place where nothing made sense to him. And, the Apostle Paul himself, the greatest spiritual intellect of all of the ages, talked of a time when he was perplexed. And, darkness may come to you, my dear friend, but just because it doesn’t make sense to you doesn’t mean it doesn’t make sense. And, just because you don’t understand now doesn’t mean that one day you will not understand. One of these days, God will pull back the shades of night, and pin them with a star, and open the door of the morning, and flood your world with sunlight.

*[It may] not [be] now, but in the coming years,
It may be in the better land,
We’ll [know] the meaning of our tears,
And there...we’ll understand.*

—MAXWELL N. CORNELIUS

My dear friend, darkness is the absence of light, and the darkness can never drive away the light. And, if there's darkness in your life, it's only because God has withdrawn the light. And, if God has withdrawn the light, you let God be God. And, there are some things that you can only see in the darkness. You never see the stars until it's dark. The stars are there at high noon, but you don't see them 'til the sun sets. And, there are some things in our lives that we'll never know and never understand until we get into darkness. And so, I would say to you, first of all, my dear friend, do not—do not—be dismayed by darkness when your dreams dissolve. If you don't understand it—if something bad has happened to you and if it makes absolutely no sense—the Bible says you stay upon your God; you trust in your God—Isaiah 50:10–11. (Isaiah 50:10)

II. Don't Be Derelict in Your Duty

Number two: When your dream dissolves, don't be dismayed by darkness and don't be derelict in your duty. Look, if you will, again in verse 20: the Bible says, *“And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison”*—but now, watch—*“But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison.”* (Genesis 39:20–21)

Now, if Joseph had been like many men that I know and many women that I know, he would have said, “Here I am serving God, and where has it gotten me? I've been thrown into prison. I'll just quit. I'll close up shop. I've been abused and misused,” and he'll just simply close down. But, you find out that Joseph does two things in prison: he maximizes his integrity, and he maximizes his industry. He continues to serve the Lord, and before long, Joseph, in this prison, is running the prison. There's a butler who is thrown into prison. There's a baker who is thrown into prison. And, Joseph is there to witness to both the butler and the baker, to put his arms around them and tell them of the grace of God, to minister to them. And, I'll tell you, there's one thing that Joseph could say to both of those men who are in prison: “I understand how you feel.” He was able to commiserate with those people. Joseph was not a fair-weather Christian. Joseph was a Christian who was a foul-weather Christian as well as a fair-weather Christian. He knew what it was to serve God in prison and out of prison.

I see so many, when they meet the devil, as we heard tonight on this platform, face to face, rather than standing up, they fold up. Listen, my dear friend: do not be derelict in your duty when your dream dissolves. Keep on praying. Keep on witnessing. Keep on tithing. Keep on submitting. Keep on giving. Keep on being faithful. Some of you are about to quit. Don't quit.

III. Don't Be Defeated by Your Disappointment

Number three: Don't be defeated by your disappointment. Don't get bitter. Look, if you will, in verse 14 of this same chapter. Joseph is rehearsing what happened to him, and I begin in chapter 40 and verse 14: *"But think on me when it shall be well with thee, and shew kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house"*—this is what Joseph is saying—*"For indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews: and here also have I done nothing that they should put me into [prison]."* (Genesis 40:14–15)

Joseph here is rehearsing what has happened to him. Now, notice Joseph is saying, "Look, I was minding my own business. I was serving God. I've been framed." But, as you listen to Joseph—such a marvelous spirit here—he states the facts, he tells what happened to him, but there's no note of bitterness here. There's no complaint here. He doesn't even mention his brothers who sold him into slavery. He doesn't mention Potiphar or Potiphar's wife, who lied on him and said that he had tried to molest her. He doesn't mention those things. He just takes it patiently, and he's not defeated by this disappointment.

Let me give you a verse right here—1 Peter 2:20: the Bible says, *"For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God."* (1 Peter 2:20) My friend, when you are mistreated and when you've been wrongly treated, if you're not careful, you'll turn bitter. You read the story of Joseph, and you cannot find one shred of bitterness. He is not defeated by his disappointments. Hebrews 12:15: the Bible says we're to be *"looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled."* (Hebrews 12:15)

Many people, when their dreams dissolve, when they don't get what they think is coming to them—they ought to have—then they get bitter. I know of a preacher who served a church for many years, and rather than loving him and honoring him, at a particular time, they turned on him. Finally, they dismissed him after ill treatment as their pastor, and he was turned out. And really, he had given them the very heart of his life, and there was really very little left. He became a bitter man, and he began to talk about those people. He talked about how he had served them, how he had loved them, how he had sacrificed for them, how he'd watched over them, but this is what he said over and over again: "After all that I did for them! After all that I did for them! After all that I did for them!" My thought is it's a shame he didn't do it for the Lord. Oh, he ought not to have been mistreated, and those people, of course, will suffer for the way they mistreated that man of God. But, my dear friend, when you do it for the Lord as unto Jesus and someone misunderstands, somebody abuses you, misuses you, and somebody disappoints you, don't be defeated by your disappointments when your

dream seems to dissolve.

IV. Don't Be Discouraged by Delays

Number four: Don't be discouraged by delays—don't be discouraged by delays. Look, if you will, here in chapter 40:23: the Bible says, *"Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him."* (Genesis 40:23) Joseph said to the butler, "When you get out of here, remember me and help me to get out of here," but the butler just simply forgot Joseph. Look in chapter 41:46, if you will, of this same chapter. The Bible says here concerning Joseph, *"And Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt."* (Genesis 41:46) Joseph had been in this thing since he was a teenager. Thirty years now, and there seems to be no answer.

My dear friend, when dreams seem to dissolve, don't be impatient. Don't get hasty. Learn to wait on God. Psalms 37:5–9 says, *"Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday. Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man [that] bringeth wicked devices to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil. For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth."* (Psalms 37:5–9) My dear friend, don't be discouraged by delays. If God is slow—if He seems slow to you—that's all right. Joseph—it seemed like he was buried alive. He was forgotten by his brothers. He was forgotten by that evil woman, Potiphar's wife. He was forgotten by Potiphar. He was forgotten by the butler, but he was not forgotten by God. As you read this story, if he had been like the average twentieth-century Christian and waited and waited and waited and waited, then finally he would have thrown up his hands and quit. But, Peter tells us in 1 Peter 5:6: *"Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time."* (1 Peter 5:6) That means that God has a due time. God is never late, and God is never ahead of time. God has His schedule. And, the Bible says, *"They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength."* (Isaiah 40:31)

V. Don't Despair of Your Dream

One last thing I would say, dear friend: you find yourself in a time when nothing makes sense—a time of darkness, a time of misunderstanding, a time of mistreatment—don't despair of your dream—don't despair of your dream. Don't think that God has forsaken you. God did not forsake Joseph. Joseph said, "You intended it for evil, but God made it good." Look, if you will, in Genesis 41, beginning in verse 37—one of the sweetest passages here in all of the Bible: *"And the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of all his servants"*—that is, Pharaoh saw what a wise man Joseph was—

“And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is? And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art: [So] shalt [thou] be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph’s hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck; And he made him...ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.” (Genesis 41:37–44)

You see, God had given Joseph a dream, and Joseph refused to give up that dream. Joseph did not despair of his dream. Through it all—through it all—he had trusted the Lord, and now see what has happened. My dear friend, he has gone from a slave’s hand to now, he’s wearing the royal ring. He’s cast off the prison garb, and now he’s wearing fine linen garments. No longer does he have those iron chains on his wrists and ankles, but he has a golden chain around his neck. If I could say something to you, my dear friend: if God has spoken to you—if God has given you a word—and disappointment comes, and despair comes, and heartache comes, and perplexity comes, and unfairness comes, and lack of justice comes, and yet you had a word from God, don’t doubt in the dark what God has shown you in the light. Don’t despair of your dream. God will keep His word.

I want you to see young Joseph. He is now made the Prime Minister of all Egypt. You remember it was Potiphar who had Joseph cast into prison. Potiphar was the captain of the guard. It was Potiphar’s wife that lied about Joseph and said that Joseph had tried to sexually assault her. I can imagine Potiphar coming home and speaking to his wife. He might have said something like this after Joseph was made the Prime Minister: he might have said, “Sweetheart, sit down. Let’s have a cup of tea. I want to talk with you. Do you remember that slave boy that you said tried to assault you? Do you remember the one?” “Oh, yes,” she says, “I remember him.” “Well, sweetheart, you remember that we had him cast into prison?” “Oh, yes, that’s right. You did have him cast into prison. Where is he now?” “Well, that’s what I wanted to talk to you about, sweetheart. I hope you were telling the truth, because I report to him tomorrow morning.” My dear friend, nothing is ever settled until it’s settled right. And, you can make up your mind that there’s a God in the glory who’s going to settle the score. He will! He’ll turn every Calvary into an Easter. He’ll turn every midnight into a morning.

You know, Joseph must have had a sense of humor. He had two sons, and I want you to see what he named his two sons, if you would. In chapter 41, look, if you will, in

verse 51. The Bible says, *“And Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: For God, said he, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father’s house”*—the word *Manasseh* means “forgetfulness.” And then, look, if you will, in verse 52—*“And the name of the second [he] called...Ephraim: For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.”* (Genesis 41:51–52) Two sons—he named one Manasseh (“forgetfulness”); he named the other one Ephraim (“fruitfulness”). I like what J. Vernon McGee said about that: “He named one amnesia; the other ambrosia.” I love that—I love that. Oh, my dear friend, thank God for a God who turns every Calvary to an Easter if we’ll trust Him.

Conclusion

Let’s bow our heads in prayer. Heads are bowed; eyes are closed. If you’ve been going through a dark time tonight—heartaches, and tears, and despair; nothing makes sense, and you’re in a prison not of your own making—my dear friend, just keep on serving the Lord. He’s still on His throne. Father, I pray now that you’ll help someone tonight who’s very perplexed just to trust you as Joseph did so long ago and, Lord, not to demand to understand, not to try to hurry your providence but to wait on the Lord until dear, Lord God, you bring that sunrise of the soul to this dear person. In your holy name I pray. Amen.

Practicing the Presence of God When Nothing Seems to Make Sense

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: September 24, 2000

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 39:20–23

“But the Lord was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison.”

GENESIS 39:21

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Introduction

Be finding Genesis chapter 39, would you, please. And the title of the message today: “Practicing the Presence of God When Nothing Seems to Make Sense.” I didn't say “when nothing makes sense”—“when nothing *seems* to make sense.” Practicing the presence of God.

There's an old story, but a good one, about a man who was a brickmason, a bricklayer, and he had too many bricks on top of the building, so he decided to retrieve the bricks and bring them down to the ground. He went up to the third or fourth story, wherever it was, put a yardarm out from the roof, and put a pulley in it, tied a rope to it, and hoisted a barrel to the roof, loaded the barrel with the extra bricks, went down to the ground, and untied the rope. At that time, he realized that a barrel full of bricks was heavier than a man. So when the bricks started down, he started up. Well, he said, he made a mistake, that he forgot to let go of the rope. He held on until it was too late. And so, half way up, he and the barrel met, and the barrel struck him on the shoulder, gave him a severe wound. “But,” he said, “I managed to hold on until I reached the top. And

then,” he said, “I wedged my fingers in the pulley.” He said, “At that time, the barrel hit the ground, and the bottom came out, left all the bricks, therefore making the barrel lighter than I.” He said, “Then I started down, and the barrel started up. This time, the barrel met me at the shins and gave me another severe wound, but,” he said, “I still managed to hold on until I fell on the ground and hit that pile of sharp-cornered bricks.” He said, “It was then that I lost my presence of mind, let go of the rope, and the barrel came down and hit me on the head.” The man applied for a few days off.

Now I think sometimes we feel that way. We’re up and down. We don’t know whether to hold on or let go, and we’re getting hit from every side.

Now, with this man, his problem was easily discerned. Number one: He wasn’t very good at physics. Number two: He wasn’t very bright. And his problem was his own problem. He made his problem. But what do you do when you’re doing nothing wrong, when you’re applying proper principles, and nothing seems to make sense? You’re being battered from every hand. What do you do when life doesn’t make sense?

Now we have a lot of little clichés. “When you get to the end of your rope, tie and knot and hold on.” That’s a real blessing, isn’t it? Or somebody says, “Just grin and bear it.” Or, “Cheer up. It could be worse.” And, generally, it does get worse, doesn’t it? Well, what do you do?

Well, this chapter in the book of Genesis, chapter 39, is going to tell us some things that we can do, some principles that we can apply when life doesn’t seem to make sense. This is a chapter, I say, in the life of Joseph. Joseph, who was a man of God, who loved God with all of his heart, found himself in great difficulty. He had been sold by his brothers as a slave. He’s carried down by a caravan into Egypt, and there he is bought by a man named Potiphar, and there he is a slave in Potiphar’s household.

And let’s look, if you will, in Genesis chapter 39, verses 20 and 21, and I believe that will give us what we’re talking about: “*And Joseph’s master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king’s prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison.*” But now, notice verse 21: “*But the LORD was with Joseph.*” (Genesis 39:20–21) There he is in prison, for the Bible says, “*But the LORD was with Joseph.*”

I want to give you some prison principles: how to practice the presence of God when you are in a dungeon, in a prison, and it is not your fault at all. Joseph here, as I say, was a slave. He was bought by Potiphar. He was put in charge of Potiphar’s household. Joseph was such a man of integrity and such a man of industry that even as a slave Potiphar found himself trusting Joseph; even while Joseph was a slave, Potiphar found himself trusting Joseph more and more, and Joseph is rising higher and higher in Potiphar’s house until finally he is taking care of all of the affairs of Mr. Potiphar. Potiphar so trusted Joseph that he said, “The only thing I know that I really own is the food in front of me. It’s all in Joseph’s hands.” (Genesis 39:6) Joseph was an incredible individual,

and even as a slave, God was with him, and he is ascending higher and higher and higher.

But Joseph was a young man, handsome, the Bible tells us, and virile. And Potiphar's wife began to lust after Joseph and tried to seduce him. Joseph refused Potiphar's wife. She took him by the coat and tried to drag him into bed with her. He refused with such vigor that he left his coat and escaped, fled. And wasn't it William Congreve who said, "Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned"? She was so insulted and so embarrassed that she decided she would get even with the young man, and she began to scream that he had assaulted her. And she disheveled her hair. She, perhaps, tore her clothing a little bit, maybe even scratched her face—I don't know—but she still had Joseph's coat in her hand, and she told the other men there, "This young Hebrew tried to do this terrible, horrible thing to me." When Potiphar came home, it was reported to Potiphar, and Joseph is now cast into prison. He is totally innocent. He has been serving God. And now nothing seems to make sense. There he is in prison.

Now I want us to look at this story today, and I want to give you five principles to put into practice if things happen to you one day that do not seem to make sense.

I. Don't Demand to Understand

Number one—number one: When you're in a situation like this, and things don't seem to make sense, don't demand to understand—don't demand to understand. Now Joseph had not sinned against God. Joseph had done absolutely nothing wrong. What Joseph was doing was right. I imagine at this time when Joseph was doing right, when he was serving the Lord with all of his heart, and he got cast into prison, he's lied about, falsely accused, that Satan whispered in Joseph's ear and said to him, "Now, where is your God? What good does it do you now to serve God?" There are going to come times in your life, my friend, when nothing seems to make sense.

Now I'm not saying that you should not try to understand. If difficulty comes your way, try to understand. But here's a verse I thought about as I was studying this passage of Scripture. Many people use this verse as their life verse—Proverbs 3, verses 5 and 6. The Bible says, "Trust in the *LORD* with all of your heart; and lean not unto your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." (Proverbs 3:5–6) He shall direct thy paths.

Now, notice what it says. It says, "Lean not to your own understanding." There will be things that you do not understand. And do not demand to understand. May I give you a companion verse? Isaiah chapter 50, verses 10 and 11—the prophet Isaiah asked this question, and it's a good question: "*Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God. Behold, all ye that kindle a fire,*

that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow.” (Isaiah 50:10–11)

Now, look at that verse. Look at it. Isaiah 50. Listen to it. What does it teach? It teaches that you can be serving God, you could be obeying God’s Word, and still have darkness. You can come to a time of perplexity, a time when you don’t understand, and yet you have done nothing wrong.

Do not get the distorted idea that the Christian life is all joy and sweetness, and that you always understand. Sometimes we give the wrong impression, when we tell people they need to come to Jesus. We tell them that their life, if they come to Jesus, is going to be an ever-ascending scale of joy and life and victory in youth, and a serene old age, and a happy family life, and a glorious exit into heaven. It does not happen that way. And as you study the Bible, you’re going to find out that many of God’s greatest saints were walking in darkness part of their lives.

Job, one of the greatest characters in the Old Testament, lived in a time of darkness, and he was perplexed. He couldn’t understand. As a matter of fact, he wanted to argue with God. He demanded to understand, and he was wrong when he did. It was as if he said, “God, you owe me some answers.” Now Job did not understand. But God understood.

You can read about the prophet Habakkuk. Habakkuk, a great prophet, a man of God, could not understand why history was doing what it was doing, why God was allowing the Chaldeans to get away with all of their sin, why there was so much violence and brutality. Have you ever wondered? Have you ever picked up the newspaper, as we’re wont to do, and read the newspaper, and read about what is happening in Hollywood—read about the dope, the vice, the corruption in politics? And we say, “God, where are you? God, why don’t you do something? Lord, I don’t understand.” Habakkuk was that way.

John the Baptist—Jesus said there was not a greater man born of a woman than John the Baptist. John the Baptist was the one who baptized the Lord Jesus, a mighty prophet, and yet Herod took John the Baptist and put him in prison. John was so perplexed in prison he began to wonder if Jesus was even the Messiah, the one who had already said, “*Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.*” (John 1:29) John the Baptist sent messengers to Jesus, saying, “Are you really the one who should come, or should we look for somebody else?” (Matthew 11:3; Luke 7:20) John the Baptist was perplexed.

The Apostle Paul wrote more books in the New Testament than anybody else. The greatest Christian who ever lived wrote to the Corinthians and said, “We are perplexed.” Do you know what *perplexed* means? It means “we don’t understand.”

Now Job, Habakkuk, John the Baptist, Paul, and you, sir, and you, gentlemen, and Adrian, and the rest of us, are going to come to times in our lives when, friend, it will not make sense. Now, if you think it's always going to make sense, you're going to be in spiritual trouble. As a matter of fact, in this passage in Isaiah chapter 50, he says, "Who is my servant that follows me, obeys me, and walks in darkness, and hath no light?" (Isaiah 50:10) Listen to me. The darkness can never put out the light—never! So therefore, if there is no light, it is only because the light has been withdrawn. The darkness never chases it away. Now, if you're in darkness, that does not mean that the devil has prevailed. If God takes away the light, then you just simply trust God and do not demand to understand. If there is darkness, you can say this at least: that God has allowed it. There are some things that we are not meant to understand.

Joseph did not understand what God was up to. When, finally, we get to the end of this book, in chapter 50, we find out that what happened to Joseph was a part of a great mosaic that God was working. But listen to what the Bible says, in Isaiah 55 now, verses 8 and 9. God says, "*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)

Now, how far is up? You tell me. You can't. How much higher are God's thoughts than your thoughts? You tell me. You cannot. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my thoughts above your thoughts." Listen to me. Just because it does not make sense to you does not mean it does not make sense. And just because it does not make sense now, that does not mean it will not make sense later on.

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

—MAXWELL N. CORNELIUS

The first principle when life doesn't make sense: Don't demand to understand. Try to understand if you can, but don't demand to understand.

II. Don't Fail to Be Faithful

Number two: Don't fail to be faithful. Now, look in verses 21 and following in this chapter here: "*But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it. The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the LORD was with him,*"—that is, with Joseph—"and that which he did, the LORD made it to prosper." (Genesis 39:21–23)

Now, here's a man for no seeming reason, actually for doing good, who is cast into prison, and now, there in the prison, he is not sitting and sulking, but he is serving the Lord. He is very faithful, so faithful that he is a man of industry. He is a man of integrity. And there in the prison, in a time of darkness and a time of persecution, he is serving God.

In the next chapter we're going to find him witnessing to the butler and the baker who have also been cast into prison. And we're going to find out that he is a man who, in the prison himself, could put his arms around these pagans and kindle in their pagan hearts a knowledge of Jehovah God. The point being this: Even when Joseph could not understand, he was not a fair-weather Christian. He did not begin to pout. He did not get angry at God.

I've seen it so many times in my pastorate. I've seen church members who are some of the most faithful church members we've had. They sing in the choir. They witness. They tithe. They're faithful. They're happy. They're joyful. But let a grandbaby die, or let a husband die, or let a sickness come, let cancer come, let something happen that doesn't make any sense whatsoever, do you know what they do? They drop out. They quit serving. They fold up. Don't do it. Even when it doesn't make sense, continue to serve the Lord. Keep singing. Keep praying. Keep giving. Keep witnessing. Keep submitting. Joseph did, and the Bible says that God was with him.

In chapter 39, verse 2, when Joseph is in Potiphar's house, and everything seems to be fine, things have turned for Joseph, the Bible says, "And God was with him." (Genesis 39:2) But you look now in chapter 39, verse 21, when he is in prison. The same God that was with him in the good times is the God that was with him in the bad times. (Genesis 39:21)

III. Don't Bow to Bitterness

Now, when it doesn't make sense to you, number one: Don't demand to understand. Number two: Don't fail to be faithful; keep on serving God, even when you don't understand. Number three: Don't bow to bitterness; don't get bitter. Now, turn to chapter 40, if you will, and look in verses 14 and 15. Joseph is now talking to a butler. The butler has been cast into prison, and he's going to be released from prison. And Joseph knows that because he's a butler he's going to serve in the presence of Pharaoh—perhaps he can speak to Pharaoh in his behalf. And here's what he says: "*But think on me when it shall be well with thee,*"—that is, when you're out of prison—"*and shew kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house: for indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews: and here also I have done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon.*" (Genesis 40:14–15)

He said, "First of all, I was sold as a slave, and now I'm in the dungeon. I've done nothing wrong. Mr. Butler, when things have turned for you, when it's well with you,

would you put in a good word for me, because I need to get out of this place?”

Now as I read that, I thought about Joseph’s spirit—and what a marvelous spirit that he had! As you read this, there is not a note of bitterness or complaint that is found there at all. It is a remarkable statement. He doesn’t even mention the name of his brothers who sold him into slavery. He doesn’t even mention Potiphar’s wife. He doesn’t mention Potiphar at all. He’s content to leave them with God.

Now, when things go wrong, when you’re serving God, and you’re punished for serving God, don’t get bitter. Here’s a good verse—1 Peter chapter 2, verse 20: *“For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.”* (1 Peter 2:20) What a great verse to describe the life of Joseph so long ago!

We need to be very careful about this matter of bitterness. You’re going to find yourself not only dropping out when things don’t make sense, but if you’re not careful, you’re going to get very, very bitter. Bitter people are not nice to be around. Sometimes pastors get bitter.

I know of a pastor who served a church for many, many years, and for some reason the people in that church turned on him, and they began to criticize him, and finally they dismissed him. And this pastor said over and over again, “How could they do that to me? How could they do that to me, after all that I did for them—after all that I did for them? How could they do that?” And he was very bitter. I thought the shame is that he didn’t say, “After all I did for God”—not for them, but for God.

If you look to people to supply your needs, if you look for people to recognize your worth, you’re going to be disappointed in life, and you’re going to get bitter after a while. One of the greatest tests of life is this: not how you react when you’re punished for doing wrong, but how you react when you’re persecuted for doing right. Joseph had done right, but there’s not a shred of bitterness in the life of Joseph. Why? Because God was with him. And one of the reasons that God was with him was the attitude that he had.

IV. Don’t Be Unwilling to Wait

Now, number four—number four—when you don’t understand, when life doesn’t make sense, number four: Do not be unwilling to wait. God will bring you out in His time.

Notice in Genesis chapter 40, verse 23: *“Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him.”* (Genesis 40:23) Now Joseph said, “Look, when you get up there, when you get back into the presence of Pharaoh, remember me.” But now here is Joseph

languishing in prison, and the butler forgot him. And then you go down to Genesis chapter 41, verse 46: *“And Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt.”* (Genesis 41:46) All of this time, this boy—who had been sold into

slavery as a seventeen-year-old—is there. Year after year after year is passing. Many of

those years he spent in prison.

Now, when you don't understand, don't get hasty, don't get feverish, and don't get impatient. Psalm 37, verses 5 through 9—listen to it: *“Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday. Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass. Cease from anger, forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil. For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth.”* (Psalms 37:5–9) Over and over again in the Bible we're told to wait upon the Lord. When you don't understand, don't be unwilling to wait.

I was speaking about preachers. Another preacher who was in a hard spot said to me, “I know that God put me here. I just wonder if He remembers where He put me?”

God knows where you are. The very hairs of your head are numbered. (Matthew 10:30; Luke 12:7) And the God that was with Joseph when he was a lad, the God who was with Joseph when he was serving in Potiphar's house, was the God who was with Joseph when he languished there forgotten in prison.

Another good scripture that I found—1 Peter chapter 5 and verse 6: *“Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.”* (1 Peter 5:6) God has His schedule. When you don't understand, don't demand to understand. Don't fail to be faithful. Don't bow to bitterness. Friend, don't be unwilling to wait. God is never late, but He's never ahead of time. The scripture that I read to you from Psalm 37 says that, “He will bring forth your righteousness as the noonday.” (Psalms 37:6) It's like the sun coming up. One thing about the sun coming up is you can't hurry it, and you can't stop it. And that's the way God is. God is always on time.

One time I was visiting with Senator Jesse Helms. Senator Jesse Helms said, “Adrian, I want to tell you a story that Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn told me.” Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn was that brilliant Russian literary genius and dissident. Many of you have read after Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, a brilliant and a godly man. But because he was a dissident when communism was so powerful, he was put into a prison camp. Later, he was released. And he told Senator Helms this story, and Senator Helms told it to me.

Solzhenitsyn said to Helms, “I hope you never know what real repression is.” He told about how he was put into this labor camp. And they took from him all books, all writing material. There was no radio. There was no television. There was no input from the outside world. And the prisoners themselves were not allowed to communicate one with another. All day long, laborious, backbreaking labor, with Russian guards standing there, armed and ready to shoot anyone who tried to escape.

Solzhenitsyn said, “This went on day after day after day. I wondered if anybody even knew that I was here, much less, did they care.” He said, “Finally, I decided that I would

end my life, but,” he said, “my faith would not allow me to do that. I knew it would be wrong for me to take my own life, but,” he said, “my mind then became twisted and perverted.” He said, “I had the idea that perhaps, if I would try to escape, then they would shoot me, and I would not have taken my own life. They would have killed me.” He said, “I know that was wrong, but my mind was twisted.”

He said, “I found the day that I was going to do it. I was sitting under a tree. They had given us a few moments from the work. I was sitting in the shade of a tree. I saw the Russian guard with his gun.” He said, “I was ready to spring up. I’d almost put my hands on the ground, ready to spring up and run, to be shot in the back when,” he said, “another man, a man that I’d never seen before, and perhaps I will never see again—perhaps was an angel, I don’t know—but he came and stood in front of me. Remember, we were not allowed to communicate, not even to talk. But he looked into my eyes with a look of compassion and understanding, though not able to say a word, and,” he said, “he had a stick in his hand, a twig, and in front of me on the ground he drew a cross and walked away.”

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn said, “I knew that that was a message from God, and what I was about to do was wrong, and I settled back down.” He said, “Little did I know that all over the world people were talking about me, and in three days I would be a free man in Switzerland—in three days.”

Wait on God. Don’t be unwilling to wait. Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God. In due time, He’ll lift you up. When you don’t understand, friend, don’t get feverish. Don’t you hurry God.

V. Don’t Let Dreams Dissolve

Now, here’s the last principle I want to give you when you don’t understand, when life doesn’t make sense: Don’t let dreams dissolve—don’t let your dreams dissolve.

Joseph had a dream. That dream was put in his bosom when he was a teen. Now, what was the dream? The dream was that one day the world’s resources and the world’s rulers would be at his feet. His brothers thought it was a foolish dream. But I want you to look now in chapter 41 and begin in verse 37, if you will, with me and see what happened. Now I’m going to skip a lot of material for time’s sake, but just remember this: that Joseph is now exalted. He’s out of prison. He is now become the prime minister of Egypt. *“And the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of all his servants. And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is? And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art: thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it*

upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck; and he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.” (Genesis 41:37–44)

This was the dream that Joseph had had so long ago. It was a God-given dream, and Joseph never forgot it, and God never forgot it. I don't know who first said it, but a wise man said this—and it's one of the greatest statements I've ever heard: “Don't doubt in the dark what God has shown you in the light.” The dark comes. Don't doubt in the dark what God has shown you in the light. God did not fail Joseph. And look up here and let me tell you something. God will not fail you. Did you hear that? He did not fail Joseph, and God will not fail you. Don't you let your dreams dissolve.

No longer is his slave's hand a slave's hand. He's now wearing a royal ring. Off is the prison garb; on go the beautiful garments that Pharaoh has put upon him. Off comes the iron chains, and on goes a gold chain around his neck. God is faithful.

I wonder. I wonder. I've thought about it. You know what Pharaoh said? He said—listen—“Joseph, nobody in all the land is going to do anything, even move their hands, without your permission. Joseph, you're in charge of everything.” Now you remember it was Potiphar who was the head of the Egyptian guard. Can you imagine after the announcement is given, and here comes Joseph riding in the second chariot, and a herald goes out there, “Bow the knee! Bow the knee! Bow the knee!” and in all Egypt they're bowing down to this boy, this one who did not fail to be faithful, this one who did not demand to understand, this one who did not bow to bitterness, this one who was willing to wait? Old Potiphar goes home. He and his wife are eating. He says to Mrs. Potiphar, “Wife, do you remember many years ago that you said there was a house slave that had tried to molest you? Do you remember that story?” “Well, yes, I remember that story.” “Well, for your sake, I hope you were telling the truth. I report to him tomorrow.” You think about it.

Conclusion

Oh, friend, there's coming a day, there is coming a day when God's going to make everything right. Don't you lose your faith when it doesn't make sense to you. Just because it doesn't make sense to you does not mean it will not make sense one day. Serve Jesus. Never quit. Give Him your heart. Give Him your life. And don't ever, ever, ever lose your dream.

You say, “I've never had a dream.” Get one! Get one! The Bible says, “*Your old men shall dream dreams.*” (Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17) Get a dream. It's always too soon to quit, never too late to start.

When Everything Goes Wrong

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: August 23, 1981

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 39:21–23

“But the Lord was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison.”

GENESIS 39:21

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Introduction

Be finding Genesis chapter 39, would you, please—Genesis chapter 39. I want to speak to you today on this subject: “When Everything Goes Wrong.” What do you do when everything goes wrong? Have you ever had one of those days when everything goes wrong? Have you ever had one of those years when everything goes wrong? There are some years like that, when everything seems to go wrong. What do you do?

I've always been amazed at the advice that worldly people give to other worldly people. It sometimes seems like good advice. For example, “When the going gets tough, the tough get going.” Tell that to a person who's really hurting. Or here's another one that will really bless your heart: “When you get to the end of your rope, tie a knot and hang on.” Now, doesn't that just bless your soul? And you see a guy dangling over a cliff, trying to tie a knot. It takes two hands to do that. Buddy, you'll fall if you try it. Or here's one that's really sweet: “Grin and bear it.”

Now, really, that's what the world tries to help us to do: help us to understand. Or you'll be really hurting. I mean, you'll be in darkness and consternation. One of your friends will come along and put his arm around your shoulder and say, “Cheer up! It

could get worse.” Well, that’s a lot of comfort: “Could be worse.” One fellow said, “Yeah, I cheered up, and it got worse.” He was right. Now that, really, is what the world does when the world cannot understand. There are times when you, as a child of God, will find yourself in difficulty and darkness and consternation.

In Genesis chapter 39, Joseph experienced this. Joseph, who was a man of God, who loved God with all of his heart, found himself in great difficulty. He had been sold by his brothers as a slave. He’s carried down by a caravan into Egypt, and there he is bought by a man named Potiphar, and there he is a slave in Potiphar’s household. And let’s look, if you will, in Genesis chapter 39, verses 20 to 23, and I believe that will give us what we’re talking about: *“And Joseph’s master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king’s prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison.”* (Genesis 39:20) And while he’s in prison there, he finds a butler, and says to the butler, “Look, they’re going to let you out of this prison after a while, and when they do, would you please tell Pharaoh where I am?” The butler forgets him. It’s like he’s buried in that prison. And the whole time Joseph hasn’t really done anything wrong. As a matter of fact, he’s been doing everything right, and he’s languishing, rotting in a filthy prison. Now, what do you do?

You know, I’ve been preaching through the book of Genesis, and I’ve come to this passage, and I read it over three or four times, and I said, “Now, what is the lesson there?” And, obviously, there are many more lessons that I’m going to touch on this morning. But I thought, “You know, I just think I’m going to look in here and see if I can find some principles—we’ll call them ‘prison principles’—some principles that we can apply to our hearts and to our lives when nothing seems to go right, and especially to those of us who are serving the Lord.” Let’s see if we can find some principles today.

I. Don’t Demand to Understand

First of all, let’s look in chapter 39 and verse 20 and get a starting place: *“And Joseph’s master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king’s prisoners were bound.”* (Genesis 39:20) And Bible scholars tell us that the prison that he was cast into was not just a normal prison. The word *prison* here is the word for “hole.” They cast him into the hole, into the dungeon, into the dark part, the slimy part, where the king’s prisoners were bound. That is, the innermost prison. That’s not just an ordinary prison. He’s in a very tight security. And there he is.

Now, remember that he is there not for doing wrong; he is there for doing right. Had he been willing to commit adultery with Potiphar’s wife, he could have stayed out of prison; but because he dared to be different, because he purposed to be pure, he’s now in prison. And I’m certain that the devil must have come and whispered in his ear and said, “Hey, Joe, you’re serving God? This is the way God rewards you for serving Him?”

Now, Joe, there probably isn't any God at all or you wouldn't be in this prison. I'm going to tell you something else, Joe. If there is a God, He sure doesn't love you. Or I'm going to tell you something else, Joe. If there is a God, and He loves you, He might not be much of a God, because He sure can't keep you out of trouble. He may love you, but He sure is a weak and a pitiful God." I don't know what the devil whispered into Joseph's ear, but I'm certain that Joseph could not understand.

So, principle number one: When you find yourself in a prison of despair and difficulty and depression, principle number one is: don't demand to understand—don't demand to understand. Try to understand. There's nothing wrong with trying to understand, because the lesson may be very obvious. And sometimes God teaches us a lesson that He wants us to understand. But don't demand to understand, because there are some things that you will never understand.

I'm going to show you a very interesting passage of Scripture. I want you to take your Bibles and turn with me to Isaiah chapter 50. And believe me, it will be worth turning to, because you need to mark this passage in your Bible, because you're going to come back to it one of these days, I believe. Isaiah chapter 50—just put your bookmark there like I have done in Genesis chapter 39. Isaiah chapter 50—let's look in verse 10: *"Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God."* (Isaiah 50:10)

Now I want you to notice how God describes this man.

A. He Feels the Lord

First of all, here is a man who fears the Lord. And to fear the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. (Psalms 111:10) He must be a very wise man. And the fear of the Lord doesn't mean that we quake in the sight of God. It doesn't mean that we tremble, that we are terror-stricken, by the thought of the Lord. But it means an awesome reverence for God. And he who fears God most loves Him best. The fear of the Lord and the love of God and the love of the Lord are hand-mates. So he's speaking here about somebody who really has a right relationship with God. He fears God. Now all through the Bible the fear of the Lord, fearing God, is spoken of as having a right relationship with God.

B. He Obeys the Lord

But not only does this man described here in chapter 50 fear the Lord; he obeys the Lord. Look at what it goes on to say: "He obeys the voice of God's servant." (Isaiah 50:10) That is, God's servant says, "Here are God's orders," and he says, "Aye, Captain. Whatever you say, I'll do it." Here is a man who fears God. Here is a man who obeys God.

C. He Walks in Darkness

Now, watch it. Here is a man walking in darkness. Now we wouldn't expect that, would we? We would say, "Well, if you fear God, and if you obey God, then you are going to walk in light." Darkness can come to the child of God—and I mean the child of God who's doing everything right. Joseph was doing everything right when darkness came into his life. He wasn't doing everything wrong; he was doing it right. And let me say this. Don't you get the distorted idea that, if you serve God, everything is going to be all light and sweetness, and that you're going to go through life with a joyful childhood, that you're going to have an ever-ascending scale of health and happiness and prosperity, and that you're going to have a fruitful old age and a glorious exit into heaven.

Sometimes we, trying to get people to be saved, I suppose, paint a false picture. We go around painting the clouds with sunshine. We go around quoting, "God's in His heaven, and all is right in His world." God's in His heaven; but, friend, there are a lot of times things are not right down here. And I'd be less than honest if I didn't tell you that some of God's choicest of servants have been perplexed and in despair. I'm talking about people that walk after God, who obey God, who fear God.

You read the prophet Habakkuk. He was God's man. Boy, there came some things he just couldn't understand. You read about John the Baptist. He loved God. He was cast into prison. There were some things he couldn't understand. You read about the Apostle Paul. He loved God. But he said, on one occasion, he was perplexed. You read about Joel. He loved God. But he had just to throw up his hands and say, "I don't understand it all." You can love God and be in darkness.

And don't you demand to understand. Just because things don't make sense to you doesn't mean they don't make sense. And just because you don't understand now doesn't mean that you will never understand.

You see, the only way that you can have darkness is for the light to go away. Isn't that true? I mean, you can't walk into a room that is full of light, flick a switch, and turn on the darkness, can you? You can walk into a room full of darkness, and flick a switch, and turn on the light. You see, darkness never overcomes light; light always overcomes darkness. So if you're walking in darkness, and you're a child of God, the only reason that you could be walking in darkness as a child of God is that God took away the light, right? Right!

Okay, listen. The only way that you could be a child of God and walk in darkness is not that the darkness overtook the light, but that the light was withdrawn. That means that, in God's plan, in God's will, in God's way, in God's wisdom, for God's purpose, God ordained that you be in darkness.

Now, when you find yourself in darkness, if you're not careful, you'll be so anxious to

understand, do you know what you're going to do? You're going to light your own fire. And when you do, that's when you're going to really get into trouble. Notice what God says in verse 10. He says, "If you're walking in darkness, trust the name of the Lord, and stay upon God." That word *stay* means "to lean" upon God. It's the same word that's translated in Psalm 23, "*Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*" (Psalms 23:4) David said, "When I'm going through the dark valley, the valley of the shadow of death—things I don't understand—I'm going to lean upon the Lord. Even though I don't understand, I'll just lean upon God."

But then the writer here in the book of Isaiah says, "Be very careful"—Isaiah says—"Be very careful that you don't light your own fire": "*Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow.*" (Isaiah 50:11) Mister, when God allows darkness, and you light your own fire, that's a recipe for heartache. Just put it down. You try to take things in your hands, you try to wrest truths from God, you try to make it work out, you demand to understand: you're going to have difficulty.

You say, "Why is that?"

1. God's Thoughts Are Different

Well, let's just turn over in the book of Isaiah for a moment. I want you turn to Isaiah chapter 55, verses 8 and 9—look at this: "*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*" (Isaiah 55:8–9) So you demand to understand things, dear friend, that you don't have the capability, the capacity, to understand. Now, how high is heaven above earth? Can you measure the reach of outer space? No man has ever done it. No man ever will do it. But as the heavens are high above the earth, so are God's thoughts above your thoughts, God's ways above your ways. You don't have the capacity to understand the infinite workings of the all-wise God.

And so, if God sometimes plunges you into darkness, if you sometimes find yourself in a prison of doubt and despair, a dungeon of disappointment, don't demand to God, who says, "*My thoughts are not your thoughts.*" You're not going to be able to think things after God, to figure out the way that God works, you see, because God sees the beginning, and God sees the end, and God sees everything in between at the same time.

We see things only one at a time. You watch a parade from ground level, and you see the floats and the bands as they go by, one at a time. Go up to the roof of a twenty-story building, watch the same parade: you see the beginning of the parade; you see the end of the parade; you see everything in between.

Now all Joseph could see was the prison, but God could see the palace. God knew that one day Joseph would be the prime minister of Egypt. Joseph couldn't see that. God could see it. You see, we, dear friends, are on one level. God is on another level. And God's ways are above our ways—more than a twenty-story building. God inhabits eternity. He sees it all. He knows it all. We don't. And therefore we'd better learn just simply to trust Him. And don't demand to understand.

2. God's Techniques Are Different

Not only are God's thoughts different; God's techniques are different. He says, "Not only are my thoughts above your thoughts, but my ways are above your ways." (Isaiah 55:9) God does things different ways.

Now we'd like to instruct the Lord. We'd like to tell the Lord how to do it. I'm sure the early church was praying against the Apostle Paul and saying, "God, strike him dead." You know, before he got to be the Apostle Paul, he was Saul, persecuting the church. "God, strike him dead." God didn't do it. God struck him alive. Amen? God saved him. See, God's ways and our ways are not always the same.

I heard about a college boy who came home from college. He was telling his dad—his dad was a farmer—he said, "You know, I've learned a lot of things in college." He was a freshman. He said, "I studied biology. I found out the world is made wrong, and God just created everything wrong, if God created it." His father said, "Oh, how is that?" They were talking, standing under an oak tree, and the son says, "Well, for example, Dad, look at this oak tree. Look how big, how strong, it is. It has those little acorns on it. And then look down here on the ground. There's a little weak pumpkin vine, and it has those big pumpkins." And he said, "Really, the pumpkins ought to be on the big oak tree and the little acorns on the weak vine." About that time, an acorn fell off that tree and hit him on the head. He said, "Boy, I'm glad it wasn't a pumpkin." Amen?

Now there are just certain things—there are certain things—that we don't understand. See how our ways and God's ways are different? Our thoughts and God's thoughts are different. Don't demand to understand. Don't get the idea, dear friends, that if it doesn't make sense to you that it's not going to make sense one day.

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

—MAXWELL N. CORNELIUS

II. Don't Fail to Be Faithful

Now, here's a second principle. Principle number one: Don't demand to understand. Realize that sometimes you can be a child of God doing everything so well as you know

it, so far as you know it, perfectly right, and still find yourself in a dungeon of doubt and despair and depression. Number two—number two: Don't fail to be faithful—don't fail to be faithful, even when you don't understand. Continue to read. Let's go back to our passage and look here in chapter 39, verse 21, and let's find out what happened to this youngster when he's thrown into prison now. He's lied about. Let's see what he does. All right, in verse 21: *"But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it"*—that is, Joseph just took over the prison. *"The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the LORD was with him,"*—that is, the Lord was with Joseph—*"and that which he did, the LORD made it to prosper."* (Genesis 39:21–23)

Now, what does that tell? It tells me that in prison Joseph just kept on serving the Lord. He didn't understand it. He couldn't understand why he was sold as a slave. He couldn't understand why he was maligned and lied against. He could not understand why he was in prison. But one thing he did know: he was still going to serve God. No matter where, no matter what, he is going to be faithful to God. And you see in prison his integrity and his industry—his integrity and his industry. He is working; he is serving the Lord. And in the next chapter you find out that the butler, Pharaoh's butler, is thrown down into prison. Pharaoh's baker is thrown into prison. And guess who's there in prison to minister to them? Ol' Joseph. Perhaps they're saying, "Man, I don't understand. I'm trying to be a good baker. This guy gets hacked off. Here I am in prison. Man, that's terrible." Joseph could put his arm around his shoulder and say, "Man, I understand—I understand."

You know, God sometimes gives us a little sympathy so we can understand others and we can comfort others with the same comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. (2 Corinthians 1:4) But I can see ol' Joseph down there in that prison slipping his arm around that butler, putting his hand upon the shoulder of that baker, and trying to kindle in their poor old pagan hearts a belief in the great Lord God Jehovah, and telling them about our great God. The truth of the matter is that while he was there, and while he could not understand why he was there, he was still serving God.

Are you a fair-weather Christian? You know, there are some of you, if your children get sick, you'll stop tithing. There are some of you, if you get a bad report from the doctor, you'll stop praising. Some of you, if somebody hurts your feelings, somebody at the church tells a lie about you or something like that, you stop witnessing, stop attending. You can tell the size of a Christian by what it takes to stop him. Joseph didn't let circumstances take him from the Lord. Nobody had been mistreated more than Joseph. But he was faithful, was serving the Lord. Now Paul says we're to preach the

gospel in season and out of season. (2 Timothy 4:2)

Now, if you're just one of these guys that likes to serve the Lord when the sun is shining, when everything is going your way, you're not much of a Christian. I wonder even if you are a Christian. What do you do when nothing seems to make sense, when everything seems to go wrong? Friend, I'll tell you what to do: keep giving your tithe. I'll tell you what to do: keep praying. I'll tell you what to do: keep witnessing. I'll tell you to do: keep praising. I'll tell you what to do: keep attending. I'll tell you what to do: be faithful unto death. Understand it? Fine. Don't understand it? Fine. But don't fail to be faithful. Just keep on serving the Lord.

III. Don't Bow to Bitterness

The third thing I find out about Joseph—the third principle: Don't bow to bitterness. Refuse to get bitter. Oh, how many bitter people we have around the world today! And they're bitter, primarily, because somebody did them wrong. There may be some people here today, doubtless, and you feel that you were cheated on an inheritance. Your brothers or sisters cheated you when Mom and Dad died. There are some of you who feel that your children have wronged you and haven't been as faithful and thoughtful of you as they ought to be. There are some of you whose wife or husband has been unfaithful to you. There are some of you who perhaps were mistreated in the church. You did something, gave something, served somewhere, and you weren't recognized. There's nothing worse, nothing more damaging, to the human soul than bitterness.

I want you to notice Joseph. He's telling the baker what happened to him, and here's an interesting thing. I want you to see how he describes the calamities that befell him. Look, if you will, in chapter 40, verse 14. He says, *"But think on me when it shall be well with thee, and shew kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house: for indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews: and here also have I done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon."* (Genesis 40:14–15) That is, he said, "It's not my fault that I'm here. I didn't do anything wrong. And look, Mr. Butler, when you do get out of prison, Mr. Butler, please put a good word in for me to Pharaoh, would you? Just tell him I'm here. Tell him what the situation is. I was sold as a slave, and I didn't do the thing that I was accused of."

Now he told the truth. But did you notice that he doesn't say one word against his brothers? He doesn't even really mention his brothers. He doesn't say one word against Potiphar. He doesn't say one word against Potiphar's wife. He doesn't even mention it. He deals with the facts, but there is not a spirit of revenge; there is not a spirit of bitterness.

Man, I tell you what the average person would have said: "Look, Mr. Butler, let me tell you what that no-good, low-down skunk of a woman did to me, and let me tell you

what these rotten, lousy brothers of mine did to me”—just would have been eaten up with it. Not this man.

You see, have you ever as a child gotten a spanking that you didn't deserve? I never did. I got some for the wrong thing. But I never got one I didn't deserve. As a matter of fact, I have a lot of spankings coming I still haven't gotten, things that I pulled off and, you know, got away with until I faced the Lord, I suppose, and left them under the blood. But, you know, every now and then your dad would just be in a spanking mood, and he'd come in there, and, man, the whole kit and caboodle would get it. Boy, he'd spank this one, this one, this one, this one, and you just stand there. Boy, he'd pick you up and whack you too. Did that ever happen to you? Man, you talk about being indignant. Man, there is nothing worse to a child than to say, "I got spanked, and I didn't deserve it."

Now we never stop to think about all the times we did deserve it and we didn't get spanked. And it's bad enough getting spanked when we really did deserve it; but, oh, my goodness, if we ever get it to happen to us and we didn't deserve it—bitter. You wouldn't think little kids could become bitter. I used to be so bitter, man, if something like that were to happen to me.

Now, here's what Peter says in 1 Peter chapter 2, verse 20: *"For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye...take it patiently?"*—I mean, if we get it because we had it coming, big deal—*"but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently"*—but let me stop and read that again—*"but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God."* (1 Peter 2:20) God says, "There's a certain thing that I really like. I like for you to do good, and then to suffer for it, and then to be patient." God says, "I really like that"—"I really like that." But if you're not careful, when you do good and you suffer for it, you're going to become very bitter.

And the book of Hebrews and the twelfth chapter and the fifteenth verse says, "Beware, look very carefully, lest there be a root of bitterness in you." (Hebrews 12:15) I'm wondering, is there somebody here today and you're bitter? Only God can get the root out. You can pull the top off that weed, but only God can take the root out. Would you ask Him to do it? Would you ask Him to do it? Bitter person, that bitterness is not hurting the person that you're bitter against; that bitterness is hurting you.

A certain minister served a church for many years, and the people in that church turned on him. They asked him to leave. He resigned under pressure. That minister was, outwardly, at least, a good minister. He was talking to another preacher friend, and he was talking about that church that he felt did him dirty. And this was one phrase that was the refrain of what that preacher was saying: over and over again he said, "After all I did for them... After all I did for them... After all I did for them, for them to treat me this way... After all I did for them." That minister said, in reporting that story, "It's a shame he

didn't do it for God.”

You see, friend, don't do it for people, as such. Serve the Lord—serve the Lord. Don't get bitter. If when you serve the Lord, if when you do right, people mistreat you, what difference does it make, if you serve the Lord? God will give you the reward. *“Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.”* (Romans 12:19) Don't bow to bitterness. And I have an idea today that there are some of you who are being eaten alive with bitterness—some ol' grudge, somebody did you wrong. Just tell Jesus on him and go your way. He'll take care of it. And when you don't understand, and when you've tried to do right and things go wrong, don't bow to bitterness.

IV. Don't Hurry Providence

I want to say, here's a fourth principle I want to mention—and, oh, how important this one is: Don't hurry providence—don't hurry providence. Don't try to rush God. Don't be pulling your radishes up by the roots to see how they're growing and then jam them back down in the ground. Let God be God.

Now Joseph languished in prison. It was like he was buried there in prison. As a matter of fact, he told that butler that he wanted to be remembered. But look, if you will, please, in chapter 40, verse 23: *“Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him.”* (Genesis 40:23) I mean, boy, you talk about ingratitude! Here Joseph had done so much for this butler, and he just completely forgets him. Now, turn to chapter 41, verse 46: *“And Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt.”* (Genesis 41:46) That means, by my calculations, that he was in prison about ten years—ten years. Well, he was seventeen when the whole thing started, when he was sold into slavery. Well, let's say that he was twenty or twenty-one years old when Mrs. Potiphar lied on him. He's in prison nine or ten years. Here he is a thirty-year-old man. And it seems like everyone has forgotten him. His father thinks he's dead. His brothers have forgotten him. Potiphar has forgotten him. Potiphar's wife has forgotten him. Pharaoh has forgotten him. The baker is dead. The butler has forgotten him. But God has not forgotten him.

And God was not late. God brought him out at the exact, precise moment. The Bible says, *“Humble yourselves...under the mighty hand of God, [and] he [will] exalt you”*—now, what's that next phrase?—*“in due time”*—*“in due time.”* (1 Peter 5:6) The Bible says, concerning the Lord Jesus, *“In the fullness of time Christ came.”* (Galatians 4:4) God is never ahead of time, and God is never one second late. And don't you try to hurry up God. Learn to wait upon the Lord.

I tell you, that's hard when you're in prison. It is hard to wait upon the Lord. But Joseph stood there and stayed there, I believe, at least ten years, and it wasn't his fault. Joseph didn't have the book of Psalms. But if he had, I would have said, “Joseph, I want

you to read Psalm 37, verses 5 through 9.” Let me read it to you: *“Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday. Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil. For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth.”* (Psalms 37:5–9)

Have you ever seen a better biography of Joseph’s life than that right there? I mean, he wasn’t in there all hacked off because of these evildoers. Man, for ten years he’s just waiting upon the Lord, serving the Lord. And he was exalted in due season. Don’t try to push providence.

One preacher was in a particular church, and he went there because he felt God led him there. But then nothing seemed to work out, and he just oh so wanted to go to another church. He told a pastor friend of mine—he said, “I know where God put me, and I know God put me here, but I just wonder if He remembers where He put me.”

Well, God does remember where you are—God remembers. He has not forgotten. Joseph is forgotten, but God’s not late. The Bible says, *“They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength.”* (Isaiah 40:31)

Conclusion

I had the privilege several months ago to spend some quality time with Senator Jesse Helms. Now I’m not trying to drop names. I don’t do that. But I was impressed with Senator Jesse Helms. He’s a man who really loves the Lord. As a born-again Christian, a man who’s really, I believe, a man of God and a humble man, it doesn’t seem to go to his head that he is a very powerful United States Senator. As a matter of fact, he said, “When you see a turtle on a stump, you know he didn’t get there by himself.” Well, that’s pretty good wisdom. And so he realized that he was that turtle that had been placed on that stump by some other people who worked on his behalf. But he loves God, and we spent some time praying together and worshipping the Lord together.

And he said, “Brother Rogers,” he said, “I want to tell you something.” And as he told me this story, his eyes glistened with tears. He had just been talking with Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, in my estimation, is one of the mightiest intellects of the twentieth century. He was a Russian exile. He was a literary man and a thinker who was put into a Russian concentration camp and in a prison camp because he would not bow down to the system. And finally he was set free, and he talked to Senator Jesse Helms, and he said to him, “Senator, I hope that you never ever really have to experience real repression, that you never have to understand what real genuine repression is, as we did in Soviet Russia.”

And then he told about being in that Soviet camp, that Soviet prison, that Soviet stockade. He said, “We were allowed absolutely no letters, no mail, no newspapers, no magazines, no communication with the outside world. We could not write any letters to anyone. We were allowed absolutely no reading material. We were not even allowed to talk and communicate one with another. But,” he said, “day after day after day after day, there was nothing but hard, physical, brutal labor in the blazing sun or in the frigid cold. And,” he said, “we had guards standing over us. They never allowed us to talk, very little rest, meager rations, poor place to sleep, day after day, night after night—absolutely no communication. We felt that we had been completely cut off and completely forgotten by the outside world.”

He said, “After a while, my spirit was broken, and,” he said, “I made up my mind that I would take my own life, that I would commit suicide. But then,” he said, “the more I thought about that, the more I realized I could not do that.” He said, “My faith, what I’d been taught, what I believed in, would not allow me to commit suicide. But then,” he said, “a thought came into my mind.” He said, “I know it was not of God, but,” he said, “it came from a mind that was warped, a mind that had been pressured so long.” He said, “I thought of a scheme. I rationalized.” He said, “I made up my mind that I would try to escape, full well knowing that I could not escape. But,” he said, “I made up my mind that I would break and run, and I knew I’d be shot in the back, but,” he said, “then it wouldn’t be my fault.” And that was the way he had it figured out.

He said, “The particular day came.” He had fully purposed that day, that moment, that it would be the day that he would try to escape and be shot. He said he was sitting under a tree. They had given just a very brief time to rest. He was sitting there on the ground. He saw the guard with the rifle. He saw the other prisoners. Alexander Solzhenitsyn said that he put his hands on the ground, ready to push himself up, and ready to run, ready to be shot. He said, at that moment, when his hands were already on the ground, when he was ready to spring up, at that very moment, he said, another prisoner, a man that he’d never seen before, so far as he knew, walked up and stood directly in front of him. They were not allowed to communicate. The guard was standing there. And he said, “That other prisoner looked into my eyes with such a look of love and compassion and understanding,” he said, “though he uttered not a word, there was a look upon his face that spoke volumes to my heart. And he had a branch off a tree like a stick, and he was just doodling in the ground, almost as though he wasn’t paying attention to what he was doing. But,” Solzhenitsyn said, “I looked down, and he had drawn in the ground the sign of a cross.”

Solzhenitsyn said, “I knew what I was about to do was wrong. I knew I was wrong. I asked God to forgive me, because of the message He sent to my heart.” He said, “Little did I know that all over the world people were pleading my cause and in three days I

would be a free man in Geneva, Switzerland—three days from that time!”

Oh, how we tend to hurry providence! How we tend to take things into our own hands rather than waiting upon the Lord! Wait! Wait, I say, upon the Lord! He will turn your Calvary to Easter. He will turn your midnight to sunrise. Trust in the Lord. Wait upon the Lord. Don't hurry providence. I'm so glad that Joseph didn't.

Keeping On

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: Merritt Island

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 45

“So he sent his brethren away, and they departed: and he said unto them, See that ye fall not out by the way.”

GENESIS 45:24

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Introduction

Take your *Him*-book tonight. This book, it's about Him. Take your Bible and turn, if you will, to Genesis chapter 45. You'll understand why I said that in a moment—why I called it a *Him*-book. Because all of the Bible is about Him. All of the Bible is about the Lord

Jesus Christ. Now, if you read the Bible and you don't find the story of Jesus, you had better reread it. Standing somewhere in the shadows, you'll find Jesus. The Old Testament says somebody is coming. The Gospels say someone has come. The Epistles and the Revelation say somebody is coming again. And that somebody is Jesus Christ. Somebody says, "Have you read the four Gospels?" Friend, I've read all sixty-six, starting in Genesis and going all the way through Revelation. It's all about Him.

Now Jesus, before the New Testament was written, said to some people, "Search the scriptures, for these are they that testify of me." (John 5:39) And remember when He walked with those disciples on the road to Emmaus, the Bible says, "He started at Moses and the prophets and showed them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." (Luke 24:27) Not all the things concerning Himself in the Scriptures, but "*in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.*" I'm saying, this book is a Jesus book; and if you read the Bible, you're going to find the story of Jesus Christ.

Now the Old Testament is kind of like a picture book. You remember before you could read, you used to get a picture book and you looked at the pictures. Well, the Old Testament is a picture book, because it was given to a primitive people. And so God had to speak to them in pictures, because they couldn't read spiritual language very well. And we call these pictures types. And the Bible says, "All these things happened unto them for examples unto us." (1 Corinthians 10:11) And the word *example*—*topoi*—means a type, a picture. These are pictures or shadows or prophecy of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, tonight, we're going to be studying. Let's get a text before we go any further. Let's look in Genesis chapter 45, verse 24, and I want to give you a text and a topic. "*So he sent his brethren away, and they departed: and he said unto them, See that ye fall not out by the way.*" (Genesis 45:24) I want to speak to you tonight on this subject: "Keeping On." For it's one thing to come to a meeting like this and get blessed, get your spiritual inner tube all blown up; but it's another thing to keep on keeping on, because some of you are going to have a blowout about Monday; you're going to have a spiritual blowout, and you'll want to get to another conference and get your inner tube pumped up again. So we're going to talk about keeping on, not falling out by the way. And this passage of Scripture, this little text, is taken from the entire story of the life of Joseph. And there's no more intriguing story in the Bible than the life of Joseph. And I honestly, sincerely, believe that Joseph is an Old Testament picture and prophecy of the Lord Jesus Christ. And it just excites me, because it's one of the great proofs of the inspiration of the Scriptures.

No human being could write a book like the Bible. It's just absolutely fantastic how God so long ago put in shadows and pictures and types of the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. And, as we're going to see in a moment, the life of Joseph is in about four

divisions. Division number one, I'll call, "The Beloved Son." Division number two: "The Rejected Servant." Division number three: "The Exalted Sovereign." Division number four: "The Seeking Savior."

Now, let's look and see if that's not true about the life of Joseph.

I. The Beloved Son

So, let's go back to Genesis chapter 37 for a moment. And let's think a little bit about Joseph now as the beloved son.

A. His Name

The first thing that strikes me is the very name *Joseph*. Genesis chapter 37, verse 2: "*These are the generations of Jacob. Joseph...*" (Genesis 37:3) It's the first listed: "*Joseph*." And the name *Joseph* has a meaning. You remember that Hebrew names had a meaning. And this name means "adder; one who adds to"—because Jesus Christ is God's great principle of addition or multiplication. Friend, when you come to Jesus, you don't lose. That cross is not a minus; that cross is a plus sign. Satan and Adam are the great subtracters, and Jesus Christ is the great multiplier. Jesus said, in John chapter 10, verse 10, "I've come that you might have life, and that you might have it abundantly." (John 10:10) In other words, He's not coming simply to add years to our life, but life to our years. He's saying, "I've come that you might have life, and that you'll have it abundantly."

Don't feel sorry for me because I'm a Christian. I met the Adder. I met the One who has added to my life. The only things God has asked me to give up are the things that hurt me—that's all. "The Lord thy God is a sun and a shield; and no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." (Psalms 84:11) If it will make you healthy, if it will make you happy, if it will make you holy, if it will make you helpful, if it will make you wholesome, God says, "Help yourself." *And every time God says, "Thou shalt not," He's saying, "Don't hurt yourself." And every time He says, "Thou shalt," He's saying, "Help yourself to happiness."* You see, He is the great multiplication factor. Oh, friend, you don't lose anything but your dirt and your sin when you come to the Lord Jesus Christ.

B. His Hatred of Evil

Now, let's continue to think. Let's look in Genesis 37, verse 2, and I want you to notice that this one who means "addition" has an intense hatred of evil. The Bible says, in the last part of this verse, "*And Joseph brought unto his father their evil report.*" (Genesis 37:2) Joseph came to his father, and he says, "This is what they're doing," and he reported. Now somebody says that made him a talebearer. No, he wasn't a talebearer; he was a truth speaker. He had an intense hatred of that which is evil. And this is the reason the world hates Christ: because Christ hates sin. You see? Listen to John 7,

verse 7. Jesus said, *“The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.”* (John 7:7) Just as Joseph testified of his generation, Jesus Christ testifies of our generation. And *there are people today who cannot find the Lord Jesus Christ for the same reason that a thief can't find a policeman*. Jesus said, “Men hate the light. They will not come to the light because their deeds are evil.” (John 3:19)

Joseph had an intense hatred of evil, and they hated Joseph because Joseph hated their sin. The same is true of the Lord Jesus Christ. But then let's continue to read in verse 3: *“Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children.”* (Genesis 37:3) Here was the dearly, dearly beloved son. Oh, you'll never know how much God the Father loves His own dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. We read in Matthew chapter 3, verse 17, where God the Father spoke out of the glory and said, *“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”* (Matthew 3:17) You honor Jesus, you honor God. You neglect Jesus, you neglect God. You receive Jesus, you receive God. You deny Jesus, you deny God. *“This is my beloved Son.”* Oh, to refuse the Son is to insult the Father!

C. His Royal Garment

Then I want you to notice, in verse 3, his royal garment: *“Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours.”* (Genesis 37:3) Oh, what a beautiful coat Joseph had! And what does the coat of many colors stand for? Well, in that day, a coat of many colors was a symbol of royalty. You can read for yourself in 2 Samuel chapter 13, verse 18: a symbol of royalty, a symbol of distinction. (2 Samuel 13:8) I'm so glad that the Lord Jesus Christ is pictured—to me, at least—as wearing a coat of many colors, because He's not a drab Savior. Brother, He's not a pale Galilean with milk for blood. He is the colorful Christ. Oh, He's the exciting Jesus! And if Jesus Christ doesn't excite you, you must have calluses on your soul. Jesus is exciting: to know the Lord Jesus Christ. You know that we have the idea today that, when a man gets saved and becomes a preacher, he's got to get a black suit, black trousers, black shoes, black socks, black tie, black Bible, and dandruff, and go around looking like an advance agent for the undertaker.

Now you remember, when the Queen of Sheba came to see Solomon, and she saw how he was dressed, she was amazed. And Jesus, referring to that later on, said, “You consider the lilies. Solomon in all his glory was not dressed like one of these.” And then He said, *“A greater than Solomon is here.”* (Matthew 12:42; Luke 11:31) Oh, what a colorful Christ! Oh, what a beautiful Jesus! Oh, Sharon's fairest rose, the bright and morning star, Joseph in a coat of many colors! And don't you let somebody make you drab. Don't you let somebody make you pale. Don't you let some super sophisticated, sanctimonious, so-called spiritual person take the joy and the zest and the vibrancy out of your life. Our Jesus is a colorful Jesus. Oh, He's a beautiful Christ! He is

resplendent in glory and beauty. The first episode is, “The Beloved Son.”

II. The Rejected Servant

But then I want you to notice the rejected servant.

A. He Was Sent on an Errand of Mercy to His Brethren

Continue to read in Genesis chapter 37, verses 13 and 14, and you’re going to find this: that Joseph was sent on an errand of mercy to his brethren. In Genesis chapter 37, verse 13: *“And Israel said unto Joseph, Do not thy brethren feed the flock in Shechem? come, and I will send thee unto them. And he said to him, Here am I.”* (Genesis 37:13) “I’m going to send you to your brethren.” And here was the beloved son as he says, “Father, here am I.” And he is sent by the father on behalf of his brethren on an errand of mercy. And that reminds me of the New Testament, in 1 John 4, verse 10, for the Bible says, *“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent His Son.”* (1 John 4:10) Just as this ancient father so long ago sent Joseph to his brethren, God the Father has sent His own dear, beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And God’s Son said, “Father, here am I. It’s written in the volume of the book. I have come to do thy will, O Lord.” (Psalms 40:7–8; Hebrews 10:7)

B. He Was Scorned and Hated by His Brethren

Sent by the father to his brethren, but scorned and hated by those brothers. Look, if you will, please, in Genesis 37, verse 4, and the Bible says, *“When his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.”* (Genesis 37:4) Oh, they hated him. And Jesus knows this hatred. He says, in John 15, verse 24, *“If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.”* (John 15:24) “They’ve seen me, and they’ve hated me, because I’m different. I did things that caused them to envy, because they saw that I was the dearly beloved.” The Bible says that it was for envy that they delivered Him. (Matthew 27:18; Mark 15:10) And so they bow up their back.

Notice in Genesis chapter 37, verse 8: *“And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more.”* (Genesis 37:8) Read in the New Testament, in Luke 19, verse 14, where they said, *“We will not have this man to reign over us.”* (Luke 19:14) Do you see the parallel? Joseph’s brothers said, “Oh, you’re going to have dominion over us? You’re going to reign over us? Oh, no, you’re not.” And today the sinner boldly, braggingly, brazenly, shakes his puny fist in the face of God and says, “O God, if there be a God, you’re not big enough to make me do what you want me to do. I’m boss around here. It’s my life, and I’m going to live it.”

C. He Was Conspired Against by His Brethren

Scorned by his brethren. But that's not all. Once they scorned him and hated him, then they started to conspire against him. Look in Genesis 37, verse 18: *"And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him."* (Genesis 37:18) His brothers got together and they said, "We're going to do him in." Does that remind you of any scripture in the New Testament? Read in Matthew 26, verses 3 and 4: *"Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, and consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty, and kill him."* (Matthew 26:3–4) They conspired against the Lord Jesus Christ.

D. He Was Insulted and Put to Suffering and Shame by His Brethren

Then, after they conspired against Joseph, they insulted him and put him to ignominious suffering and shame. Read Genesis 37, beginning in verse 23: *"And it came to pass, when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stript Joseph out of his coat."* (Genesis 37:23) Isn't that interesting? They stripped him out of his coat. They didn't unbutton the coat. It was a seamless garment. They stripped him out of it. Our Lord, before He was crucified, was stripped of that seamless garment. They stripped him and they presented Him there naked before the crowd. Can you imagine the humiliation?

And then, notice in verse 24: *"And they took him, and cast him into a pit: and the pit was empty."* (Genesis 37:24) Oh, Jesus trod the winepress of the wrath of God alone. "It was empty, and there was no water there." For it was Jesus who cried out and said, *"I thirst."* (John 19:28) And it was Jesus who descended into Sheol, into the pit for me, and into the pit for you. And Jesus walked the burning corridors of the damned. How much Jesus suffered, only the damned in hell can begin to know. Your imagination is not sufficient to speak of the suffering of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

And he was sold for silver. This is strange. But look in verse 26: *"And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood? Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmeelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh."* Oh, the hypocrisy of these! *"And his brethren were content. Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmeelites for twenty pieces of silver."* (Genesis 37:26–28) And who was the brother who suggested that he was sold for silver? Judah. Do you know what the New Testament name for Judah is? Judas.

Isn't it strange that the Bible so arranged that a brother whose name was Judah said, "We're going to take him and sell him, and we're going to deliver him to the Gentiles. Let the Gentiles do the work for us so his blood won't be on our hands." Pilate said, "Why don't you put Him to death?" They said, "Oh, it's not lawful for us to put a

man to death. But we're going to deliver him to you." (John 18:31) And the Bible says that, while he was in that pit, "they sat down and had a meal"—his brothers. (Genesis 37:25) Does it remind you of that scripture that says, *"And sitting down they watched him there."* (Matthew 27:36) Oh, the hypocrisy of these who would not even come into Pilate's judgment hall lest they condemn themselves and dirty themselves! The hypocrisy of these who wanted to take Him down off the cross before the Sabbath! "Oh," they said, "let's not let his blood be on our hands"—that's what Joseph's brethren said. Oh, he endured suffering and shame!

But, oh, it's not finished yet. He was slain and put to death, in a figure. Notice in verse 31: *"And they took Joseph's coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood; and they sent the coat of many colours, and they brought it to their father; and said, This have we found: know now whether it be thy son's coat or no."* The liars! *"And he [recognized] it, and said, It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces."* (Genesis 37:31–33) In their mind—in Jacob's mind; and, later, in the brethren's mind—he was as good as dead. They took a blood-sprinkled garment and presented it to the father.

Beloved, I'm glad for the sprinkled blood. I'm glad that, when Jesus suffered and died on the cross, in the glory, blood was sprinkled. There's a Mercy Seat there. And I'm glad for the garment that is spotted with blood, because I see a type, I see a figure; faintly, yes, but I see it, that God is telling us so many ways in the Old Testament what He said in Hebrews chapter 9, verse 22: *"Without shedding of blood is no remission."* (Hebrews 9:22)

III. The Exalted Sovereign

All right, episode number one: "The Beloved Son." Episode number two: "The Rejected Servant." Sent unto his brethren, they conspire against him; they hate him; they shame him; and they put him to death, in a figure. Now, episode number three: "The Exalted Sovereign." The better part is coming. Turn to Genesis chapter 41.

E. He Is Brought from Shame to Glory

You see, Joseph did not stay in the hands of the Midianites. Joseph did not stay in the pit. Joseph did not stay in the prison where he was numbered with the transgressors. But he is raised up out of all of that. He is brought forth, in a figure, from death to life. And notice here in Genesis chapter 41—and I wish we had time for the whole story, but we don't—but look in verse 38: *"And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?" And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art: thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph,*

See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck; and he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt.” (Genesis 41:38)

Oh, what a blessed passage of Scripture this is, because now Jesus Christ is exalted, and the gory story becomes a glory story! For the Bible tells of the Lord Jesus in 1 Peter chapter 3, verse 22: “[He] is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.” (1 Peter 3:22) And then the Bible says, “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:9–11) One day, friend, every knee is going to bow. One day, Satan himself is going to bow the knee and say, ‘Jesus Christ is Lord.’ One day, Hitler is going to bow the knee. Stalin is going to bow the knee. Golda Meir is going to bow the knee. Moshe Dayan is going to bow the knee. Richard Nixon is going to bow the knee. You’re going to bow the knee. “As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow.” (Romans 14:11)

They put Joseph in that chariot; they put the royal robes on him; they put the golden chain around his neck; they put the ring on him; and as Joseph went up and down the streets, the cry went out, “Bow the knee! Bow the knee! Bow the knee!” I tell you, one of these sweet days, every knee’s going to bow and every tongue is going to confess that the One cast into the pit is now at the right hand of the Majesty on High, exalted, lifted up! Oh, thank God for that!

*All hail the power of Jesus' Name! Let angels prostrate fall;
Bring forth the royal diadem, and crown Him Lord of all.*

—EDWARD PERRONET

A. He Is Given a New Name

But not only is he brought from shame to glory; continue to read: he’s given a new name. Look in chapter 41, verse 45: “And Pharaoh called Joseph’s name *Zaphnathpaaneah*.” (Genesis 41:45) Now, what on earth does that name mean? Well, it is Egyptian for “savior of the world.” Oh, when he was lifted up, and he sat on the right hand of the majesty on high, and was given authority over all the land, he was given a new name: “Savior of the World.” Notice this: he is first made prince, and then he is made savior.

Acts chapter 5, verse 31: “Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour.” (Acts 5:31) Do you see how it fits? Oh, friend, if Jesus had been left in that grave, if He’d not been raised up, if He had not ascended, if He had not been

seated at the right hand of the Majesty on High, He couldn't have saved anybody. How we need to preach the resurrection!

One demon was heard speaking to another demon, and he said, "If those liberal theologians ever really let Jesus Christ out of that grave, hell help us, all heaven may break loose."

B. He Is Presented with a Bride

Brother, let me tell you something. Joseph is first made a prince, and then he's made a savior. He's first exalted, sat at the right hand of the majesty on high, and then he is given a name which means "savior of the world." And it gets sweeter yet. Notice, in verse 45, he's presented with a bride: *"And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphnathpaaneah; and he gave him to wife Asenath the daughter of Potipherah priest of On."* (Genesis 41:45) A Gentile bride is given to Joseph. A Gentile bride is presented to him. And, of course, in my heart, in my mind, that pictures the Church, which the Bible tells us, in Ephesians chapter 5, is the Bride of Christ. (Ephesians 5:32)

And I love the Church, and I'll tell you why. I love it because Jesus loves it. Folks say, "Well, what do you think of the Jesus Movement?" Friend, I'm for it. I thank God for it. But I already thought I was in it a long time. Oh, I thank God for these kids. I think we ought to love them. I think we ought to guide them. But I want to tell you something, friend. You talk about stolen thunder. Every church is a Jesus movement. Any church that's not a Jesus movement is not a church. And any Jesus movement that's not church-centered is not a Jesus movement, because Jesus is moving with His Church.

The Bible says, *"Unto him be glory in the church."* (Ephesians 3:21) He's presented a bride. Now the Lord's saved me, and He's done a lot with my temper, but I used to be—some of you know I used to live in West Palm Beach—I used to be bad to get in fights. And I think I'm sanctified now, but if you want to test me, you say something about my bride. You insult Joyce, and that would be a pretty good test to my sanctification, dear friend. I want to tell you something, friend. Jesus loves the Church; it's His bride. You'd better love the Church. After Joseph is exalted at the right hand of the majesty on high, and after he is given a name that means "savior of the world," he's given a precious bride, a Gentile bride.

C. He Becomes the Only Hope of a Dying World

And, oh, it gets sweeter yet. Let's continue to read, and notice, in chapter 41, beginning in verse 55 and on through the end: *"And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread: and Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, Go unto Joseph; what he saith to you, do."* Isn't that a great text? Go to Joseph. Even though Pharaoh was the ruler of the land, you've got to go to Joseph: "No man comes to me but through him." You've got to go to Joseph: "Whatever he saith to you, do." *"And the*

famine was over all the face of the earth: and Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold unto the Egyptians; and the famine waxed sore in the land of Egypt. And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy [wheat]; because that the famine was so sore in all lands.” (Genesis 41:55–57)

Now, here’s the point—and listen to it: not only does he have a Gentile bride, but he becomes the only hope of a dying world. There was nowhere else to go. Friend, if you didn’t go to Joseph, you’d had it. That’s all, because he was the only hope. You see, the Bible says, *“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”* (Acts 4:12) *Jesus isn’t a good way to heaven; He’s the only way to heaven.* He’s not one of the ways, not even the best way. Oh, isn’t it amazing? A rejected Jew became the hope of the world!

Our world is in a mess. You talk about a world that’s going through a famine—I mean, a famine for the Word, a famine for God, a famine for reality, a world that is confused. And the only hope of this sin-blighted world is the Lord Jesus Christ exalted at the right hand of the Majesty and the Sovereign on High. “Well,” you say, “how on earth could Joseph feed all those people? Surely he ran out of food to feed them with.” Well, look in verse 49. This will just tickle you—in verse 49 we see this: *“And Joseph gathered [grain] as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left numbering; for it was without number.”* (Genesis 41:49) There was enough for everybody.

Oh, the riches of His grace! Nobody came to Joseph and went away hungry. There was no need. *“My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”* (Philippians 4:19) You’re not going to run out of grace any more than a man out here in the Atlantic’s going to run out of water. I thank God for the rejected Jew who became the savior and the only hope of the world. And so we pass through the third episode in the life of Joseph.

IV. The Seeking Savior

And let’s go to the last episode in the life of Joseph. For not only was he the beloved son, and rejected servant, and the exalted sovereign, but now he becomes the seeking savior. For he is not content that they should come to him for bread, he wants to seek those who need it. He thinks of his father back yonder; he thinks of his brothers’ children and all of these; and so he becomes the seeking savior. And, oh, there are some points I’d like to speak about, but I’m not.

A. He Revealed Himself to His Brothers

In Genesis chapter 45, verse 1, you find him revealing himself to his brothers. You know, you didn’t discover Jesus; He found you. He found you. Oh, and Joseph revealed himself to his brothers, and had he not chosen to have done it, in their stupidity they would never have known who he was. You put away your slide rule and your theorems

and your scales and your test tubes. *“Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee.”* (Matthew 16:17) Brother, when you know Him, it’s because He sought you out and revealed Himself to you. How we ought to thank God for that!

B. He Forgave His Brothers

Oh, he showed himself and revealed himself to the blinded eyes of his brothers. And then he forgave his brothers. Genesis 45, verse 5 (Genesis 45:5), tells us that. The Bible speaks of “God, who is rich in mercy,” who has forgiven us. And they were forgiven.

C. He Commissioned His Brothers

I wish I could talk about that, but I’m going to hurry on to something I want to say. Not only did he reveal himself to his brothers, and not only did he forgive his brothers, but then, dear friend, he commissioned his brothers. I want you to notice in Genesis 45—now I’m going to read this—verse 9. I want you to see him speaking to his brothers, and he says: *“Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not.”* (Genesis 45:9) That is, he sent them on an evangelistic crusade. He said, “I want you to go out and find those who don’t know this message, and I want you to bring them back.”

And I wonder what right we have to call ourselves Christians if we’re not soul winners. To say that all Christians are missionaries is like saying all Christians are Christians. And a preacher who won’t win souls is like a barber who won’t cut hair. He’s like a bus driver who won’t drive buses. I don’t care what else you do, dear friend: if you’re disobedient to the Great Commission, you’re a rebel. These are the marching orders of God to His Church, and no one is excluded. Andrew Murray said, “There are two classes of Christians: soul winners and backsliders.” Brother, you’ve been commissioned. I don’t care how much money you give. I don’t care how eloquently you preach. I don’t care how beautifully you sing. I don’t care how faithfully you attend. I don’t care how circumspectly you walk. If you’re not witnessing, you’re not walking with God. I tell you it’s a day of good tidings, and we’d better not hold our peace.

D. He Supplied His Brothers

He revealed himself to them. He forgave them. He commissioned them. And then he supplied them. He gave them everything they possibly needed. Notice in verse 17: *“And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Say unto thy brethren, This do ye; lade your beasts, and go, get you unto the land of Canaan; and take your father and your households, and come unto me: and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land. Now thou art commanded, this do ye; take you wagons out of the land of Egypt for your little ones, and for your wives, and bring your father, and come.”* (Genesis 45:17–19) He says, “Now, look. Don’t say, ‘Well, I can’t go, because I haven’t got what it

takes.' Then you're insulting Joseph when you say that."

You know, I was talking to a fellow a while back. He said, "Well, I believe God wants me to preach, and I think He wants me to go away to school, but," he said, "I haven't got the money." I said, "Well, that's a shame." I said, "I want to ask you a question"—with a twinkle in my eye—"You know, if I can find a millionaire who'll back you up and pay your expenses, would you go?" He thought maybe I had someone, you know. He said, "Would I!" Boy, he brightened up. I said, "Man, you've got the One who owns the world. I mean, what do you need a millionaire for?"

Listen. *Where God guides, God provides*. Brother, if it's God's will, and God sends you on an errand, whatever it is God tells you to do, if you go by faith and go by obedience, the same God that sought you, the same God that forgave you, the same God that commissioned you, is the God who will supply you. He says, "All power is given unto me. Go ye, therefore, because I have this power." (Matthew 28:18–19)

E. He Admonished His Brothers

And I wish I could speak about that, but I'm coming to the end now, and I want to talk about one other thing: He admonished his brothers. And we finally worked our way back to the text. Have you ever heard such an introduction? All right, the message now. We're going to get the message, but it won't be that long, really. But I want you to get back now to the text that we had: He admonished his brethren. Now I want you to notice in verse 24: "*So he sent his brethren away, and they departed: and he said unto them, See that ye fall not out by the way.*" (Genesis 45:24) All right now, they have been sought; they have been saved; they have been sanctified; they've been sent; but now they are warned. "Be careful that as you go that you don't fall out by the way."

Conclusion

Now I want to suggest three reasons to keep on keeping on. I want to suggest three reasons why tomorrow you ought to be just as happy as you are tonight. Why you ought to be just as full and just as faithful and just as fruitful tomorrow as you are tonight. "See to it that you fall not out by the way."

A. Because of Your Position

Number one: because of your position. Before he found these men, they were shepherds. Now they're royalty; they're somebody. Now they're associated with Joseph, and everybody in the court knew. Pharaoh knew, everybody knew, these are Joseph's brothers. Friend, when you and I sin, and when you and I fail, we dishonor the name of Jesus. He leads us in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. (Psalms 23:3) Remember your position. Remember who you are. He calls us brethren; and the Bible says He's not ashamed to call us brethren. (Hebrews 2:11) Sometimes that amazes me,

because I think sometimes He has reason to be ashamed of us. Because of your position.

B. Because of Your Provision

But I want to say again, “Fall not out by the way,” because of your provision. We’re going to come back to that again. All you need He shall supply. *“My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”* (Philippians 4:19) You know, the Bible says, *“[He] hath raised us up...and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”* (Ephesians 2:6) *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.”* (Ephesians 1:3) Everything you need, He has provided. There’s no reason for you to say, “I can’t.” There’s no reason for you to fail. There’s no reason for you to fall, because of your possessions.

A missionary was going to the mission field. You know how it was in olden days: the missionary’s standing there on the docks, and they were kissing, saying goodbye with tears. Just before this missionary got on the boat, a wealthy man walked up, handed the missionary a sealed envelope, and said, “If you ever get to the place where you don’t know what to do, you don’t know where to turn, open this envelope.” I know what I’d have done: gotten on that boat, you know, and seen what’s in that thing. After years and years and years on that mission field, that missionary came home, giving his testimony. Later on, he pulled out a yellow envelope still sealed, and said, “Brethren, there were times when we had some needs. There were times when there were some fears. There were times when there were troubles. But there was never a time where I didn’t know where to turn. There was never a time where I didn’t know where to go. Thank God.”

Listen. Because of your provision. He has blessed us. I mean, you know, you say, “Oh, God, give me power! Oh, God, give me peace! Oh, God, give me...”—He’s given it to you! He has supplied all that you need. Not “will bless”: “has blessed.” God said to those Israelites in Canaan, “Every place that the sole of your foot shall step upon, that have I given you.” (Joshua 1:3) And we need to start saying, “This one is mine”; “this one is mine”; “this one is mine,” and claim your blessings: they are yours. You’re not praying for the victory; you’re praying from the victory. The victory is yours in Jesus. There’s no need to fall out. There’s no need to be a casualty. There’s no need to be a quitter.

C. Because of Your Proclamation

And I want to say one last thing. Don’t fall out because of your position. Don’t fall out because of your provision. And don’t fall out because of your proclamation. They were bearers of a message. You want me to tell you what that message was? Joseph said, “This is what I want you to tell them when you go: Tell, first of all, I’m not dead; I’m

alive.” Jacob needed to hear that. He said secondly, “Tell them I’m in a highly exalted position at the right hand of the majesty on high.” And he said, “Thirdly, tell them I made ample provision for them, and I want them to come and live with me.” That’s what it’s about. Oh, listen—listen. “I go and prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I’ll come again and receive you unto myself that where I am there you may be also. I want you to come and live with me.”

And no one ever had a better message than that. Oh, God, help us that we fall not out by the way, but we keep on keeping on.

The Anatomy of Salvation

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: August 30, 1992

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 45

“Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren.”

GENESIS 45:1

Outline

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Conclusion

Introduction

Take your Bibles and turn this time to the Old Testament, to the book of Genesis chapter 45. I just hope that what I have to say tonight will bless you as much as it blessed me as I tuned my heart to speak on this passage of Scripture. Actually, tonight, we're going to look at the entire forty-fifth chapter of the book of Genesis. But we're only going to go through it very quickly. The title of the message tonight is, "The Anatomy of Salvation." And I hope tonight that, when we look at the message, it will help you to understand, to appreciate, the salvation that you have, and to love and adore the Lord Jesus Christ more than you ever have before.

Now God wants us to be saved so much that He tells us clearly and plainly how to be saved, and then He sends the Holy Spirit of God to encourage us and to draw us to Christ. And, of course, the Lord Jesus Christ suffered, bled, and died that we might be saved. But on top of all of that, God has given us many wonderful picture stories in the

Old Testament. These are illustrations. We call them types. They're Old Testament stories. And they literally happened, but they also illustrate New Testament salvation. And so it's not just what did happen; it is what is happening to us day by day.

One of the most blessed types or pictures of the Lord Jesus Christ, I personally believe, is found in the life of the man named Joseph. If you want something thrilling to study and read, study the life of Joseph. Now, tonight, obviously we don't have time to look at all of the life of Joseph; but may I tell you that the life of Joseph can be summed up in four great episodes. Now, get these in your heart.

I. Joseph, the Beloved Son

First of all, as you see Joseph, who pictures the Lord Jesus Christ, you see him, first of all, as the beloved son. Joseph's father loved him above all others. He was the beloved of his father. And, therefore, he was a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. And Joseph's father gave him a coat of many colors. And that coat represented the royalty that belongs to the royal Son of heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ.

II. Joseph, the Rejected Servant

But Joseph was sent by his father on behalf of his brethren. And so you see the second episode. Episode number one: He is the beloved son. Episode number two: He is the rejected servant—the rejected servant. He has been sent by the father on behalf of his brothers, and he was rejected. You remember how they sold him and put him in a pit, sold him to the Ishmaelites and then went back to their father. Joseph's wicked brothers told Joseph's father and their father that he had been slain by a wild beast. And they took that bloody coat, that royal coat now stained with blood, and they presented it to Joseph's father, and said, "Joseph is dead. He's been slain. He's been killed by a wild beast."

III. Joseph, the Exalted Sovereign

So, first of all, he's the beloved son. Secondly, he's the rejected servant. The third way that you see Joseph in the Bible is the exalted sovereign. Joseph goes down to Egypt. He's sold in a caravan down to Egypt with these Ishmaelites. And through a great deal of circumstance, all of it guided by the providence of God, Joseph becomes the royal ruler in Egypt. He is the highest of the high. And there you see him exalted on high. That's the third chapter. And if you know the story, you know that is true. Joseph now, who was sold into slavery, rejected of his brethren, is now raised upon a throne, and he is the prime minister of all Egypt, the most powerful nation on the face of the earth.

IV. Joseph, the Seeking Savior

Now the last chapter is the chapter we are going to be looking at tonight. And the last chapter in the life of Joseph is Joseph, the seeking savior. He's the one now exalted, who sets out to seek his brothers, and to bring them to him, and to become their savior, in a physical sense, to save them from starvation, to save them from deprivation and all of those things that would be consumptive with their condition. So you see the four episodes. He is the beloved son. He is the rejected servant. He's the exalted sovereign. He is the seeking savior. And in all of those things—and we could go through the life of Joseph—I have a message that I have called “The Gospel According to Joseph.” And line upon line, precept upon precept, illustration upon illustration, you see how the life of Joseph in a strange way, a marvelous way, parallels in many ways the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. And therefore he becomes to me personally, and I believe to many people, an illustration of salvation that we have.

But now we come to chapter 45. And chapter 45 is the chapter that shows Joseph revealing himself to his brothers. That is, he is seeking his brothers that he might relate himself to them. And there are some wonderful, wonderful similarities. Would you look with me tonight at seven of them, seven similarities here, as we see Jesus, the seeking Savior, portrayed by Joseph in the book of Genesis. It will do two things. Number one: It will cause you to appreciate divine revelation. It will cause you to have a love for the Bible that perhaps you never had. Number two: I think it will cause you to have a deeper love for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now here there are seven steps in the way that Jesus sought me and brought me to Himself. They are the same seven steps that Joseph took with his brothers, all right?

A. Confrontation with Christ

Step number one: a confrontation with Christ. That's the first step we have. Look now in verses 1 through 3: *“Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him,”*—now, watch it—*“while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard. And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph.”* (Genesis 45:1–3) Now here you have a picture of his brothers. They don't know who he is. He is the exalted sovereign. And they know he is the ruler, but they do not know that he is Joseph. They do not know that he is the one that they sold into slavery so long ago. And now his great heart of compassion is so overflowing. Look, if you will, in verse 1. It says, *“And he cried.”* Look in verse 2: *“And he wept aloud.”* Now he had already wept in private. They didn't know it, but he'd already wept over them.

Go back to chapter 42 here. Let me show you something. Look, if you will, in verse

7: *“And Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them,”*—see, they didn’t know him, but he knew them. This is chapter 42, verse 7—*“but made himself strange unto them,”*—that’s just a way of saying he disguised himself—*“and spake roughly unto them; and he said unto them, Whence come ye?”* (Genesis 42:7) Here he is wearing a disguise. He’s hiding himself from them. Now, first, he hides himself from them, and then he reveals himself to them. First of all, he speaks roughly to them, and then, he speaks tenderly to them. So he has spoken roughly to them—and I’ll tell you why in just a moment. But he has disguised himself; he has spoken roughly to them.

But after he has spoken roughly to them, look in chapter 42, verse 24: *“And he turned himself about from them, and wept; and returned unto them again.”* (Genesis 45:24) So when he is disguising himself, he doesn’t really want to hide himself from them. He has an ulterior motive. And when he is speaking roughly to them, it’s not because he doesn’t love them. His great heart is breaking, but he doesn’t want them to see him crying right now. He comes in a disguise and says, “Where did you guys come from?” They’re quaking in their boots. And then he goes off by himself, buries his face in his hands, and he just weeps; he just sobs; he convulses.

What is all of this about? It’s a picture, my dear friend, of our dear Lord Jesus Christ. Now he caused them pain. But little do we realize how much it pains Him to cause us pain. Why does He bring us pain? That we might see our need of Him. You see, what He did was to bring them to a place of desperation. The needs, the hungers, the heartaches, we have in this world are caused by God, and they are the silken cords to draw us to Himself.

Now, first of all, Joseph spoke roughly to them. And then, now he speaks tenderly to them. Go back to chapter 45 again. To their hearts now that have been crushed, to the fear that is now in their hearts, he now begins to speak peace. This time he cries before them. Verse 2: *“He wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard. And Joseph said to his brethren, I am Joseph.”* (Genesis 45:2–3)

B. Conviction by Christ

So, first of all, we have a confrontation with Christ that’s pictured here. And then, we have a conviction by Christ. Look in verse 3: *“And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him;”—*now, underscore this—*“for they were troubled at his presence.”* (Genesis 45:3) And the word *troubled* means they were “terrified.” Do you know why they were terrified? They had now fallen into the hands of the mightiest person on earth, and he was the one that they had so dreadfully wronged. Joseph is now armed with absolute power, and they are worthy of judgment. You see that, first of all, there is a confrontation with Him, and then, my dear friend, there is a conviction by Him. He says, *“I am Joseph.”* They begin to quake in their boots. And well they might. Put it down big and plain and straight, my

friend: that nobody is ever saved without this same kind of conviction.

I was telling the men this Saturday morning, if your child wants to be saved, your child is six, seven, eight, nine, you say, “Is my child ready to be saved?” the very first thing you look for is a conviction of sin: does that child see that he or she is a sinner and under judgment? No conviction, no salvation. In my estimation, no one has ever been saved who has not first of all seen himself or herself as a hell-deserving sinner. And the way to be saved is to say, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner”—“God, be merciful to me”—to cry out for the mercy of God.

C. Conversion to Christ

So that’s the second step. First of all, a confrontation with Christ: Jesus takes the initiative, just as Joseph took the initiative, to bring his brothers to himself. And then, there was not only confrontation, but conviction. And then, after the confrontation and the conviction comes the conversion. Begin in verse 4: *“And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come...”*—that’s the invitation. That’s the gospel invitation. He gave them an invitation. Joseph said unto his brothers—these have wronged him; these have lied about him; these who have rejected him; these who have sold him into slavery and denied him—in compassion and grace he says to them—*“Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither.”*—now, watch it—*“for God did send me...”*—oh, my dear friend, God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son also—*“God did send me before you to preserve life.”* (Genesis 45:4–5) *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”* (John 3:16) *“For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh,”*—now, watch this—*“and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.”* (Genesis 45:6–8)

Now in verse 4, he says to these men now who were weeping and quaking in their boots—they’re now under conviction; they now realize they deserve judgment—he stretches out his hand, and he says, “Come. Come on. Come near to me.” And he does not minimize their sin. But what he does is emphasize the grace of God. He says, “I know you did wrong, but God was over it all.”

Now I want to ask you a question. Who engineered Calvary? “Well,” you say, “wicked men crucified Jesus.” Yes, they did. But God was over it all. It was the plan of God. Listen. Calvary was in the heart and mind of God before this planet was swung into space. It’s not incidental. It’s not accidental. It is fundamental. It was in the heart and mind

of God. This is what Joseph is saying: “You did wrong. It’s your fault. But over it all was the providence of Almighty God.” *Calvary, my friend, was the greatest tragedy in man’s dealing with God, and it was God’s greatest triumph in God dealing with man* — Calvary. It’s an amazing thing. And so he says, “Come to me,” and they come to him, and they are now under new management. He becomes their lord, and he has made provision for them. He says, “I’m going to save you. I’m going to deliver you.” And he says, “I am lord.” He said, “I can do all of this, because I am lord.” Look, if you will again, in verse 8. He says, God has “*made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house.*” (Genesis 45:8) My dear friend, the One who saves us today is not a baby in a manger, and He is not a man nailed to a cross. He is the Lord of lords. Lord of all, He reigns on high.

D. **Commission from Christ**

Now, number four of these seven steps: first of all, confrontation; secondly, conviction; thirdly, conversion; and, fourthly, commission. You see, He didn’t just save them and forgive them. Now, look in verse 9: “*Haste ye, and go.*” (Genesis 45:9) Now, look in verse 4: “*And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come.*” (Genesis 45:4) Now, look in verse 9: “*Haste ye, and go.*” May I say, dear friend, that all of the Bible is summed up in those two words: *come* to Jesus, and *go* unto all the world. “Come to me. Come, come, come, anybody come. I’m the exalted Lord. I made provision for you. I want to save you. I want to forgive you. What you did wrong to me, God in His providence has used to provide salvation.”

First, you come. But now, watch it. Once you’ve received this message, then you’re to tell them, “*Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not: and thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children’s children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast: and there will I nourish thee; for there are five years of famine; lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty. And, behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you. And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen; and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither.*” (Genesis 45:9–13)

Now, who was his father? Well, Jacob thinks now that Joseph is dead. The last he’s seen of Joseph is that bloody coat. All these years he says, “He’s dead. My beloved son is dead.” But Joseph says to his brothers, “I want you to go to him,”—this one who thinks he’s dead—“and you are to tell him this”—tell him, “We once rejected him, but he’s not dead. He is raised on high. He has a name above every name. The world is at his feet. He’s the fairest of ten thousand. He has forgiven us our sins. And he wants us to come and be with him and share his glory.” That’s what they are to go tell Jacob:

“Just tell him all my glory.”

And, my dear friend, that’s the joy that we have, is to preach Christ: Christ risen, Christ reigning, and Christ rich. Anybody who doesn’t want to do that, I wonder if they’ve seen Him at all. I really do. It’s beyond me how anybody could say that he is a Christian and doesn’t want to be a soul winner. To say that all Christians are missionaries is just another way of saying all Christians are Christians. I mean, I can’t understand how anybody wouldn’t want to tell this story. First of all, there’s confrontation. Secondly, there’s conviction. Thirdly, there’s conversion. Fourthly, there is a commission: “Go tell this message. I am not dead. I am alive. I am at a highly exalted position at the right hand of majesty on high. I have made provision for you. I have forgiven your sin. I want you to come and live with me and see my glory.” That’s what Joseph told them. And that’s what they were commanded to do. They were to take his words and share his words.

E. Communion in Christ

But now, wait a minute. He wanted more than servants. And so the next thing you see, number five, is not only a commission from Christ, but communion in Christ. Look, if you will, in verse 14—look at it here: *“And he fell upon his brother Benjamin’s neck, and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck.”* (Genesis 45:14) Don’t miss this. Look at it. Can you see these brothers who have hated Joseph? They’d sold him into slavery. They’d forgotten him, perhaps. They despised the very thought of him. He was despised and rejected. Now here they are, grown men weeping, hugging—weeping on one another’s neck.

And look in verse 15: *“Moreover he kissed all his brethren.”* (Genesis 45:15) I would have loved to have been there in the palace to see this—see old Joe going around and kissing these rascals. He kissed all his brethren and wept upon them. And after that, his brethren talked with him. What a time that must have been! Oh, the hugging! Oh, the weeping! Oh, the tears! Oh, the joy! You see, my dear friend, they were guilty, and they needed to be pardoned. They needed to be forgiven. They were hungry, and they needed to be fed. But Christianity is more than pardon. Christianity is more than supply. My dear friend, it is fellowship with our Lord Himself. And they talked with him.

Oh, that’s why He has saved us, friend: that we might just talk with Him, that we might love Him. I found myself today just lifting my hands in praise to our great God, saying, “Lord, I love you.” I love just to talk with Him. You know, I was in my library Friday. I found myself talking to the Lord like I might be talking to you, Bob. I said, “Lord, I can’t find that book. Where is that?” I said, “Lord, if you want me to have that book, you’re going to have to help me find it, because, Lord, I’m wasting time. And either I’m going to find it, or you don’t want me to have it.” And I found myself, as you do often, just talking to God just like I’d be talking to you.

You say, is God interested in those little things? Of course He is! Now we get on the

phone and talk with our children. We were talking past midnight last night. That's the reason why I've preached so poorly this morning. Just talking and talking about everything. We want to know everything. You say, "Well, I don't want to bother Him with the little things." Do you think anything is big to God? Friend, everything you've got is a little thing, as far as He's concerned. He's God. Your problems, they may seem big to you. They're not big to Him. He loves you. My dear friend, Jesus is a friend.

Can you imagine all the things they must have talked about in that room? Now the Bible just compacts it all down, you see, just to fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. The debate sometimes that hymnal people have about whether "In the Garden" ought to be left in the hymnal, you know:

*And He walks with me, and He talks with me,
And He tells me I am His own...
And the voice I hear falling on my ear...
—C. AUSTIN MILES*

And the people say, "Oh, you know, that's syrupy poetry. Get that out." They're so dumb, aren't they? They're so dumb. And they haven't even got a hint. I know they don't even have a clue about it. Friend, that's what it's all about—that's what it's all about:

*And He walks with me, and He talks with me,
And He tells me I am His own...
And the voice I hear falling on my ear
The Son of God discloses.*

Yes, he forgave them. Thank God for that. Yes, he supplied them. But I love this part where he just goes around and kisses them. Can I tell you something? I love Jesus. You say, "That's corny." Well, I can't help it. I do. And I'm not ashamed to tell you that I love Him. And He loves me. And He's the One that I had despised and rejected. And I was guilty of His crucifixion. But in mercy He spoke roughly to me till I saw that I was under judgment. Then He made Himself known to me. And then He said, "Come to me." And then He said, "What you meant for evil, God meant for good." And God sent me for you. And He said, "I have forgiven you. And I have commissioned you. And you're to go to those that I love and tell them that you've seen my glory. And I'm not dead; I'm alive. I'm on the right hand of the Majesty on high. Now, let's just have fellowship. Let's just have some fellowship. Come here. Let me hug your neck. Let's talk. Let's talk together."

What a time that must have been! Communion in Christ.

*And He walks with me, and He talks with me.
And He tells me I am His own.*

F. Completion Through Christ

And now I want you to see our completion through Christ—number six. Look at it, if you

will, beginning in verse 16: *“And the fame thereof was heard in Pharaoh’s house, saying, Joseph’s brethren are come: and it pleased Pharaoh well, and his servants. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Say unto your brethren, This do ye; lade your beasts”—*what that means is, *“Load up those animals”—“and go, get you unto the land of Canaan; and take your father and your households, and come unto me: and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land. Now thou art commanded, this do ye; take you wagons out of the land of Egypt for your little ones, and for your wives, and bring your father, and come.”* I love this verse. *“Also regard not your stuff;”—“regard not your stuff”—“for the good of all the land of Egypt is yours.”* Now, friend, if you’re backed up by Pharaoh, who says, “Everything in Egypt is at your command,” you’re pretty well off. *“And the children of Israel did so: and Joseph gave them wagons, according to the commandment of Pharaoh, and gave them provision for the way. To all of them he gave each man changes of raiment; but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver, and five changes of raiment. And to his father he sent after this manner; ten asses laden with the good things of Egypt, and ten she asses laden with corn and bread and meat for his father by the way.”* (Genesis 45:16–23)

Now, my dear friend, not only was there communion, but there was completion. In all of this, Joseph makes no mention of their guilt. It’s forgotten; it’s blotted out of his mind. He just simply brings these brothers and says, “Pharaoh, I want you to meet my brothers.” He doesn’t say a thing in the world about the fact they sold him into slavery. He just presents them to the majesty, just to Pharaoh the king. Joseph is the prime minister, and he says, “Come. I want you to meet Pharaoh.” That’s the way the Lord Jesus presents us to the Father. And just like we’re presented to the Father, all of the resources of the throne were laid at their feet—everything, all of the wealth of Egypt. Pharaoh did that for Joseph’s sake—for Joseph’s sake. You know, we pray, “For Jesus’ sake,” “In the name of Jesus.” In the name of Joseph all of the wealth of Egypt was just simply laid at their feet—for Joseph’s sake.

And do you know what they said to these boys? “Hey, don’t worry about your stuff.” Now, friend, that spoke to me. You know what God says to me? God says to me in this, “Look, if you know Jesus, and Jesus is heaven’s prime minister, and Jesus is willing to present you to the throne, and all of the resources of heaven are at your feet, you don’t have to worry about your stuff. You don’t have to worry about it. “Don’t regard your stuff.”

When Joyce and I had a little baby boy to go to heaven, we made a solemn agreement that we would never worry about the loss of anything material. I’ve had to remind myself about that from time to time. We just made up our mind we were not going to grasp tightly the things of this world, because we saw in a moment, in a flash, how absolutely worthless those things are compared to the great issue of life. Friend, we are incredibly wealthy, because all of heaven belongs to us. The authority and the

name of our Jesus has unlocked the storehouse of heaven's treasury.

And so these people had every provision necessary for every step of the way. There was nothing that they needed that they did not have. And this is the reason I have called it completion, because the Bible says, in Colossians chapter 2 and verse 10, "We are complete in Him" (Colossians 2:10)—in Jesus. And then Philippians 4:19: "*My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*" (Philippians 4:19) That's our completion in Christ.

G. Continuation in Christ

I want you to see these guys as they're going now to do what God has commanded them to do, loaded down with wagonloads of all of the goods that they'll ever need. Here's the last of these seven similarities: not only our completion through Christ, but our continuation in Christ. Look, if you will now, in verse 24 and following: "*So he sent his brethren away, and they departed: and he said unto them, See ye fall not out by the way...*"—that is, don't quit; keep on; continue—"See that ye fall not out by the way. And they went up out of Egypt, and came into the land of Canaan unto Jacob their father, and told him, saying, Joseph is yet alive,"—friend, that's the good news; that's the gospel. He's not dead. He's risen—"and he is governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not." (Genesis 45:24–26) He just passed out. He didn't believe them.

You know, the last thing he'd heard or seen about Joseph was that bloody coat. He was totally convinced that Joseph was dead. And now suddenly they come on the scene and say Joseph is yet alive. Well, Jacob couldn't take it. When he revived, maybe they poured a little water on him. And verse 27: "*And they told him all the words of Joseph,*"—now, what makes a good testimony? Well, first of all, your testimony. What you say: word of mouth, but even more than that, the words of Joseph. My dear friend, we take the words of Jesus. And they took the words of Joseph—"which he had said unto them: and when"—watch it now—"he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived: and Israel"—that's another word for Jacob—"said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive." (Genesis 27–28)

I love it. First of all, there is the testimony: "Hey, we've seen him—we've seen him. He's alive." *Do you know, a Christian with a glowing testimony is worth a library full of arguments.* You know. You ask me how I know He lives? He lives within my heart. They knew.

But now, wait a minute. On top of their experience were the words of Joseph. And on top of your experience is, my dear friend, the Word of God, to convince these people like old Jacob. But what was it that finally, finally, convinced him? Look at it, friend, in verse 27: "*And when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived: and Israel said, It is enough*"—he's alive. (Genesis 45:27–28)

Why were those wagons there? Friend, those wagons were loaded with every conceivable good thing that Egypt had; they were just loaded down—just wagonload after wagonload of the rich things of Egypt. And here come the wagons. I mean, how is Jacob going to explain all of that? There's no way to explain that. How could those boys get that stuff? They had to say, beyond the shadow of any doubt, he is alive. It was not primarily the brothers' word; it was Joseph's wagons that convinced him.

Conclusion

Now that brings me to a question: What's going to cause people to believe in Adrian's God? Why should people believe what I preach? Why? Well, I say I know Him. They say, "Well, that's good for you." "The Bible says..." They say, "Well, that's what the Bible says," too. Let me tell you something, folks. Do you know what they need to see in my life? Wagonloads of the grace of God that they can't explain. They need to see something about me, and say, "Where did he get all that stuff? Where's that coming from?" Wagonloads of the grace of God.

You see, my dear friend, we are incredibly rich if we know the Lord Jesus Christ. Let me tell you something. The greatest argument for Christianity and the greatest argument against Christianity is the life of a Christian—one way or the other. *The only thing about me that I have a right to ask you to believe is the part you can't explain.* I mean, if you can explain me apart from Jesus Christ, there's something missing in my testimony. You have to be able to say about me, and your neighbor has to be able to say about you, there's something about him or her that is supernatural, that is different. "Where did he get those wagonloads? Where did all that stuff come from? How does he live that way? Where is that joy? Where is that grace? Where is that peace? Where is that love? Where is that coming from unless it's come from heaven?" Friend, when we go out, we'll take our testimony. We'll take the words of Joseph; that is, our Jesus. I'll tell you what else. We'd better bring the wagons along with us too. We'd better say, "You know, there is something supernatural about this thing that can't be explained apart from the grace of God."

Now you say, "Well, pastor, that sure is coincidental all those things happen to Joseph like that in the Old Testament, and so much like Jesus in the New Testament." Well, I believe it was all engineered by the Holy Spirit, not only to help us to learn the life of Joseph, but to help us understand just what we have in Jesus. Now you've got somebody who needs to know that Jesus is not dead. He's alive. He's at a highly exalted position at the right hand of the Majesty on high. He's made provision for us. He wants us to come and see His glory. He wants to love us. He wants to live with us and us with Him forever.

The Anatomy of Salvation

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: August 30, 1981

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 45

“And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.”

GENESIS 45:7

Outline

Introduction

- I. Our Confrontation with Christ
- II. Our Conviction by Christ
- III. Our Conversion to Christ
 - A. The Invitation
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 - C. The Further Amplification
- IV. Our Commission from Christ
- V. Our Communion with Christ
- VI. Our Completion Through Christ
- VII. Our Continuation for Christ

Conclusion

Introduction

We're going to be thinking today on this subject: "The Anatomy of Salvation"—"The Anatomy of Salvation." Genesis chapter 45, and let's begin reading in verse 1. And, actually, we're going to do the entire chapter, so we're going to have to move right along as we're preaching through the Book of Genesis, and on Sunday night the Book of the Revelation. We're calling the entire series "The Beginning and the End." Now, let's read together the first three verses: *"Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. And he wept aloud; and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard. And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence"* (Genesis 45:1–3).

Now, my dear friend, God wants you to be saved. I was thinking as we were singing that song,

I never shall forget the day,

*Blessed be the name of the Lord!
When Jesus washed my sins away,
Blessed be the name of the Lord!
—CHARLES WESLEY*

And I wondered how many people might be singing that song but they were like iron fountains in the park. You see a lion, and perhaps there's water spewing out of his mouth, but he never tastes a drop of it. And I'm wondering if some of you did not have that song coming out of your mouth this morning without tasting a drop of it.

*I never shall forget the day,
When Jesus washed my sins away,
Blessed be the name of the Lord!*

Was there a time, was there a day, when you said, "Praise God, bless God, hallelujah, I know that I know that I know that I've met Jesus Christ as my personal Savior and Lord; I have a day to be remembered"? If not, do you know what my prayer is? My prayer is that this day will be the day that you'll sing about on some other day when you'll sing,

*I never shall forget the day,
When Jesus washed my sins away,
Blessed be the name of the Lord!*

The Lord wants you to be saved, and only Jesus can save you. The problem is sin. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). And there's only one thing that can be done with sin, and that is to bring that sin to the Lord Jesus Christ. If you were to take all of the atomic weapons that have ever been created, somehow put them between the lapels of your coat and detonate them, it would vaporize your body, but it wouldn't do anything to your sin. Your sin would be somewhere in existence. Only the blood of Jesus Christ can blow sin out of a man's heart. Only the blood of Jesus Christ can cleanse us and make us pure and make us clean. So you need to pay attention.

And there are things that will keep you today from getting saved if you're not careful. I read in last week's newspaper a terrible story down in Homestead, Florida—perhaps you read it—of a fire. And in that fire, I believe, there were five children that perished. There was a neighbor who came to the house to try to rescue those children, but the newspaper said that there were two snarling, vicious dogs that fought away the rescuer, and he could not get in to liberate the children from the fire. And I thought, how tragic that was, because the family had gotten these dogs, doubtless, to protect them, but the very things that they had gotten to protect them caused them to perish in the flames.

We as individuals build up protective mechanisms in our hearts, in our lives. Let me tell you what two of them are. One of them is pride. Do you know pride is sort of a protective shell that we have around us because we don't want people to get to us, and

we have a little sense of insecurity about us naturally? We have that sense of inferiority, and so we put up this façade of pride. Oh, what a terrible thing it is! And another is doubt or cynicism. That's another protective device that we have. You know, we've been lied to, conned, and gyped, and used and abused and misused, and so forth. When anybody comes to us, we just throw up that protection. We want to watch his angle, and we're always figuring.

And, you know, there are many people who come to listen to me preach, and I can almost read it on their faces, especially when they first get here. They kind of, you know, look at me out from under their eyebrows as if they're saying, "All right, who is this guy? What is he? You know, what's it all about? And is he for real? Is he some sort of a charlatan, a fake, or a hypocrite?" We just have those defenses built up in us, you see. There's this pride, one vicious, snarling dog that we thought is going to protect us; and another is this doubt, this vicious, snarling dog. And, if you're not careful, they may keep the Savior from saving you today. These things that you think are protecting you may be your demise today.

So I want you to chain those dogs for just a few moments, will you? And I want you to listen to what God has to say about how you can know the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord. And I want you to see the background of our passage of Scripture.

We've been studying the life of Joseph. Joseph was a young man who was sold into slavery by his brethren. They hated him. They despised him. They rejected him. They sold him for a slave. He was taken by the Ishmaelites in a caravan down to Egypt. While he was in Egypt, God so blessed him, and God so honored him, that Joseph became the Prime Minister of Egypt, virtually lord over all the entire world. Now, in the meanwhile, there arose a mighty famine, and the famine was all over the land, but Joseph had been so wise and so led of the Lord that he had built up an enormous store of food. And anybody on the face of the earth that needed food had to come to Egypt, and if they got food, they had to get it through Joseph, because Pharaoh said to anybody who came for food, "You just go to Joseph, and whatever Joseph says, that you will have to do."

Well now, the brothers of Joseph, who had sold him into slavery, were down in Canaan. The famine was sore in the land of Canaan, and so their father said, "Go to Egypt." When he said "Egypt," they looked at one another like they'd been shot. He said, "Why are you looking at one another like that? Go to Egypt." Well, they knew they sold old Joe down to Egypt, but anyway he said, "Go to Egypt, and go down there and get us some food." Well, they had to go down there, and they had to meet and talk with Joseph. They did not know that it was Joseph, however, they were talking with. He's now the lord, the prime minister sitting upon the throne, and they have to go to him.

Now Joseph knew them, but they did not know Joseph.

And that brings us up to the point of the scripture that I've just read to you today. Let's look at it again. And the Bible says, *"Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren"* (Genesis 45:1). These brethren who had rejected him, these brethren who had despised him, these brethren who had sold him, he makes himself known to them.

Now in Joseph making himself known to his brethren we see an illustration of Jesus making Himself known to us. Now, if in the Bible salvation is so important—and it is—you would expect to find in the Bible many wonderful illustrations of salvation—and you do. And here in this story of Joseph making himself known to his brethren, you're going to find a picture of how Jesus makes Himself known to us. And I really believe that Joseph is a picture, a prophecy, an illustration, of Jesus. I believe that Jesus is our heavenly Joseph.

And so I want you to see what I call seven similarities. Are you ready for them? We're going to see them as we look at this story here in Genesis chapter 45, and we're going to find seven salvation similarities, and I trust they'll be a blessing to your heart as they have been a blessing to mine.

I. Our Confrontation with Christ

Now, first of all, I want you to see their confrontation with Joseph, because it illustrates our confrontation with Christ, in these first three verses. I read here in verse 2 that he, Joseph, wept aloud. He's there in the palace. He says to the guards, "Get out of here." He says to his attendants, "Get back away from me." And when all of them are gone, we see Joseph as he just breaks down and sobs great heaving sobs. The salty tears are coming down his cheeks, and he's weeping so loudly that they can hear it in the outer court.

What is it a picture of? It is a picture of the great compassionate heart of Joseph. How old Joseph loved his brethren! He looked at these pitiful brothers of his that had lied about him, that had sold him, that had despised him and rejected him, and his heart was so full of love and compassion for them that the Bible says he *"could not refrain himself"* (Genesis 45:1). He could not restrain himself any more, and he wept over them. And what an illustration he is of the Lord Jesus Christ, who weeps over us!

This was not the first time that Joseph had wept over them. Turn to Genesis chapter 42, and look with me for just a moment in verse 7—in Genesis chapter 42, verse 7: *"And Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them, but made himself strange unto them, and spake roughly unto them"* (Genesis 42:7). Now that's very strange; that is really strange. You see, here they come, these boys from down in Canaan, these boys who

had so mistreated him, and when he saw them, he knew who they were, but they didn't know who he was, because, in a way, he disguised himself. He put on a different voice. I'm sure that he may have spoken to them through an interpreter. And he made himself strange to them. That means he put on a disguise. And he spoke: "Who are you? What do you want? What are you doing down here? I think you're a bunch of spies." Oh, how roughly he spoke to them!

And if that's all you had been able to see, verse 7, you would have said Joseph was full of bitterness and vindictiveness and Joseph was trying to get even. But I want to show you something here that will really be a blessing to your heart. Look in verse 24 of this same chapter. Now we're in chapter 42. Now, look in verse 24. And the Bible says, "*And he turned himself about from them, and wept; and returned to them again*" (Genesis 42:24). This time Joseph went off into privacy. He went into a secret chamber, and there he wept over them. His heart was so full of compassion when he made himself strange to them. His heart was so full of love when he spoke roughly to them. They didn't know it, but he knew it. Do you know what he was trying to do to his brethren? He was trying to bring them to a place of desperation. He was trying to bring them to a place of conviction. He was trying to bring their slumbering conscience to the surface again. And the way he did it was to deal roughly with them. They had to see their need. They had to see their circumstances. But I want to tell you this—and pay much attention: he hurt when they hurt, and it pained him to give them pain. He spoke roughly to them, and then he went aside and cried over them, but they never knew it—they never knew it.

Do you know that the hard times you're having have been allowed by God, who weeps over you, and a Savior, who loves you? And do you know why God sometimes seems to speak so roughly? And do you know why sometimes you seem to have such difficulties in your life? Because God is trying to show you your need of Him. The worst thing that could happen to us would be for us to go through life as sinners, yet living high, wide, and handsome. And so many times we see that our Lord seems to hide His face from us. He makes Himself strange to us. So many times we see that our God seems to speak roughly to us and deal roughly with us. But I want to tell you, dear friend, there's not a pain that you feel but what He feels it. And our dear Lord weeps over you. And so he came.

Let's go back, if you will again, to chapter 45, and we see the Lord Jesus pictured here and illustrated here by Joseph, who is weeping over his brethren. But not only do we see his compassion here; we see, dear friends, that he makes himself literally known to them. He just reveals himself to them. He says unto his brethren, in verse 3, "*I am Joseph*" (Genesis 45:3). That was easy to understand. It wasn't hard to understand. It's just plain: "*I am Joseph.*" You see, the only way they could have known that he was

Joseph was for him to reveal himself to them. The only way that you can know who Jesus is, is for Jesus to reveal Himself to you. You see, *“We love him, because he first loved us”* (1 John 4:19). We know Him, because He first knows us, and He makes Himself known to us.

Do you know what my sermon is today? My sermon today is God making the Lord Jesus Christ known to you. And He does it through me. You see, I am His ambassador, and this message is Jesus standing before you saying, “I am Jesus.” Don’t you understand that just as God had organized the affairs of the lives of Joseph’s brethren, God has organized the affairs of your life? And you’re not here by chance or happenstance, and the problems and the famines and the hungers and the needs and the tears and the tribulations that you’ve had have just been God’s way of bringing you to this place so that the Lord Jesus through His servant can say to you today, “I am Jesus.” He loves you, and He wants to save you. But no one can ever be saved until they have a confrontation with the Lord Jesus Christ. And so we see, first of all, our confrontation with Christ pictured.

II. Our Conviction by Christ

Now, secondly, we see our conviction by Christ pictured. Look again in verse 3, if you will: *“And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence”* (Genesis 45:3). Now the word troubled literally means, “terrified.” Friend, they were scared speechless. They couldn’t utter a word. They stood there dumbfounded. They were literally shaking in their boots. They had fallen into the hands of the one that they had so dreadfully wronged. *“I am Joseph.”* And when he said that, they knew that he was armed with absolute power, and they knew that they were worthy of absolute judgment. They knew that they knew that he had the power of death over them, and they were worthy of death. No wonder they were speechless. No wonder they were troubled. No wonder they were terrified. *“I am Joseph.”* Not a word could they speak. What conviction came over them! How they trembled in his presence!

May I tell you something this morning? No one has ever been saved until he’s come to the spot that Joseph’s brethren were in right here. Nobody has ever been saved until he has seen himself as a hell-deserving sinner. Have you seen that? Have you been terrified at your sins? Have you come to the place where you stand speechless before God, with no alibi, no excuse, no way out? There is no conversion without conviction. First, they had a confrontation with Joseph; and then, they had a conviction by Joseph.

I remember reading in the Bible, in the New Testament, about Jesus telling about two men who went to church one day. I guess we could call it church. They went to the temple to pray. Most likely it was on Saturday. It was their church, but they went up to

the temple. One was a Pharisee. He was outwardly religious; the other was a publican. He was a notorious sinner. The Pharisee stood, the Bible says, and prayed with himself. Now that's very, very instructive, because that's what he was doing: praying with himself. God was nowhere near his prayer. He prayed with himself. He said, "God, I thank you that I'm not like other men are." And he told God how good he was, and how he fasted, and how he tithed, and how he did not live in open, flagrant immorality (Luke 18:11–12). But Jesus said, the other man, the publican, the tax collector, the crook, bowed his head, smote himself upon the breast, would not even so much as lift his eyes to heaven, and he prayed like this: "*God, be merciful to me...*"—now the King James Version says—"*be merciful to me a sinner*" (Luke 18:13), but it literally says, "be merciful to me, *the sinner*." He saw himself as the chief of sinners. "Oh, God, I am the one. God, be merciful to me, the sinner." And do you know what Jesus said about those two men who went to worship that day? He said, "This man went home justified rather than the other" (Luke 18:14).

Two men went to church. One man went home dignified; the other man went home justified. How will you go home? Two men went to church. One man went home dignified. "God, I thank you I'm not like other men are." The other man said, "*God be merciful to me a sinner*." I tell you there was only one thing that Joseph's brethren could do on this particular day, and that was to say, "Oh, have mercy! Have mercy!" They stood before him speechless, condemned, and convicted. And so, not only do we see pictured our confrontation with Christ, but our conviction by Christ.

III. Our Conversion to Christ

The third thing we see pictured of these seven similarities is our conversion to Christ—our conversion to Christ.

A. The Invitation

Look, if you will, in verse 4: "*And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near*" (Genesis 45:4). Oh, I love that! Joseph gave a gospel invitation, or at least Joseph gave what is similar to a gospel invitation to them that day. He stretched out his arms, and he said, "Come to me." And that's exactly what Jesus is doing. Jesus today is saying to you, through my voice, "Come to me." Jesus is giving you this invitation: "*Come near to me*." And the Bible says through the blood of Christ we can be made nigh; we can be made near (Ephesians 2:13). And I don't know what the brethren said as they came, but I believe they might have been saying, "Just as I am, without one plea, I come, I come." As the brethren of Joseph now you come. And I thank God that when the invitation was given they did come to him. Jesus said, "*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*" (Matthew

11:28).

B. The Explanation

And so I want you to see in verse 4 the invitation, and then I want you to see, in verse 5, the explanation of this conversion. Look, if you will: *“Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life”* (Genesis 45:5). Now that’s a very interesting thing where he says, “Don’t be grieved about your sin.” Now he’s not minimizing their sin. Don’t you think that for one little moment. Their sin was terrible, hurtful, hellish, heinous. What he is doing is not minimizing their sin; he is maximizing God’s grace. What he is saying is that you may not be able to understand it, but that God used what you did in a strange and a marvelous way to redound to His glory and to your good. And so he just simply maximizes the grace of God. He says, “God meant it for good. You meant it for harm, but God meant it for good.”

I want you to translate that to Calvary right now. Think about Calvary. Think when the Lord Jesus Christ died in agony and blood upon the cross. From man’s viewpoint, Calvary was the greatest tragedy known to man, known to history in man’s dealing with God. But from God’s viewpoint, Calvary was the greatest triumph in God’s dealing with man. In man’s dealing with God, the greatest tragedy; in God’s dealing with man, the greatest triumph: tragedy that they sold him into slavery in Joseph’s day; triumph in that God used it for their good and His glory. Oh, thank God for Calvary! Thank God that, “Where sin does abound, grace doth more abound” (Romans 5:20). Thank God that God took Calvary and used it to bring us to Him.

C. The Further Amplification

And so I want you to see, as we continue to look at our conversion to Christ, there was that invitation. There was that explanation. And then I want you to see the further amplification. He tells them now that they’re under new management. Continue to read in verse 6, if you will. He says, *“For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in which there shall neither be earing nor harvest.”* Now they’re under the management of the one who now knows the future. No man knows the future, but they’ve come to Joseph, and Joseph knows the future, because it has been revealed to him by God. *“And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance”* (Genesis 45:6–7).

Now, what was Joseph to them? A preserver. What was Joseph to them? A savior. What was Joseph to them? A deliverer. What is Jesus to me? Jesus is a Savior. What is Jesus to me? A preserver. What is Jesus to me? He is a deliverer. And what he’s saying to these fellows is, “You don’t know the future, but I know the future, and now you’re under my management. From now on, I am your preserver. From now on, I am

your savior. From now on, I am your deliverer, and I'm going to take care of you, and I'm going to see to it that every possible need that you have will be met. You are now under new management, and I'm going to take care of you, come what may." Hallelujah! That's so wonderful!

And why was it all possible? Well, look in verse 8, if you will, and you'll see why it was all possible, because he says, "*So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt*" (Genesis 45:8). He's saying, "The reason I can make these promises, the reason I can do these things, and the reason that I can tell you that I am going to be your preserver, your savior, and your deliverer is that I am lord—I am lord."

Oh, you know, we go to some churches today, and do you know how Jesus is pictured? You see in the bulletins, you see in the stained-glass windows and all of these places, a little baby in its mother's arms, and that's the Jesus they worship. Or else you'll come to some other churches, and you'll find the crucifix with a dead man hanging on a cross, and that's the Jesus they worship. I want to tell you, I don't worship a helpless babe in its mother's arms, and I don't worship a dead man on a cross; I worship a Lord upon His throne. And, oh, you'd better learn that—you'd better learn that, my dear friend. He is the victorious, risen, ascended Savior. And the reason he can make such promises is that *we're not coming today to mourn a corpse; we're coming today to hail a conqueror. His name is Jesus*. And so He says, "Come to me." And they come to Him, and He forgives them by His grace. And then He begins to make provision for them. And so we see the third similarity is not only our confrontation with Christ, not only our conviction by Christ, but our conversion to Christ.

IV. Our Commission from Christ

Fourthly, I want you to see our commission from Christ—our commission from Christ—as it is pictured. Continue to read now where we left off in verse 8. Here's what he says to them: "*Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not: and thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast: and there will I nourish thee; for yet there are five years of famine; lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty. And, behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you. And ye shall tell my father...*"—oh, I love this verse—"And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen; and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither" (Genesis 45:9–13). He gives them a commission. He says, "You are to go and

tell of my glory. You're going to tell of the one who has loved you so, and forgiven you, and now has supplied your every need."

I want you to notice verse 9, where verse 9 says, "*Haste ye, and go*" (Genesis 45:9). Compare that, if you will, to verse 4, where verse 4 says, "*Come near to me*" (Genesis 45:4). The entire life of a Christian can be summed up in two words: the word in verse 4 which says, "*come*," and the word in verse 9 which says, "*go*." That's the gospel. First Jesus says, "*Come*," and then He says, "*Go*." He says, "*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*" (Matthew 11:28). And then He says, "*Go into all the world and preach the gospel*" (Mark 16:15). And everyone who has heard the *come* must hear the *go*. And don't tell me, dear friend, you're saved if you only have one half of that story. Don't tell me you know the Lord Jesus Christ if there is not within your heart a burning conviction that you ought to tell of His glory to other people. If you knew the cure for cancer, would you tell it? If you knew the answer to war, would you tell it? Don't try to make me believe that you believe that you know the answer to men's everlasting needs, and you keep it quiet. Oh, my dear friend, if we have *come*, then we must *go*.

Every now and then we talk about some Christians being missionaries. All Christians are missionaries. Some Christians may be missionaries in the special sense, in the classic sense, but dear friend, whatever makes a man a Christian makes him a missionary at the same time. And to say that all Christians are missionaries is just another way to say that all Christians are Christians. We are to go. I tell you, my heart almost leaps out of my throat when I look at this vast panorama of people sitting before me and wonder how many of them have ever heard our heavenly Joseph say, "Go tell of my glory."

And what were they to tell when they got back down there to Jacob? I'll tell you what they told. They said, "Father, we want to tell you about Joseph. Once we hated him, once we rejected him, once we ignored him, but now he has been raised up on high, and he sits on the right hand of the majesty on high. Now Joseph is given a name which is above every name, and the entire world is at the feet of Joseph. He is dressed in splendor. He is the fairest of ten thousand, but furthermore, he has forgiven our sins by his grace. He now calls us brethren. He wants us to be with him and to share his glory." That's the story they were to tell, and that's the story we are to tell: our commission from Christ. You can't spell *gospel* unless you start *g-o—go*. "*Come*," he said; and then he said, "*Go*."

V. Our Communion with Christ

But not only do you see their confrontation with Christ as illustrated, and not only do you see the conviction by Christ as illustrated, and not only the conversion to Christ, and not

only the commission from Christ, but our communion with Christ is illustrated. Here's another similarity: our communion with Christ. Continue to read, if you will, please, in verses 14 and 15 of this same chapter: *"And he fell on his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck. Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him"* (Genesis 45:14–15). Those are two of the sweetest verses in all of the Bible.

Now, remember, these were the rascals that sold him into slavery. These were the rascals that were ready to take his life. They cared nothing for him, and yet he by his graceful action has revealed himself to them. He has forgiven them. He has promised to supply all of their need and take care of them. And now he goes around hugging them and kissing them, and they sit down to talk together.

What is this a picture of? It's a picture of our communion with Christ. You see, the Lord Jesus Christ does not want merely service. He saved us that He might have fellowship with us. This is what Joseph had been longing for all of that time: to be included in the family. He wanted to be a part of his own. And so now he's having fellowship with them. And the Bible says, in verse 15, "And he talked with them" (Genesis 45:15).

Do you talk with your Lord? Do you? You say, "What should we talk about?" What do you think Joseph and his brothers talked about? Can you imagine what a conversation that must have been? The Bible doesn't say, but I have a feeling that they talked for hours and hours and hours and hours. There was a lot of catching up to do. And they talked about a lot of little things. Did you know that when you love the Lord Jesus Christ, your heavenly Jacob, that you'll talk to Him about the little things? And He wants to hear them. You'll talk to Him about that flat tire. You'll talk to Him about that new suit that you want. You'll talk to Him about how hard it is to get the lid off that jar. You'll talk to Him about this next fish that you want to catch. He wants to hear about that. You say, "Oh, no, He doesn't want to hear about those little things; just the big things." Oh? Well, friend, can you think of anything that's big to Him? It's all little to Him.

Last night I talked to my boy who just went off to college, and boy, I tell you, I feel sorry for those fellows. They rented an apartment, and they're going to do their own cooking. And my David, now, you talk about miracles! Well, anyway, I talked about that some, talked about some other things, and I just wanted to hear those things. It was a blessing to my heart. It wasn't an interest to you, but it's an interest to me, because he's mine.

You ladies, your daughter goes out on a first date. She comes back in, and you want to talk about all kinds of things: what you all had to eat, where did you sit, did he hold the chair for you, and so forth—little things. But why? You're the mama, and you're interested, right? I want to tell you, the Lord, anything that's big enough to concern you

is big enough to concern Him.

“And, they talked together.” Oh, think of the fellowship, the communion, the communion with Christ that is so pictured here! What a blessing it is to say,

*And He walks with me, and He talks with me,
And He tells me I am His own;
And the joy we share as we tarry there,
None other has ever known.*

—C. AUSTIN MILES

I see our communion with Christ pictured here.

VI. Our Completion Through Christ

I'll tell you another similarity. I see our completion through Christ pictured here.

Continue to read now where we left off in verse 16, and read: *“And the fame thereof was heard in Pharaoh’s house, saying, Joseph’s brethren are come: and it pleased Pharaoh well, and his servants. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Say unto my brethren, This do ye; lade your beasts, and go, get you unto the land of Canaan; and take your father and your households, and come unto me: and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land. Now thou are commanded, this do ye; take you wagons out of the land of Egypt for your little ones, and for your wives, and bring your father, and come.”* And here, I love this verse: *“Also regard not your stuff...”*—now that’s what it says here in the King James. Another translation I read said, “Regard not your furniture.” But I like that word *stuff*, especially in the context in which it’s being used here—*“Also regard not your stuff; for the good of all the land of Egypt is your’s”*—boy, that is a great verse, isn’t it? We all ought to put a star by that. Listen, friend. If you’ve got all that heaven’s throne gives you, you don’t have to be worried about stuff, do you?—*“regard not your stuff; for the good of all the land of Egypt is your’s. And the children of Israel did so; and Joseph gave them wagons, according to the commandment of Pharaoh, and gave them provision for the way. To all of them he gave each man changes of raiment; but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver, and five changes of raiment. And to his father he sent after this manner; ten asses laden with the good things of Egypt, and ten she asses laden with corn and bread and meat for his father by the way”* (Genesis 45:16–23). Our completion through Christ.

Now I want you to get this picture now. Get this picture. Here is Pharaoh, and he learns now that these are Joseph’s brothers. And Joseph brings his brothers to Pharaoh. And here’s something that will bless your heart. Not one time does Joseph mention to Pharaoh what his brothers did to him. Not one time does he mention their sin, their guilt, their crime. He just says, “Pharaoh, these are my brothers.” He’s not ashamed to call us brothers (Hebrews 2:11). And what they did to him is buried in the

grave of his forgetfulness, never to be mentioned again, never to be brought up again. He just simply presents them to the throne as his brethren. And do you know what happens at that particular time? All of the riches of the throne become theirs, and they start to participate in these throne gifts.

Now, listen to me now, and I tell you, it will be hard for you to sit down too if you listen. The resources of the throne were laid at their feet because of Joseph, who called them brethren. Did you get that? The resources of the throne were laid at their feet because of Joseph who had called them brethren; for Joseph's sake. No wonder Pharaoh could say, "Don't worry about your stuff." "All of the riches of Egypt are yours."

And I want to tell you that Jesus is not ashamed to call you brethren, and when Jesus takes you by the hand, not mentioning your sin, not mentioning your guilt, but when Jesus brings you to the Father in glory, you can claim with the Apostle Paul that, "*My God shall supply all your need according to your riches in glory by Christ Jesus*" (Philippians 4:19). And you can say what Paul says in the Book of Colossians: "*Ye are complete in him*" (Colossians 2:10)—in the Lord Jesus. See their completion through Joseph, which illustrates to me our completion in Christ. He gave them enough sufficiency to take care of every possible contingency until they were one more time before him. And when the Lord Jesus Christ saves us, He gives us all that we need to meet this journey of life until one day we are gathered at His blessed feet.

VII. Our Continuation for Christ

The last of these seven similarities that I want you to see is, not only our completion in Christ, but I want you to see our continuation for Christ. Now, take up where we left off in verse 24 of this chapter, and read with me here. In verse 24, we read, "*So he sent his brethren away, and they departed: and he said unto them, See that ye fall not out by the way*" (Genesis 45:24). Oh, listen! That's the message to you today. Weary pilgrim, are you about to quit? Listen. You've got all you need from heaven's throne, if you would just learn how to claim it. Don't fall out by the way. Listen to what he said. He just said, "Keep on keeping on, brother." "*See that ye fall not out by the way.*"

Now, what does this mean? Does it mean, "See to it that you don't get into an argument, that you don't have a falling out with one another?" Or does it mean, "Just see to it that you don't lay down on the job and quit"? I don't know which it means, so I'm going to preach it as meaning both: "Don't quit," and, "Don't get in a fuss with one another." "*See that ye fall not out by the way. And they went up out of Egypt, and came into the land of Canaan unto Jacob their father, and told him, saying, Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not*" (Genesis 45:24–26). Old Jacob, boy, it was hard to convince him. He just said, "Oh no! This is terrible! You had to bring Joseph up again, and I know you're

lying. He's not alive." And notice verse 27: *"And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them: and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived. And Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die"* (Genesis 45:27–28).

Now I want you to see what happened as a result of their continuation, for Joseph, as illustrating our continuation with Christ. Joseph gave them all they needed. He loaded them down with everything they ought to have—wagonloads full. And then he said, "Look. Don't fall out. You go do the job I've told you to do." And they get down there, and there's old Jacob, the old man. The door burst open. These boys run in. "Daddy, listen! Joseph is alive! Joseph is Prime Minister of Egypt! We sold him into slavery! Daddy, we're so sorry! He's forgiven us! He put his arms around our neck! He's hugged us! He's made provision for us! He wants us to come and live with him forever! He's prepared a place for us, and he wants us to be with him where he is!" (John 14:3).

But old cynical Jacob doesn't believe. There are two dogs guarding his house: pride and doubt. But these boys had something that overcame those two snarling dogs. You know what it was? They had wagons full of the riches of Egypt. And I want you to notice a verse. Look in verse 27: *"And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them: and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived"* (Genesis 45:27). They did not convince him with the words of Joseph; they convinced him with the wagons of Joseph.

Now, are you paying attention? Because I'm finished, but I don't want you to miss this. You know when this world is going to start believing the message that I preach? Do you know when your neighbor is going to start listening to your witness about the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you know when you're going to start bringing your children to Jesus Christ—and your unsaved husband? Friend, when you witness with more than words, when you've got a wagonload behind you of heaven's throne gifts to back up what you're saying. I'm tell you this, dear friend: When you are feasting on milk and honey, corn and wine, grapes and pomegranates, when you have heaven's gold and heaven's silver, and when God's blessings are yours, and when people see something about your life that cannot be explained other than the supernatural working of God, that somehow God is blessing your life, they are going to believe your testimony.

Have you got a wagonload when you go witnessing? Listen. He didn't believe their words, but when he saw those wagons, then he said, "I know you boys couldn't be doing this by yourself. I know there has to be something that I cannot explain. There's something supernatural here."

I believe, dear friend, this morning, and every morning when we go to church, we ought to load up the wagons, and the rest of the week we ought to be showing them off. Amen? I mean, when we go to the prayer closet, we ought to just go in and get a

wagonload of the grace of God. And then, when people hear us preach, or teach, or testify, they'll believe our words, because of our wagons. "Don't worry about your stuff," he says. "All of Egypt's riches are yours." And God says to you, friend, "Don't you worry about these other things. You just get from me what you need, and this world will believe." I am convinced that the greatest argument for Jesus Christ, and the greatest argument against Jesus Christ, is the life of a Christian, and it all depends on whether his wagons are full or empty.

Conclusion

Have you got a wagon full this morning? You say, "I sure have. Stop preaching." You got a wagon full this morning? I mean, have you gotten it from heaven? When you go out, is your face aglow with the noonday sun for the riches of Christ Jesus in you? When we start witnessing that way, there's many an old cynical Jacob who will chain the dogs and believe.

The Gospel According to Joseph, Part 2

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: October 15, 2000

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 45

“And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt.”

GENESIS 45:4

Outline

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Conclusion

Introduction

Be finding in your Bibles, God's Holy Word, Genesis chapter 45. We receive a lot of mail. Some mail is more unusual than other mail. Here's a letter I want you to listen to: "Dear Pastor Rogers, I had to write to let you know what effect your ministry has had on my life. Many times I sat and watched your program and thought what you said was stupid, how you expressed Christ was a joke. I laughed at your God by ignoring Him. He really wasn't there. I was a Satanist, as well as a part of a Nazi party movement. As bad as it seems, Christians were nothing more than lower life forms to myself and my friends. I didn't need your God. I sold my soul to the devil. I signed a pact with my own blood, and after doing so, I read the small print. If I tried to get out of the group, I could be killed. I remembered your prayer line and your church. I called the number. Someone prayed with me, and I received Christ. I got a Bible, and read and reread it. God saved me. Why would He do that—because I was so evil and hurt Him so badly? I had been

living together with my boyfriend. He saw the change in me also. He got saved. And we finally got married. We both love the Lord so much, because we see the love of the Lord through your church. Jesus can save anyone. He saved me. Thanks for your prayer line and your church and your TV ministry.” And she signs her name.

Now, folks, that’s God’s grace. That is amazing grace. But I want to say, that lady, saved by the grace of God, was saved just like a little child might be saved this morning, an eleven-year-old girl who might come and give her heart to Jesus. And it will take just as much of the grace of God to save that eleven-year-old child as it did this lady and her husband, her husband now, who got saved. What have we said so many times? *There are none so bad they cannot be saved, and none so good they need not be saved.* And God wants us saved so much that He’s given so many wonderful illustrations in the Word of God. And one of those illustrations is the life of Joseph.

Now what we’re studying today from the book of Genesis—listen to me—it happened twenty-five centuries ago, but it is just as fresh as fresh-baked bread for breakfast. I want you to listen now to what God says about salvation, because in this chapter we’re going to see a glorious and a wonderful illustration of salvation. God wants us saved so much that He gives us many, many illustrations, and the life of Joseph is a picture, a prophecy, a portrait, of Jesus, who is to come. What a confirmation, an affirmation, of the inspiration of the Word of God when we see these word pictures and portraits tucked away in the Old Testament!

As we’ve already told you, Joseph’s life could be put into four major categories: Joseph, the beloved son. He was his father’s beloved son, as Jesus is. And then Joseph, the suffering servant. Joseph was sent to his brethren. He was scorned by his brethren. He was shamed by his brethren. He suffered at the hands of his brethren. They cast him in a pit, as good as dead. Joseph, the suffering servant. Joseph, the exalted sovereign. Joseph is now taken from the pit, and from prison later on, and he is exalted. He becomes the prime minister of the most powerful nation on the face of the earth, and now he is the exalted sovereign, and Pharaoh says, “Wherever Joseph goes, you bow the knee to Joseph. Everything that I have is in Joseph’s hand.” (Genesis 41:41–44)

But now we’re going to come again and see Joseph, not only the beloved son, not only the suffering servant, not only the exalted sovereign, but Joseph, the seeking savior. We’re going to find out how Joseph sought and brought, forgave, restored, and fellowshiped with his brothers. And, as we see that, we’re going to see seven salvation similarities. And I want you to get all seven. And I want you to listen quickly. Listen in a hurry, because we don’t have a whole lot of time.

Here is Joseph now, and his indescribably wicked brothers—who have wronged him, who have sinned against him—are now standing before Joseph, the exalted sovereign.

Look, if you will, in Genesis 45, verse 1. Now here are the brothers. They don't know that Joseph is Joseph. He's dressed like an Egyptian. He's speaking the Egyptian language. He's on the throne. He's not the little boy, seventeen years old, that they'd thrown into a pit twenty-five years ago. The times have come and gone.

Joyce and I were looking this morning at our high school reunion catalog. Recently, Palm Beach High School had their fiftieth reunion, and fifty years ago I was a senior in high school. And, boy, those folks looked old! Good night! I said, "Joyce, do we look that way? Can that be? Why, look at Raymond. Look at Arnold." We began to look at those folks. It was amazing. The years change us, don't they? The years work on us.

*Beauty is skin deep;
Ugly goes all the way to the bone.*

*Beauty fades,
But ugly holds her own.*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

And the years had changed old Joseph. There's Joseph now on the throne. They can't recognize Joseph. They don't expect to see him where he is. But Joseph loves them, and Joseph wants to restore them, forgive them, fellowship with them, and commission them. Now, what a picture of our salvation!

All right, there are seven salvation similarities that I'd like you to see, and I'm going to call them principles.

I. The Principle of Compassion

The first is the principle of compassion—the principle of compassion. Read with me. And what is the principle of compassion? Here's the principle of compassion: God's love is greater than all our sin. Oh, that was worthy of a better amen. God's love is greater than all our sin, amen? Listen to these verses: "*Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren.*" Underscore that. "*And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard. And Joseph said unto his brethren,*"—listen to this, one of the greatest three words in all the Bible—"I am Joseph..."—now, folks, you're going to have to let your imagination begin to work a little bit. Can you imagine those three words? They look at him and he says—"I am Joseph: doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence." (Genesis 45:1–3) The word *troubled* here literally means "terrified."

Now in order for us to be saved, God must reveal Himself to us. "*There is none that seeketh after God...no, not one.*" (Romans 3:11–12) "*We love Him, because he first loved us.*" (1 John 4:19) And He reveals Himself to us. Now Joseph had been giving his

brothers a hard time. I mean, he acted roughly toward them. As a matter of fact, go back to Genesis 42, verse 7, and look at it: *“And Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them, but made himself strange unto them,”*—that is, he didn’t reveal himself to them—*“and spake roughly unto them; and he said unto them, Whence come ye? And they said, From the land of Canaan to buy food.”* (Genesis 42:7) Now he says, “No, you’re just spies. I know you’re spies.” And he’s speaking roughly to them, and he’s jerking them around. Well, why did he do that? Because he didn’t love them? No. Because he did love them.

In that same forty-second chapter, where we read, in verse 7, where he spoke roughly to them, go on down to verse 24, and look at it: *“And he turned himself about from them, and wept; and returned to them again.”* (Genesis 42:24) Over here, here he is, speaking roughly to his brothers and bringing them under conviction. Then he excuses himself and goes out, and he weeps and he cries. And then he goes back and speaks roughly to them.

Listen, friend. Learn this about God. God, in love, causes us problems. All the way back to the book of Genesis, what did God say to Adam and Eve after they sinned? *“Cursed is the ground for your sake”* (Genesis 3:17)—not for your punishment, but for your sake. The worst thing that could happen to hell-bound sinners would be to live a life of ease and no difficulty and no pain and no problem.

What was it that brought these boys to Egypt to begin with? They had a hunger. There was a famine in the land of Canaan. Did you know, if we never had any needs, we wouldn’t come to our Lord? Listen. God allows us to have heartaches and pain. If we only knew how much pain He has when He sees us have pain. There he was speaking roughly to them, and so overcome with emotion that he has to leave the room and literally weep—literally weep.

Are you having troubles? Are you having heartaches? Are you having difficulties? Are you having disappointments? Is there pain in your life? That is the silken cord that He is using to draw you to Himself. He loves you. No matter what the appearances may seem, I’m telling you that God loves you, and God’s love is greater than all of our sin.

What a time it was when he said, “Look, I am Joseph!” They didn’t know this gospel song, but I believe they could have sung, “Once I was blind, but now I see.” Joseph is weeping now tears of joy, because he’s able to make himself known to his brothers. And there’s joy in heaven when one sinner comes home, is there not?

All right now, that’s the first principle. You have it? It’s the principle of compassion. Say to yourself, especially if you’re not saved yet, “God loves me”—“God loves me.” *“God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”* (Romans 5:8) I can tell you without stutter, stammer, or apology, God loves you. I don’t care what you’ve done. There are some who think that God only loves some of the

people of this world. God loves them all. Red, yellow, black, and white, they're precious in His sight. The principle of compassion.

II. The Principle of Conviction

Second principle: the principle of conviction—the principle of conviction. No one is truly saved apart from the conviction of sin. Now, notice what he is doing with these boys. He brings them to a point where they are in great conviction. Notice verse 3: *“And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence.”* (Genesis 45:3) One translation gives it, “They were terrified.” And well they might be. Another said, “They were afraid.” Another translation that I read said, “They were stunned.” Well, why shouldn't they be? Joseph was the one that they had treated so dreadfully, so hatefully, so hellishly, so awfully. They had misused, abused, refused Joseph. And now he is the one with absolute authority, the one who could put them to death if he wished. And they're in his hands. And now they tremble at his presence.

Do you know what's missing in the average church today? The fear of God—the fear of God. The Bible says, *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.”* (Psalms 111:10; Proverbs 9:10) And I want to tell you that it is my conviction, and I believe the Bible teaches that no one has ever been saved who has not first been convicted of his lost estate before God. *“Christ Jesus came to the world to save sinners.”* (1 Timothy 1:15) You're never saved unless you've seen yourself as a hell-deserving sinner.

Jesus gave a parable about a man who stood and prayed by himself, and said, “Lord, I thank you that I am not as other men are.” But then, He said, there was another man, a tax collector was there, who would not even so much as lift his eyes to heaven, but fell upon his knees, and smote himself about the breast, and said, *“God be merciful to me a sinner.”* And in the Greek language, he literally said, “God be merciful to me, the sinner.” I mean, “I am the one. I am a sinner.” And Jesus said, concerning that man who failed to admit his own need because of his lostness, Jesus said, “That man went home not saved. He went home dignified. The other man went home justified.” (Luke 18:9–14)

Have you ever said, *“God be merciful to me a sinner”*? Have you ever seen yourself under the conviction of sin? Now, folks, you can admit that you're wrong, and never really be convicted of sin. A court may convict me of crimes, conscience may convict me of wrongdoing, but only the Holy Spirit of God can truly convict of sin. And so many people join churches like they join a country club, and like they're doing God a wild favor. They have never seen themselves as sinners in the sight of a righteous and holy God.

What is the principle, the salvation principle, that we have here? It's the principle of conviction—conviction. You must be convicted of sin in order to be saved.

III. The Principle of Conversion

Now, here's the third principle. It's the principle of conversion. First, His compassion causes Him to love you even if it seems He's treating you roughly. This is meant to bring you to conviction of sin. And then the principle of conversion. And what is the principle of conversion? In order to be saved, we must come to Him, yielding to His Lordship. Now, begin now in verse 4: *"And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life. For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance."* That is, "God sent me to be a savior." *"So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh,"*—Pharaoh, young people, was the king—*"and the lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt."* (Genesis 45:4–8)

Now this is the principle of conversion. How are we saved? Well, you know Ephesians 2:8, 9, and 10: *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."* (Ephesians 2:8–10) Now, what does that verse tell us? First of all, the Bible tells us that it is by—are you listening?—by grace. Now, what is Joseph saying to his brothers? "Look, all of this is the grace of God. You sold me into slavery, and as far as you were concerned, I was as good as dead. But God had a purpose. While we were sinners, God loved us. God loved you boys so much, even while you were doing all of this wickedness, God was working behind the scenes to make me a savior. It is sheer grace. God did it." And he is now emphasizing the grace of God. He is not minimizing their sin; he is emphasizing God's grace.

Calvary was the greatest tragedy in man's dealings with God, but God's greatest triumph in God's dealings with man. When they misused and abused Joseph, that was wickedness, but over it all and behind it all was God working it all together for His glory. Calvary, the greatest tragedy this world has ever known, was God's greatest victory, when Jesus, God the mighty Maker, died for man, the creature.

Now, listen to me. What is the principle of conversion? It is by grace through faith. Look at verse 4. And he says, "Come to me." Now at that moment they've got a decision to make. Here he is, the exalted sovereign. Here he is, saying, "Look, it's all a part of God's plan. My suffering is for your benefit and your welfare. God meant it for good. God loves you. Now, come—come." Here they are. The Bible says, in that verse, "And they came to him." They took that step of faith. It's almost as if Joseph said, "Come unto

me,” and they said, “Just as I am without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me, O Lamb of God, I come to thee; I come.” It is by grace through faith.

And now Joseph says, “All right, now that you’ve come, I want you to know that I have a plan for you.” It is unto good works. Look in verses 6 and 7 here when he says, in this wonderful chapter here, *“For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest.”* Joseph was the only one who really knew the future. *“And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me”—*now, watch this—*“a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.”* (Genesis 45:6–8) “Brothers, you now are under new management. I am the lord of all of Egypt, and it is all made possible because of my exaltation.”

Now, if you’re not a Christian today, let me tell you about Jesus. Jesus is not now a baby in a manger, nor is Jesus a man nailed to a cross. He is the exalted King of kings and Lord of lords. And how do you come to Him? You come to Him, because it is by grace. You come through faith. You come unto good works, to bow the knee, to serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

IV. The Principle of Confession

Now, here’s the next principle, and this is principle number four of these seven salvation principles that you’re going to find tucked away here. It is the principle of confession—confession. First of all, His compassion. Secondly, our conviction. Thirdly, our conversion. And now, our confession. Once we give our hearts to our Lord, then it’s our job to confess Him openly and publicly. Begin now in verse 9—here’s what Joseph says to his brothers: *“Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not: and thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children’s children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast: and there will I nourish thee; for yet there are five years of famine; lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty. And, behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you. And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen; and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither.”* (Genesis 45:9–13)

Now, what is the lesson here? Well, Joseph said, “Look, I have forgiven you, and I have restored you. Now there are others that I want to bring to my glory, and I am commissioning you now, and I am commanding you now that you are to confess me to them.” You see, in verse 4, he says, “Come,” but now, look in verse 9. In verse 9, he says, “Go.” May I tell you that all of the gospel can be summed up in these two phrases:

“Come unto me” (Matthew 11:28); “Go ye into all the world.” (Mark 16:15) That’s it. “Come,” he says—“Come to me.” They came. He said, “All right now, go and tell others.” What right do we have to call ourselves children of God if we fail to obey Him? Our Lord has given us a Great Commission. We’re to go into all the world and share the Lord Jesus Christ. Did you know you can’t spell the word *gospel* without beginning *g-o*?

A little boy had a toy car he got at Christmas. It wouldn’t work. His dad said, “What’s wrong with it?” He said, “I think the *go* is broke.” I think that’s what’s wrong with the church. Listen. We’re to go—we’re to go. And to say that all Christians are missionaries is just another way of saying all Christians are Christians.

What were they to share? What was the message they were to share? Here’s what the message was. Number one: We once rejected Him. Number two: God has raised Him up on high. Number three: He has a name that is above every name. Number four: The world is now at His feet. Number five: He is the fairest of ten thousand. Number six: He has forgiven all of our sins. Number seven: He wants us to be with Him and to share His glory. That’s what they were to tell about Joseph, and that’s what we’re to tell about Jesus.

V. The Principle of Communion

Now, here’s the next salvation principle, and it’s the principle of communion. And what is the principle of communion? You have been redeemed, and you have been forgiven, and you have been commissioned to fellowship with your King. Look in verses 14 and 15 now of this chapter: “*And he fell upon his brother Benjamin’s neck, and wept;*”—it reminds you so much of the father and the prodigal son, doesn’t it?—“*and Benjamin wept upon his neck. Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him.*” (Genesis 45:14–15)

Can you imagine this scene? I mean, look, folks. Use your imagination. This is not a fairy tale. Here’s Joseph. They’re terrified. He said, “*I am Joseph.*” They are terrified. He says, “Come on; come to me,” and they come, and he forgives them. And he says, “Look, it’s all by the grace of God. God meant it for your good. God sent me to be your deliverer. Come to me. Now, go tell others what you’ve seen, what you’ve heard, that I am risen, I am reigning, I am rich. Go tell the message.” And then he says, “Come. Come here, Benjamin. Benjamin, I love you. Come here, Judah. Judah, I love you, I love you, Judah.” Judah says, “I love you, Joseph.” Then, Joseph, “I love you,” and he’s hugging them. And then it says he talked with them. Can you imagine that? Would you like to have a tape recording of that? He talked with them. What did they talk about? Who knows? But I’ll tell you one thing: God has saved you. Jesus loves you that He might hug you, weep with you, and talk with you. Oh, what a fellowship!

You know, Jim, you served on the hymnal committee, helping pick out songs for a

new hymnal. And, you know, there's been that classic argument. There's one hymn that people say, "Well, we don't want that in there. It's full of maudlin sentimentality."

*I come to the garden alone
While the dew is still on the roses
And the voice I hear falling on my ear
The Son of God discloses.*

*And He walks with me, and He talks with me,
And He tells me I am His own.*

—C. AUSTIN MILES

And they say, "Oh, that's just sentimentality." No. That's one of the greatest songs in all the hymnal.

*And He walks with me, and He talks with me,
And He tells me I am His own.*

And He wants to hear you talk with Him. And He's interested in the little things as well as the big things.

When we call our son, serving overseas as a missionary in Spain, we're not just talking about how we're going to reach Spain with the gospel. We want to know what he had for lunch today, what's happening—the little things. You say, "Well, I don't want to bother God with the little things." Oh, tell me something you think is big to God. Your big things are just like that. No! He loves you, and He wants fellowship with you. And why has He redeemed you? He wants more than servants. He wants you to know Him and love Him and fellowship with Him. There's the principle of communion.

VI. The Principle of Compensation

Now, here's the next principle—and it's the principle of compensation. This is an amazing principle. What is the principle of compensation? God saves us entirely by grace, and then enriches us, supplies us for service. Notice now, beginning in verse 16: "*And the fame [of Joseph] was heard in Pharaoh's house, saying, Joseph's brethren are come: and it pleased Pharaoh well, and his servants. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Say unto thy brethren, This do ye;*"—watch this—"lade"—boys and girls, that means "load"—"*your beasts, and go, get you unto the land of Canaan; and take your father and your households, and come unto me: and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land. Now thou art commanded, this do ye: take you wagons out of the land of Egypt for your little ones, and for your wives, and bring your father, and come.*" Now, watch this: "*Also regard not your stuff;*"—that's one of my favorite things in this whole thing. I read it in another translation and it says, "your merchandise," or, "your possessions," but I like the word *stuff*. "Don't worry about your

stuff”—*“for the good of all the land of Egypt is yours. And the children of Israel did so: and Joseph gave them wagons, according to the commandment of Pharaoh, and gave them provision for the way”*—underscore that. *“To all of them he gave each man changes of raiment; but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver, and five changes of raiment. And to his father he sent after this manner; ten asses laden with the good things of Egypt, and ten she asses laden with the corn and bread and meat for his father by the way.”* (Genesis 45:16–24)

Now he sends them out. He never mentions their guilt at all. It’s forgotten. It is blotted out. He now calls them brothers. He introduces them to Pharaoh. He says, “King, I want you to meet my brothers.” When I was reading this, I thought of a verse, and I jotted it down—Hebrews 2, verse 11: *“For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.”* (Hebrews 2:11) He’s not ashamed to call me His brother, to present me before the throne, and say, “Holy Father, this is Adrian, my brother.” Oh, glory to God! “This is Adrian, my brother.” He’s not ashamed to call us brothers.

And the resources of the throne of the mightiest nation on the face of the earth are laid at their feet. And if they need anything, all they have to do is ask in the name of Joseph and it will be given to them. What does that say to those of us who are saved? The Bible says, *“The same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.”* (Romans 10:12) And he says, “Look, guys, I’m sending you out. I’ve commissioned you. Now, don’t worry about your stuff.” When are we going to learn that? When are we going to learn? And I hope we’ll learn it in this love offering. Don’t worry about your stuff. *“Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”* (Matthew 6:33) Philippians 4:19: *“My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”* (Philippians 4:19) Colossians 2, verse 10: *“And ye are complete in him.”* (Colossians 2:10)

A preacher boy told me one time, he said, “I believe God’s called me to preach.” He said, “I need to go to school, but I don’t have the money.” I said, “Oh.” I said, “Well, if I could find a very rich person who would underwrite you, would you go?” Boy, his eyes lit up. He said, “Would I!” I said, “Well, you have the One who owns the world, Almighty God.”

Listen. Do you think God wants you to do something, and God says, “I just can’t afford it”? No. Behind any command of God is the omnipotent power of God and the infinite resources of God to carry it out. There’s the principle of compensation. He says, “You go, and I’m with you. Whatever you need to get the job done, I will supply.”

VII. The Principle of Communication

Now, here’s the last and final thing. I wish I had more time. It’s the principle of

communication—the principle of communication. Begin now in chapter 45 and verse 24: “So he sent his brethren away, and they departed: and he said unto them, See that ye fall not out by the way.” That is, “Don’t have an argument on the way.” And he must have known those boys. “And they went up out of Egypt, and came into the land of Canaan unto Jacob their father, and told him, saying, Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt.” Can you imagine old Jacob hearing this message? “And Jacob’s heart fainted, for he believed them not...”—now they’re trying to communicate the message—“he believed them not. And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them: and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived: and Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die.” (Genesis 45:24–28)

What is the principle of communication? How do we communicate?

A. By Our Love

First of all, by our love. “See to it that you don’t fall out by the way. Don’t get in some silly argument.” “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” (John 13:35) Listen, folks. *The devil had rather start a church fuss than sell a barrel of whiskey any day*—did you know that? One of the greatest means that we have to convince the Jacobs of this world is by our love.

B. By Our Lips

And then, not only by our love, but by our lips. They told him the words of Joseph. We are to take the message. If you want people to believe, you’ve got to give them something to believe.

C. By Our Lives

By our love. By our lips. But, oh, here’s the main thing: by our lives. Jacob didn’t believe. It was too much to take in. But then he looked up there and he saw these wagons. Now these were paupers that went away. These were boys in famine. Good night! They’ve got all these wagonloads of stuff that Joseph had sent. And when he saw that, he said, “I know these boys didn’t do that by themselves.” This is a true story.

You see, listen. By our love, by our lips, and by our life. Do you know what’s going to convince this world? When they see us united, with wagonloads of God’s grace—I mean, with wagonloads of God’s grace—when they see something in us that they cannot explain apart from the good hand of God upon us. I long for that.

Conclusion

And I’ll tell you, these are seven salvation principles. And let’s go back to the first one again. God loves you. The same God that saved that woman that wrote that letter is the God that will save you today. I don’t care what you’ve done. You probably haven’t been

a Satanist. You probably haven't signed a pact with the devil in your own blood. But God will save you. You may be just a child today—a boy or a girl: God will save you. You may be on this football team: God will save you. You may be a businessman: God will save you. You may be a young married couple: you need Jesus in your family.

The Gospel According to Joseph

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: August 11, 1996

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 45:1–15

“And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.”

GENESIS 45:7

Outline

Introduction

- I. Our Confrontation with Christ
- II. Our Conviction by Christ
- III. Our Conversion to Christ
- IV. Our Commission from Christ
- V. Our Communion in Christ
- VI. Our Completion in Christ
- VII. Our Continuation for Christ

Conclusion

Introduction

Now, be finding in God’s Word the Book of Genesis, the first book in the Bible, and fast-forward to chapter 45, if you will. And we’re going to look tonight at “The Gospel According to Joseph.”

Now, you know, all of the Bible is about Jesus. Somewhere standing in the shadows, you’ll find Jesus. God wants us to be saved, so much that He tucks away, by illustration, in the Old Testament, salvation stories, which, rightly interpreted and rightly understood, are a great, great blessing. They portend, prophesy, and portray the Lord Jesus Christ. And one is in the life of a young man named Joseph, whom I believe, beyond the shadow of any doubt, was a type, a picture, of the Lord Jesus Christ. And in his life we find out how God is reaching out to us in Christ. Remember that Jesus said that the Old Testament testified of Him (John 5:39).

Now before we begin to read the scripture tonight in Genesis chapter 45, let me just review with you quickly the life of Joseph. You will remember that Joseph was the beloved son of his father. He was the one that had the coat of many colors that spoke of the variegated splendor of his character. And it was literally a coat that royalty would wear. And his brothers, however, conspired against him. They hated him. They put him

in a pit and then sold him as a slave. He went to Egypt. And they went back home and told their father Jacob that Joseph had been killed. And they took a bloody garment that had the blood of an animal on it, and they gave it to the dad, and said, "This is all that's left of Joseph's clothing. Here's the blood. It's the blood of your son." So, as far as Jacob knew, his son Joseph was dead. But his son Joseph had been sold to a caravan, an Ishmaelite caravan, going to Egypt.

And eventually Joseph ended up on the slave market. He became a slave of a man named Potiphar. He was accused, falsely accused, of rape. He was thrown into prison, languished in prison. He was taken out of prison by the providence of God, and by a miracle of God's providence ascended to the second place in all of Egypt. He was second to Pharaoh on the throne. He was really what you would call today the prime minister of Egypt. And there was a famine in the land of Canaan, where Joseph's brothers, eleven brothers, lived, and where his daddy, Jacob, was. And because of Joseph's foresight there was much grain and much provision in Egypt. And so Joseph's brothers have come to Egypt to find grain. So far as they know, their brother that they sold into slavery may as well be dead. They knew not what had happened to him. They had no way of knowing whatsoever that he had become the prime minister of Egypt, second on the throne. And they have to appear before Joseph in order to get this grain.

Now Joseph, knowing that they are his brothers, but they not knowing that Joseph was their brother, Joseph is wanting to reach out to them to forgive them and restore them. Now, as a picture, he pictures the Lord Jesus reaching out to us to receive us to Himself, though we're the ones who crucified Him. We're the ones who turned our backs on Him. In love, the Lord Jesus is reaching out to us.

Now I say all of that to set the stage for the scripture that we're going to read tonight, because time would forbid us to give the whole story. So we're going to jump in to the middle of the story, and what is happening is this: that Joseph's brothers now are in the land of Egypt. Joseph is the prime minister of Egypt. And he is about to reveal himself to his brothers. Now as you see this, you're going to see how the Lord Jesus Christ has revealed Himself to us, and what He has done for each of us.

Now I don't know about you, and I don't know how you enjoy studying the Bible, but I can tell you this kind of a Bible study really turns me on. I get very, very excited about finding pictures of the Lord Jesus in the Old Testament. I get very, very excited about seeing how God's Word is so marvelously, wonderfully, put together by divine inspiration. And when I find things like this in the Bible, I say, "This book could not have been written by happenstance." It's a great confirmation of inspiration, but beyond that, a great chance for us to understand and love the Lord Jesus more.

So you see Joseph as he pictures the Lord Jesus. He was despised and rejected. And then he was exalted and given a place of rule and authority. Then he forgives and

restores his brothers. And by doing this he becomes a picture of Jesus. And there are about four steps in Joseph's life. You see Joseph as the beloved son. You see him as the rejected servant. You see him as the exalted sovereign. And you see him as the seeking savior.

Now, tonight, we're going to see him as the seeking savior. Genesis chapter 45, verses 1 to 3: *"Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. And he"—that is, Joseph—"wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard. And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence"* (Genesis 45:1–3).

I. Our Confrontation with Christ

Now, here's the first thing I want you to seek. And there are about five steps here, and I want you to look at this. And we're going to go right down this chapter, and I know that you're going to be blessed. In our salvation experience, first of all, there came that confrontation with Christ. Here Joseph now is confronting his brethren. And you see him, as his brothers stand in front of him: he is weeping; he is crying. But he has already cried in private before he ever cried in public. Just go back, if you will, in chapter 42 and verse 7. Look, if you will: *"And Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them, but made himself strange unto them,"*—that is, he disguised himself—*"and spake roughly unto them"* (Genesis 42:7).

Now, why did he speak roughly to them? Why was he seemingly cruel to them? Why was he causing them heartache? Why was he causing them trouble? Did you know that it's trouble and heartache that brings us to the Lord Jesus Christ? And when we have trouble, that doesn't mean that He doesn't love us. It may indeed mean that He does love us and wants to do something in our heart, because go on to chapter 42, verse 23: *"And they knew not that Joseph understood them; for he spake unto them by an interpreter."* Joseph knew what they were saying, but they didn't understand what Joseph was saying. They didn't understand that Joseph understood their language. And now, notice in verse 24: *"And he turned himself about from them, and wept; and returned to them again, and communed with them, and took from them Simeon, and bound him before their eyes"* (Genesis 42:23–24).

Now, here's the picture. He's speaking to them roughly, strongly, condemningly. They don't even know who he is. All they know is he's like a despot upon a throne. They're afraid of him. Now he understands them. But they don't understand that he understands them. He knows all about them. He understands their language. They don't know that he does, just as the Lord Jesus knows all about you. And while it seems like

he's causing them pain, he is so full of emotion that he has to turn aside, go off to a private place, put his face in his hands and weep, because these were the brothers that sold him into slavery. They were the ones that hated him, despised him, rejected him, lied on him, and yet Joseph's heart is so full of compassion that he is weeping privately over them.

Now, let me say this about God. Sometimes it may seem to you that God is hard. Sometimes it may seem to you that God is rough. But little do we realize how much pain He is suffering when He brings us pain in order to bring us to Him. These men had a need, and it was engineered that they would have a need, that they might come. And your needs and your hungers are God's way of bringing you to Himself.

So the very first thing is, you see Joseph's confrontation with his brothers. And all of us have been confronted by the Lord. The Lord speaks to us in pain. He speaks to us in hunger. It may seem sometimes trouble and heartache and all of these things come to us. But they are gifts of our sovereign God. And while they may break our heart, they have already broken His heart.

II. Our Conviction by Christ

Now, here's the second thing I want you to see. First of all, confrontation with Christ. Secondly, conviction by Christ. Look, if you will, in verse 3: "*And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph...*"—now, can you imagine having sold him into slavery and now find out that he is the prime minister in Egypt, and they're standing before him, and their life is in his hands? He could snuff them out. He could put them to death if he wanted to. And he said—"*I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence*" (Genesis 45:3). The word *troubled* may be translated, they were "terrified." They are terror-stricken. They're under conviction. He is now armed with absolute power, and they are worthy of judgment.

Nobody has ever been saved until they have seen, first of all, the sovereignty of God and that that person deserves judgment, in my estimation. There is no conversion without conviction. And I think one of the things that are wrong in many churches today is people come forward to join churches like they're doing God a wild favor, but they have never been terrified by their sin and realize that our sin nailed Jesus to the cross. Now I don't think anybody is ever been saved until, first of all, he has seen himself as a hell-deserving sinner.

And, by the way, if you have little children, and you wonder, are those children ready to be saved, I don't think it's good to berate children and say, "You're a no good, unworthy sinner," but the time will come when, by Bible teaching, they will come under a conviction of sin, and when they come under a conviction of sin, then they're going to be ready for a Savior. Don't just simply ask a little child, "Do believe in Jesus?" or "Do you

trust Jesus?” or “Do you love Jesus?” A little child will believe whatever you tell them to believe. A little child will trust whatever you tell the child to trust. A little child will love Jesus just like he would love Bambi. That’s not the point. Has that child seen himself a sinner in the sight of a righteous and a holy God? If he or she has, then that child is ready for a Savior.

First of all, there was a confrontation with Joseph. Then, there was a conviction by Joseph, just as we have a confrontation with Christ. He brings us to Him, sometimes by our hungers, sometimes by our needs, sometimes by dealing roughly with us; but by whatever means, He brings us to Him. And then He reveals Himself to us, and He says, “I am Jesus.” And when we realize He’s the One we’ve sinned against, we ought to be terrified too, and we cry out, “God, be merciful to me.”

III. Our Conversion to Christ

Here’s the third thing: first, confrontation; secondly, conviction; thirdly, conversion. Begin to read now in verse 4: *“And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me...”*—he gives them an invitation. *“Whosoever will may come”—“Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life. For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest.”* That is, when the corn will mature and there will be a harvest. *“And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt”* (Genesis 45:4–8).

Here he gives them an invitation. They’re terrified. But he reaches out his hands in love, and he says, “Come unto me.” He doesn’t minimize their sin, but what he does is maximize the grace of God. And what he says to them is, “Listen. This was God’s plan. Even though you’re guilty, God sent me here.” And even though we’re guilty of nailing Jesus to the cross, *“God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son”* (John 3:16). And the Lord Jesus was crucified in the heart and mind of God. And when man did his worst, God was doing His best. Calvary was the world’s greatest tragedy, so far as man’s dealing with God. And yet Calvary, at the same time, was the greatest triumph, so far as God is dealing with man. And so Joseph said, “You sold me into slavery; you’re guilty. But God overruled.”

Now, notice what happens. They are now under new management. Look, if you will, in verses 6 and 7. He begins to tell them about the future. He says, “There are going to be yet five years in which there will be no food.” He’s the only one that knows the future.

They don't know the future. But he's also told them, in verse 7, that he will make a deliverance for them and he will make a provision for them (Genesis 45:6–7). Now, why is this possible? Why is the one who is now forgiving them and receiving them able to provide for them? Why does he know the future? And how is he able to do all of this? Because he has been exalted. Notice in verse 8: *“So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt”* (Genesis 45:8).

Jesus is, right now, exalted at the right hand of the Father. And the reason that the Lord Jesus is able to say to me, “Adrian, come unto me; Adrian, I want you to know that the future is in my hands; Adrian, I want you to know that I have made a provision for you and I will take care of you,” is because He is now exalted, risen, at the right hand of the Majesty on high. He is not a little baby in the arms of Mary. He is not a man nailed to the cross. He is the risen ascended Lord, who has ascended the high hills of glory.

IV. Our Commission from Christ

So what do you see? First of all, you see confrontation with Christ. Secondly, conviction by Christ. Thirdly, conversion to Christ: “Come unto me. Put yourself under my control.” And then, there comes a commission from Christ. Look, if you will, in verse 9: *“Haste ye, and go up to my father”* (Genesis 45:9). Now, look. In verse 4, he says, *“Come near to me,”* and in verse 9, he says, *“Go up.”* Verse 4 says, *“Come”*; verse 9 says, *“Go.”* All of the Bible can be summed up in those two words: *come* to Jesus, and *go* into all of the world. And that's what we are to do. Once we get saved, we're to go tell others. Notice: *“Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not: and thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast: and there will I nourish thee; for yet there are five years of famine; lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty. And, behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you. And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen; and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither”* (Genesis 45:9–13).

Now what he does now is make missionaries of them. What he does now, he says, “First of all, come to me. I've made provision for you. Now I want you to go to my father. I want you to go to the rest of my family, and I want you to bring them. I want you to tell them. Give them this message. Tell them that I was once rejected. Tell them that you thought I was dead. But I'm not dead. I am alive. I have ascended on high. I have been given a name of majesty. The world is at my feet. I have forgiven your sin. I want you to come and live with me and share my glory.” That's what these brothers were to go back

and tell. That's the commission from Christ.

V. Our Communion in Christ

Now, here's the next thing I want you to notice, is our communion in Christ. Look, if you will now, in verses 14 and 15: *"And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck. Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him"* (Genesis 45:14–15). Can you see this? They're hugging each other. They're crying. There are tears of joy. Joseph has more than pardoned them. He is loving them. He's having fellowship with them. He is talking with them.

Did you know that that's the great privilege of being saved?—not merely having our sins forgiven, not merely having provision, not merely having a future, not merely having a missionary charge, but to have that fellowship with the Lord Jesus. Jesus is real to me. And I can talk with him, and I do talk with him. He's as real to me as these men on this platform. He is as real to me as my wife. He is a dear friend. And the great privilege I have is the privilege that Joseph had and they had with Joseph, and that was to talk one with another. Did you know that God wants you to talk with Him? Did you know that you meet a need in the heart of God? God is a God of love, and what good is love if there's not someone to love and someone to love back? And that's why God created us, and that's why God made us.

God didn't make you to serve Him. If He wanted servants, He could get angels. They do a lot better job. God made us as individuals that He could love and that He could talk with and share with. I hope you talk with God. Can you imagine how many things they talked about? And Joseph is saying, "Well, what about thus and such? What happened here? And what happened there?" And they're talking about little details. Remember now that they're brothers. They've been separated for a long time. They have so much to talk about.

Joyce and I will call our son David in Spain. We'll talk with David. We'll talk with Kelly. We'll talk with little Jonathan, get him on the phone. Now, folks, it's enough to put me in the poorhouse just talking on the phone to David. But it's worth it. And we like to hear, not just the big things; the small things, the incidental things.

Sometimes you might get the idea that God doesn't want to hear from you about small things. But He does, because He loves you. And you say, "I won't bother God with the little things." Do you think you're a bother to Him? Do you think our son is a bother to us when we share little things together? No. That's the joy that He loves us enough to share those small things as well as the big things. And, by the way, can you think of anything that's really big to God? He's God. There's nothing really big to Him. And I love that song that we sing about coming to the garden:

*And He walks with me, and He talks with me,
And He tells me I am His own.*

—C. AUSTIN MILES

VI. Our Completion in Christ

Confrontation. Conviction. Conversion. Commission. Communion. And now, notice this next thing: completion. Notice, beginning in verse 16: *“And the fame thereof was heard in Pharaoh’s house, saying, Joseph’s brethren are come: and it pleased Pharaoh well, and his servants”* Pharaoh, the king, was so thrilled that Joseph’s brothers had come and they were having this fellowship. *“And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Say unto thy brethren, This do ye; lade your beasts,”*—that is, burden down your beasts—*“and go, get you unto the land of Canaan; and take your father and your households, and come unto me: and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land. Now thou art commanded, this do ye; take you wagons out of the land of Egypt for your little ones, and for your wives, and bring your father, and come. Also regard not your stuff; for the good of all the land of Egypt is your’s. And the children of Israel did so: and Joseph gave them wagons, according to the commandment of Pharaoh, and gave them provision for the way. To all of them he gave each man changes of raiment; but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver, and five changes of raiment.”* Does God have favorites? No, but He does have intimates. *“And to his father he sent after this manner; ten asses laden with the good things of Egypt, and ten she asses laden with corn and bread and meat for his father by the way”* (Genesis 45:16–23).

Now, what is this? This speaks of all that we have in the Lord Jesus. When Joseph introduces his brothers to Pharaoh, he makes no mention of their guilt. It was forgotten. It was blotted out. It was buried in the grave of his forgetfulness. And he takes his brothers and he presents them to the king as his brothers.

Did you know that’s what Jesus has done with me and that’s what Jesus has done with you? He presents us to God the Father as His brothers and His sisters. And when we are presented to God the Father as the brothers of heaven’s prime minister, then all of the resources are committed to us. Did you know that God has committed all of the resources of heaven to the Church? Now, why? For Jesus’ sake.

And notice, in verse 20, Pharaoh, says, “Look. I want you to go. I want you to go and serve me. I want you to go get your loved ones and bring them in.” And he said, “I’m just going to load you down with riches. Anything you need, you can have it.” Now, notice in verse 20—and he says, *“Regard not your stuff...”*—I had that underlined—*“regard not your stuff; for the good of all the land of Egypt is your’s”* (Genesis 45:20). That’s an incredible statement. He says, “I’ve got a job for you to do. And Joseph has said you’re his brothers. And if you’re his brothers, and Joseph is the prime minister of Egypt, then

anything you need, it's all yours. So go and do this job, and don't worry about your stuff."

I can remember when Joyce and I got out of seminary and I was called to a little church in Fort Pierce, Florida. We'd only been there a few weeks. And it was Mother's Day, and, as many of you know, on Mother's Day we lost a precious son. Well, we haven't lost him. We know where he is. He's in heaven. But our little son Philip stepped into heaven, one of those sudden crib deaths. And in going through school, Joyce and I were married through seven years of school. We got married after the first year in college, and I was working my way through school, and did many, many things to get through school, and a lot of different jobs. And it really wasn't easy. And we didn't have any extra money. We lived hand to mouth. We lived from God's hand to our mouth. We never missed a meal. God was faithful. We got out of school not owing anybody any money. We started our family on purpose. Joyce stayed home and took care of the babies, and I went to school, pastored little churches, did jobs, all kinds of jobs, in order to get through school. But I wore second-hand clothes, and people would give me suits. And we had a few sticks of wood you might call furniture. And we didn't have much. We had one another. We had Jesus. Really, we were wealthy; we had a lot, if you think about it that way.

But when we went to this little church in Fort Pierce, Florida, for the first time we were able to buy some furniture. It really wasn't expensive furniture. As a matter of fact, it was inexpensive furniture. But it was new—the first new furniture we'd ever bought, because when we got married, we went off on our honeymoon with about fifty dollars cash. That was it. And from then on, it was just hand to mouth. But we bought these little pieces of furniture: a little end table; bought a little couch, a little Formica top on the end table, and some things. I can see it now. And I was grateful to have those little pieces of furniture and proud to put them in that little parlor where we were living. And we'd not done that but just a few days, been in that little house right next to that church, and on that Sunday, on Mother's Day, our little Philip, just a few months old, died and went to heaven.

Now I've told you many times about that experience, but I'll tell you one thing that happened in that whole thing. I remember going into that living room, like it was yesterday, and looking at that furniture. And, folks, I want to tell you, it wasn't trash; it was less than trash. It was of absolutely no value. Nor was anything material. It made no difference. I thought, "How absolutely vapid is any so-called material possession!" And when I thought about the issues of life and death, somehow God spoke to me and I think spoke to Joyce at the same time. And we made a promise one to another that we would never own anything. We hold the title to it, but we wouldn't own it. It's God's. And if God wanted it, He could have it. And we made up our mind that we would never get

upset over the loss of anything material—never. I think we've kept that. Maybe we've had to renew that promise once or twice. But God has blessed us.

But God spoke to me, and He said to me somehow through that experience—I don't know exactly how God said that to me, but He said the same thing that Pharaoh said to the brothers of Joseph—"Don't worry about your stuff"—"Don't worry about your stuff. All the wealth of Egypt is yours. You're mine. Joseph calls you his brothers. Don't worry about your stuff." And, folks, I want to tell you, I've tried to practice that through my life, and God has given me some stuff, and I'm grateful for the stuff, but it's stuff. That's all it is: just stuff. It's just premature junk. And all of the resources of heaven are ours. *"Also regard not your stuff; for all the good of the land of Egypt is your's"* (Genesis 45:20).

And so that's our completion in Christ. Let me give you some Scripture that deals with that. Colossians 2, verse 10: *"And ye are complete in him"* (Colossians 2:10). Philippians 4, verse 19, *"But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 4:19). And I can tell you after four decades in the ministry that God has proven that verse to be true to me. Joyce and I have given. We have tried to tithe, and go beyond the tithe, and give beyond, over and above. And yet God has blessed. He continues to bless. And I thank Him for it. And I praise Him for it. We are complete in the Lord Jesus.

VII. Our Continuation for Christ

Now, here's the last thing I want you to see as we see this parallel between Joseph and his calling his brothers to himself and Jesus and His calling us to Himself. Notice not only our completion in Christ, but our continuation for Christ. Notice verse 24 now: *"So he"*—that is, Joseph—*"sent his brethren away, and they departed: and he said unto them, See that ye fall not out by the way. And they went up out of Egypt, and came into the land of Canaan unto Jacob their father, and told him, saying, Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not"* (Genesis 45:24–26). Can you imagine thinking all of this time that Joseph is dead, having seen that bloody coat of many colors? And now his brothers have come back and say, "Listen. Joseph is not dead. He's alive. He has ascended to the throne. He has made ample provision for us. He wants us to come and live with Him."

That's what all of us preach about the Lord Jesus Christ. He's not dead; He's alive. He is risen. He has ascended to the throne. He's made provision for us. And He wants us to come and live with Him. That's the gospel message. But Jacob didn't believe it. He did not believe it. But now, notice how he got convinced. And verse 27: *"And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them:"*—evidently, still not believing, but now, watch this—*"and when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived: and Israel"*—that's another word for

Jacob—“said, *It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die*” (Genesis 45:27–28).

Now it was not the brother’s words that convicted old Jacob; it was Joseph’s wagons. Do you know what’s going to convict this world? I can preach until I’m blue in the face, but you know what will convict our neighbors? When they see the riches of Jesus in our lives. There are Joseph’s wagons. I mean, they came back with this story about Joseph not being dead but alive, and Jacob said, “I don’t believe that.” And they said, “Look at all this stuff. Look at these wagons. Look at these riches. That came from Joseph.”

Do you know what I want to do? I want to live a lifestyle that you cannot explain apart from Jesus. Somebody will have to say, “Well, I must believe what he says, because look what he has.” I’m not talking about what I have financially; I’m talking about what I have in the Lord Jesus Christ, the wagonloads of God’s grace. Wagonloads of God’s grace will convince this old world. I’ve said it before, and I’ll say it again: *The greatest argument for Jesus and the greatest argument against Jesus is the life of a Christian—it just depends on how we’re living.* And, oh, I want to say to those who don’t believe, “Listen, folks. How are you going to explain all these wagonloads of grace? How are you going to explain what God is doing and continues to do?”

Conclusion

Now I don’t know about you and how a message like this affects you, but when I pick up something like a historical chapter, chapter 45 in the Book of Genesis, I see confrontation, I see conviction, I see conversion, I see commission, I see communion, I see completion, I see continuation. By the way, he said, “See to it that you fall not out by the way, because you have everything that you need.” You know what the devil would love for us to do, is just to fall out by the way; even to fall out and quit serving him; quit serving Jesus or to fall out with one another.

Look up here, folks. We’re having this fall a family reunion. God has called us together as a family. We are brothers and sisters commissioned by the heavenly Joseph. He has given to this church everything that we need to get the job done. He’s given us wagonloads of grace, and He’s saying to us, “Don’t fall out by the way. Don’t fall out of the race. And don’t fall out with one another. Just keep on going, telling this world about Jesus.”

Dying Grace

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: September 6, 1981

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 47:28–29

“And the time drew nigh that Israel must die: and he called his son Joseph, and said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me; bury me not, I pray thee, in Egypt.”

GENESIS 47:29

Outline

Introduction

- I. Jacob Had a Forgiving Lord with Him
- II. Jacob Had a Fruitful Life Behind Him
- III. Jacob Had a Family Legacy After Him
- IV. Jacob Had a Future Light Around Him
 - A. Shiloh’s Peace
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Conclusion

Introduction

I want to speak to you today on this subject: “Dying Grace.” Now God gives us living grace, and saving grace; and so God who saves us, and God who keeps us, is the God who will give to us dying grace. And I read here in the Word of God, *“And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years: so the whole age of Jacob was an hundred forty and seven years. And the time drew nigh that Israel must die”*—*“And the time drew nigh that Israel must die.”* (Genesis 47:28–29) *“It is appointed unto men once to die.”* (Hebrews 9:27) I’m going to die. You’re going to die. *“Israel must die.”* We all must die, with the one exception: should the Lord Jesus Christ come first, then we’ll not die, and we’ll not go to heaven by route of the graveyard, but we’ll go another way.

But, speaking of the graveyard, the entire book of Genesis in many ways is like a graveyard. As you think about it, when we see the first death there of Abel, who was killed by his brother Cain, we look down upon the bruised and bleeding body of Abel. Then we continue on in that fifth chapter of the book of Genesis. You remember that. And as God gave those genealogies, “So-and-so begat so-and-so, and he died”; “and so-and-so begat so-and-so, and he died”; “and so-and-so begat so-and-so, and he

died”; “and he died”; “and he died”; “and he died”; “and he died”; “and he died”—and with almost a dreary monotony, “and he died.” And then we move into the sixth chapter of Genesis, and there we found that a whole generation, that entire antediluvian civilization, was swept away by death, and they perished. They died in the flood. And then we studied the great heroes in the book of Genesis. But every one of them had their funerals. We saw Sarah, and she died. We attended the funeral of Abraham, because he died; and the funeral of Isaac, he died; and Ishmael, he died; and we stood with Jacob by Rachel’s tomb and wept with Jacob when Rachel died and was buried there in Bethlehem; “and he died”; “and he died.” And now we come to this verse, and it says the time has come for Israel, that he must die. But I don’t want you to think that this is a downbeat message. It’s an upbeat message, friend. I’m not talking to you about things that are somber and things that are terrible. For the Bible says, “*Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.*” (Psalms 116:15) And, again, the Bible says, “*Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.*” “*Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.*” (Revelation 14:13) Now, “*Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints,*” and, “*Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord,*” so this is an upbeat message.

Sometimes I think too somberly and too seriously about death. I was interested to read in a magazine something that I clipped where a man literally went around and got little children, four, five, six and seven years of age, and asked them what they thought about death. And I want to share with you what these little children had to say, because it will be a blessing to your heart and an encouragement to your heart, and it will be somewhat amusing.

Now these are actual statements. These are not words that people have put into the mouths of little children. These are their own statements. Here’s what they say about death: (1) “Everybody has to die sometime, even if you don’t want to.” (2) “When you die, God takes care of you like your mother did when you were alive, only God doesn’t yell at you all the time.” (3) “You have to be old before you can die, because God seems to love old people best.” Isn’t that neat? Or here’s a good one: (4) “God doesn’t tell you when you’re going to die, because He wants it to be a big surprise.” Here’s another one; I especially took note of this one: (5) “Only the good people go to heaven; the other people go to where it’s hot all the time, like Florida.” And then a little child said, (6) “Everyone is scared to die, except the people who are already dead.” Or here’s one: (7) “A good doctor can help you so that you won’t die. A bad doctor sends you to heaven.” (8) “When you die, you don’t have to do homework in heaven, unless your teacher is there too.” Most of them won’t be there, I thought, when I was a little boy. Here’s one we all ought to pay attention to: (9) “Grown-ups who smoke die before grown-ups who don’t smoke. Grown-ups who smoke must be in a hurry to die.” Amen? All right, here’s

another one, everybody, and this is the last one I want to share. There were many more. I selected these, but I just wanted this one to be last, because I think it is so great: (10) “Everyone cries when somebody dies, because they don’t want to be left behind.” Isn’t that beautiful?

Well, little children sometimes have a faith that we don’t have, and the Bible says, “*Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength.*” (Psalms 8:2) And, you see, “It is appointed unto man once to die”; that is a divine appointment. And the time came that Israel must die. Now, when you die, you want to die in style. For the Bible says, “*Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints,*” and, “*Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.*”

I want to mention five factors that were true in Jacob’s death that I want to be true in my death, so that I can die the death of a saint, and that I can die a blessed death, and that I can rejoice in the time of my death. There are five things, as I looked at the Scriptures, that surrounded the death of Jacob, five factors that I would like to be true in my own life and in my own death.

I. Jacob Had a Forgiving Lord with Him

The first thing that made Jacob’s death a blessed death was this: that he had a forgiving Lord with him—he had a forgiving Lord with him. Now, look, if you will, please, in chapter 48, and let’s continue to read, beginning in verse 1: “*And it came to pass after these things, that one told Joseph, Behold, thy father is sick: and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. And one told Jacob, and said, Behold, thy son Joseph cometh unto thee: and Israel strengthened himself, and sat upon the bed. And Jacob said unto Joseph, God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me.*” (Genesis 48:1–3)

Now I want you to get the scene. It’s time for Jacob to die. And remember when the Bible says *Jacob* or *Israel*, it’s the same person—just using the terms interchangeably. And the time has come for him to die, and so he is in his sickbed, and they go tell Joseph, and Joseph gets his two children, Jacob’s grandchildren, Ephraim and Manasseh, and they go in to see Granddaddy. And they go in to see Daddy. He’s there. When he hears that Joseph is coming, it gives him strength and encouragement. He musters his strength a little bit. He sits on the side of the bed, and in come Joseph and the two grandsons.

And do you know what Jacob does? He gives them his testimony. He tells them about the time when he got saved, because that was the most important thing to him at that time. You see, Jacob had been a rascal. Do you remember our messages on Jacob? Do you? Friend, he was a con artist. His name *Jacob* means “cheat, conniver, skinflint, crook, supplanter”; that’s what his name meant. But he became Israel, “prince

with God,” because there was a day when he met God at a place called Luz. And that’s what he tells them about here in verse 3: *“And Jacob said to Joseph, God Almighty appeared to me at Luz.”* (Genesis 48:3)

Now, do you remember what I told you, in Genesis 28, that the name *Luz* means? It means “separation.” And if there were ever a fellow who was separated, it was poor old Jacob. There he was, a lad away from home, discouraged. His brother Esau said, “I’m going to kill you as soon as Daddy dies.” He had sinned against Esau, and he had cheated Esau. And there he is out in the desert, and he gets so tired when it’s time to go to sleep. It’s such a rocky, barren place in the middle of the night with the hoot owls over his head he pulls up a rock and gets a rock for a pillow. I just think that’s the Bible’s way of saying, *“The way of the transgressor is hard.”* (Proverbs 13:15) There he is out there in the desert, sentenced with death, shrouded in darkness, surrounded by desert, alone, fearful. He has hurt others. He had hurt himself. He is in a place of alienation. He is in a place of separation. He is in a place of—thank God—confrontation, because the Lord meets him there. He has a dream, and he sees the ladder, and that ladder goes up and up all the way to heaven. Remember the message we preached on it, and we called it “The Stairway to Heaven.” And there were angels ascending and descending upon that ladder; up and down they went. And God gave to Jacob a mighty revelation of Himself. And Jacob said, “God will be my God.” He was saved. He was born again. Because do you know what that ladder represented? Jacob’s ladder, we sing that little chorus, “We Are Climbing Jacob’s Ladder.” That represented the Lord Jesus, and Jesus told Nathanael, in John 1:51, *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.”* (John 1:51) Do you remember that? *“Son of man,”* but that’s what Jesus called Himself. That ladder with the angels ascending and descending was an Old Testament prophecy, type, and picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the way to heaven. For He said, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”* (John 14:6) And, “Any man who climbeth up another way, the same is a thief and a robber.” (John 10:1) Do you follow? Jesus is that ladder. And here’s old Jacob out there in the wilderness. He saw the way to heaven. He met the Lord, and God showed him there was a way into the glory. And he was born again.

Now that’s the first step in dying with grace and dying the right way. It is to have the forgiving God with you. He knew that his sins were forgiven. He knew that his sins were under the blood. He had been a rascal, but he had learned from God that *salvation is not a reward for righteous people; it is a gift for guilty people*. And he met the Lord there, and God dealt with him by grace. Oh, how wonderful to die when you know that your sins are under the blood!

One night I spent almost all night in a hospital with a dying man, sat by his side, and

the doctor said, “He’s going to die at any moment.” I watched his chest as it heaved and went in. Finally, he opened his eyes and looked at me and recognized one more time that it was his pastor. And through those languid eyes he gazed at me for a moment, and I saw a smile play around the corners of his lips, and this is what he said to me before he stepped out to meet God. He said, “Pastor, my sins are all under the blood.” Amen? That’s the way to die: with your sins all under the blood.

Jacob had a day when he met the Lord. Brother Tommy Lane led us—was it last Sunday or two Sundays ago?

*I never shall forget that day,
Blessed be the Name of the Lord!
When Jesus washed my sins away,
Blessed be the Name of the Lord!*

—CHARLES WESLEY

Jacob couldn’t forget that day, and when Joe came, and Manasseh came, and Ephraim came to see Jacob, he said, “Say, fellows, let me tell you about the time when the Lord met me there at Luz.” And Jacob changed the name from Luz to Bethel, which means “the house of God,” for he met God face to face.

A hundred and forty-seven years of age was Jacob, but the thing that meant so much to him at that particular point was that he had met God, that God met with him, and that God had become his God; he had been born again. Have you been born again? Friend, if you haven’t been saved, you’re not ready to die. You’re not ready to live, unless you’ve been saved. Now you cannot have dying grace unless you’ve experienced saving grace. Have you? I say, have you? Answer that question. Are you saved? Does God’s Spirit bear witness with your spirit that you are a child of God?

II. Jacob Had a Fruitful Life Behind Him

Secondly, not only did he have a forgiving Lord with him, but he had a fruitful life behind him. Continue to read here in verse 4. Now this is what God said to him when He blessed him, in verse 3: “*And said unto [him],*”—in verse 4—“*Behold, I will make thee fruitful*”—“*Behold, I will make thee fruitful.*” (Genesis 48:4) And God did. He took this old patriarch and made him a blessing, such a blessing that when he came into Pharaoh’s court—here this old weather-beaten shepherd was introduced to Pharaoh, because Joseph was the prime minister—the Bible says that, “*Jacob blessed Pharaoh.*” (Genesis 47:7) Can you imagine that? And the Bible says, “*And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better.*” (Hebrews 7:7) That means that Jacob was a man who was a great man. He lived his life for God. Oh, he failed God. He got behind in his sanctification quite a few times. He backslid quite a bit. But, dear friend, as you look at the total thing, you’ll see that here was a man who by the grace of God not only was

saved by grace but he bore fruit by grace. God made him fruitful. And, again, he pictures the New Testament Christian. For Jesus said, “*Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain.*” (John 15:16) And so, when he came to die, he looked back, and not only did he have a forgiving Lord with him; he had a fruitful life behind him.

Now you can be saved and not be fruitful, or at least not as fruitful as you ought to be. You can go to heaven empty-handed.

*“Must I go, and empty handed?”
Must I meet my Savior so?
Not one soul with which to greet Him,
Must I empty handed go?
—CHARLES C. LUTHER*

Jacob didn’t have to meet the Lord empty-handed.

You say, “What difference does it make? We’re saved by grace and not by works, so what difference does it make as long as I’m going to heaven?” It makes a lot of difference, dear friend. There are going to be degrees of reward in heaven. We’re going to face the Judgment Seat of Christ, and you may get there with your coattail smoking, but you’re not going to be satisfied that you let your life go up in wood, hay, and stubble. (1 Corinthians 3:12) The Bible says, “*Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.*” (Matthew 6:20) You know, the Bible says, in Revelation 14:13, a very interesting passage of Scripture, “*And [he said], Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours;*”—and now, notice this next phrase—“*and their works do follow them.*” Now, learn this about good works. *Good works don’t bring you to heaven. Good works follow you to heaven.* “*And their works do follow them.*”

I’m glad that when Jacob died that he could look back; not only look up to a forgiving Lord, but he could look back to a fruitful life. What about your life? Is your life being fruitful? I mean, when it comes time to die, you’re going to look around and see that you lived for junk. Oh, that house, those cars, that clothing, those things—do you know what that is? That’s just premature junk. That’s all it is.

Have you ever heard of Charles “Tremendous” Jones? Charles “Tremendous” Jones is one of these motivational speakers. He loves God. He’s a great guy, a friend of mine. And Charles “Tremendous” Jones said that near his house, there was a tremendous flood, and it flooded his basement. And down in his basement he had his study. And he had all of his notes, and he had all of his books, had all of his letters, and he had all of his little goodies, you know, his letters from the President, and his citations, and all of those little rewards and everything, had them all filed away down there, and all of those things he worked so hard for. And it rained and just flooded that place and then filled it

up with mud. And he went in there: everything was ruined. There was two or three feet of mud in the basement. It was all gone. He said “Oh, my gosh! Look at this! All my life’s work, it’s gone!” And he carried it to the Lord. And this is what Charles Jones said the Lord said to him: “Don’t worry about it, Charlie. I was going to burn it all up anyway.” I think that’s tremendous. “Now, don’t worry about it. I was going to burn it all up anyway.”

Listen, friend. What do you have and what will you have in your hand when it comes time to die? I mean, that’s what really counts. Do you have a fruitful life behind you: something that death cannot take away? Have you been fruitful? Are you going to be fruitful? When are you going to start? You’d better get at it. You’d better report for duty this morning. You’d better be like the apostle Paul and say, “*Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*” (Acts 9:6) Have you ever really done that? Not, “Lord, what will you have the preacher do?” not, “Lord, what will others have me to do?” but, “*Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*” “Here I am, Lord.” And I’ll give you the advice that Mary gave on that day in Canaan: “*Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it*” (John 2:5)—“*do it.*” God wants you to be fruitful. God has a plan for your life. And here was Jacob. When it came time to die, he could look back to a life of fruitfulness for the Lord.

“Oh,” you say, “well, you don’t have to do good works to get to heaven. I’ll just go to heaven by the grace of God.” Do you know what Billy Sunday called that? “Burning the candle of life for the devil and blowing the smoke in God’s face.” Don’t you do that, dear friend. When you are on your deathbed, don’t miss the blessing of looking back and saying, “My life was not in vain; it was not wood, hay, and stubble.” (1 Corinthians 3:12) And Robert Moffat, that great missionary statesman, said this: “We shall have all eternity in which to celebrate our victories, but we have only one swift hour before the sunset in which to win them.” Do it. Get busy for the Lord. You’re going to die. And when you die, you want to have a fruitful life behind you—things that really, really count.

III. Jacob Had a Family Legacy After Him

Now I want to mention the third thing that made Jacob’s death such a blessed death, that I want to be true about my own life. Not only did he have a forgiving Lord with him, not only did he have a fruitful life behind him, but he also had, dear friend, a family legacy after him—a family legacy after him. Continue to read here in verse 4. I’m in chapter 48, verse 4: “*And said unto me, Behold, I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a multitude of people; and will give this land to thy seed*”—that is, to your children, to your family—“*after thee for an everlasting possession. And now thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born unto thee in the land of Egypt before I came unto thee into Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine. And thy issue...*”—this is what God is saying to him—“*And thy issue, which thou begetteth after them, shall be thine, and shall be called after the name of their*

brethren”—now, notice this phrase—“*in their inheritance.*” (Genesis 48:4–6)

He’s talking about a family legacy: “*in their inheritance.*” He’s just telling Jacob about what his children are going to inherit, and what his children were going to inherit were primarily spiritual blessings. As a matter of fact, this whole chapter and chapter 49 speak of the blessings that God had for all of the sons of Jacob. And I don’t have time to deal with all of that, so let’s just skip down to chapter 49, verse 28, and I think that sums it up—chapter 49, verse 28. That’s the way to preach through a book, isn’t it? Just *shoomp*. All right, all right, look in verse 28: “*All these are the twelve tribes of Israel: and this is it that their father spake unto them,*”—now, watch it—“*and blessed them; every one according to his blessing he blessed them.*” (Genesis 49:28) Now, what does that mean? In plain English, it means that he left them something besides silver and gold. He had a family legacy after him. He had a spiritual blessing.

Now Jacob had twelve sons, some of them mean as snakes—rascals, rebellious. They were hard to deal with. But he kept on. He prayed for those boys. He lived before those boys. He witnessed to those boys. He admonished those boys. And he brought those boys to a faith in his God. And he left behind him a spiritual blessing for his children. And I want to tell you, that’s a good way to die, isn’t it? To leave a family behind you that, because you were their daddy, because you were their mother, they know God in a better way.

I never shall forget when our first child was born, Steve. I was in college. And we had prepared for it, we thought. But when the middle of the night came, and Joyce gave me that elbow and said, “Adrian, it’s time,” boy, I tell you, I felt a dart go through my liver. I was scared to death. I didn’t know what to do. And I knew the first thing you did was to call the doctor. I didn’t know a lot, but I knew you had to call the doctor. Now we lived in a house trailer. It didn’t even have a bathroom, much less a telephone. I said, “Well, man, I’ve got to go call the doctor.” I ran out there to that little house there, to the community house where the telephone was, and it was locked up. I couldn’t wake anybody up. Boy, I ran, got a tire tool, and jimmied that window—it’s a wonder I didn’t get shot—dived in the window, and ran over to the phone. Then I found out it was a pay telephone. I didn’t have any money. Boy, I went back to the house, searching around for a dime. I was just afraid I was going to be an obstetrician there that day in that house trailer. “Oh, God, help me to get this dime in this thing.” I couldn’t get it in the right slot, couldn’t see the number, finally dialed, told the doctor, got to the hospital. That little boy was born. I looked at him: “Man, he’s ugly.” Oh, you know how misshapen their heads are when they’re first born. I wondered how such a good-looking man could have a son like that. Next day, he looked a whole lot better. That was some night. Oh, what a night!

I remember going home, and after everything was all right, and the baby was all right, and the mother was all right, getting on my knees by myself in that little trailer and

saying, “Oh, God, oh, God, if I never do anything good, if I never have any money, if I never pastor a big church, if I never preach a good sermon, God, I want to be a good daddy—I want to be a good daddy. I want to live so that my children will know the Lord. I want them to believe in their father’s God.”

I’d rather die than betray my God before my children. And my children know that their daddy hasn’t been perfect, but my children know that their daddy loves God. They know that. And they know that their mother loves God. And I’m so glad that one of these days when I lie down to die, not only will I have a forgiving Lord with me, and I trust a fruitful life behind me, but I will have a family legacy after me. I want to leave something besides things to my children. I want to leave some spiritual verve and vitality to my children. I prayed, “Oh God, dear God, I want my children to think that Abraham Lincoln and George Washington were the Jesse James boys compared to their preacher daddy. I want them to believe in what I believe in.”

*An old man going a lone highway,
Came, at the evening cold and gray,
To a chasm vast and deep and wide.
Through which was flowing a sullen tide
The old man crossed in the twilight dim,
The sullen stream had no fear for him;
But he turned when safe on the other side
And built a bridge to span the tide.*

*“Old man,” said a fellow pilgrim near,
“You are wasting your strength with building here;
Your journey will end with the ending day,
You never again will pass this way;
You’ve crossed the chasm, deep and wide,
Why build this bridge at evening tide?”*

*The builder lifted his old gray head;
“Good friend, in the path I have come,” he said,
“There followed after me to-day
A youth whose feet must pass this way.
This chasm that has been as naught to me
To that fair-haired youth may a pitfall be;
He, too, must cross in the twilight dim;
Good friend, I am building this bridge for him!”*

—WILL ALLEN DROMGOOLE

I want to build a bridge for my children. I want to be like Jacob. And I want my

children to be able to come the same way that I have come.

IV. Jacob Had a Future Light Around Him

But let me give you the fourth thing that was true about the life of Jacob and the death of Jacob that I want to be true about my life and my death. Not only do I want my forgiving Lord with me, and not only do I want these other things, but Jacob had a future light—a future light—around him. Death to him was not a leap in the dark. It was a step in the light. Now, look in chapter 49. We skipped some material. I want you just to look in verse 10 of chapter 49. You see, the light was shining brightly around the deathbed of this old saint of God. And God had given him a glimpse into the future. It was light, and it was light concerning the future. And therefore I am saying that he had a future light around him. He made some of the most amazing prophecies in all of the Word of God.

But out of all of these prophecies, verse 10 stands out. And I want you to see it. Here's what he said: *"The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."* (Genesis 49:10) Now you say, "Brother Rogers, what does that mean?" Well, when Jacob was dying, God had revealed to Jacob that the Messiah would come. One more time God gave him a revelation of the coming Messiah.

A. Shiloh's Peace

One of the names for Messiah is Shiloh. *Shiloh* comes from the same word, the same root as the word *shalom*, which means "peace." When Israelis greet one another, they say, "Shalom," and it means "peace." And I believe here that God gave to Jacob a revelation, an insight, of the Lord Jesus who indeed is our peace, the Prince of Peace, the Lord Jesus. And there upon his deathbed he looked down through the tunnel of time, and through the power of prophecy he saw the coming Prince of Peace. "Till Shiloh come." "Till Shiloh come." That's a good way to die, isn't it?—thinking about the coming of the Savior, thinking about the coming of the Messiah.

B. Shiloh's Power

And notice what he saw about Shiloh. He saw Shiloh's power, because he spoke of the scepter: "The scepter shall not depart till the one comes to whom it really belongs."

C. Shiloh's People

But not only did he see His peace, because he called Him Shiloh, he saw His power. And not only did he see His power; he saw His people—"until..."—so he said, "And the gathering will be to him." People are going to be gathered to Him: *"and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."* Do you know what I think he saw? I think he saw the Second Coming. I really do. I believe he saw that time when the trumpets shall sound, and the dead in Christ shall rise, and we who remain in our lives shall be caught up with

them to meet the Lord in the air (1 Corinthians 15:52; 1 Thessalonians 4:17), and we're gathered to Shiloh. And here's ol' Jake on his deathbed—on his deathbed with a forgiving Lord with him, a fruitful life behind him, a family legacy after him, and a future light before him.

“Till Shiloh come”: that's a good way to die, knowing, dear friend, that when our bodies go to this grave, Shiloh will come and the people will be gathered to Him. We are going to be one in the Lord Jesus Christ. Friend, when you know that, you can crawl up in the grave and lie down and take a nap, and the old microbes destroy this body, and the ol' greedy worms feast upon it. I know in my flesh I'll see God. I'm going to rise to meet my Lord. When Shiloh comes, the people are going to be gathered to Him. And Jacob had the future light shining round about him. His faith was in the Word of God and the revelation of God's Word.

V. Jacob Had Faithful Loved Ones Awaiting Him

Well, let me just tell you one final thing that I think was such a blessing in the death of this old saint and that was a part of his dying grace. Not only did he have future light, but, oh, dear friend, he had faithful loved ones awaiting him: future light around him; faithful loved ones awaiting him. Continue to read here now in chapter 49, verse 29: *“And he charged them, and said unto them, I am to be gathered unto my people...”*—that's a beautiful phrase, isn't it?—*“I am to be gathered unto my people: bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, in the cave...”*—and, incidentally, I have been to this cave, been down inside this cave; what an experience!—*“in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite for a possession of a buryingplace. There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah. The purchase of the field and of the cave that is therein was from the children of Heth.”* And now, notice one of the most poignant verses I believe in all of the Bible. Listen to it: *“And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people.”* (Genesis 49:29–33)

Isn't that beautiful? Can't you see the old man now, 147 years old? He's just finished now. Man, he's just ready. And so he just kind of pulls his feet up under the covers and smiles in the face of God, and he's gone on to glory. That's the way it is. *“Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.”* (Psalms 116:15) But notice that last phrase: He *“was gathered unto his people.”* Now, to me, that is a blessing, because there was a family reunion. Old Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, they were all there. And there he met them in glory.

You say, “Boy, that must have been something. I'd like to sit around and listen to

those folks talk.” Listen. I’ve got something that’s going to blow you out of the seat this morning. Just listen to this. And this is from Jesus. It’s found in Matthew 8:11. Here’s what it says. And Jesus said, *“And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.”* (Matthew 8:11) Folks, that’s us. This same old Jacob that we’re talking about, one of these days, we’re going to have a cup of tea with—or whatever they drink up there. Now, you think about that. Can you think about spending a couple hundred years with Abraham? I mean, we’re going to do it, folks. This is not science fiction. *“Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom.”* We are going to get in on that fellowship, and our dear loved ones.

I talked about my children a moment ago. Most of you know that Joyce and I have a little boy in heaven, and on his grave marker is just his name and these words: “Philip...” “Yes, Lord,” because we believe that God called him to heaven. But more than that, the Second Coming, is what it really talks about, because we believe when Jesus comes, He’s going to say, “Adrian,” and I’ll say, “Yes, Lord”; “Joyce,” “Yes, Lord”; “Steve,” “Yes, Lord”; “Gayle,” “Yes, Lord”; “David,” “Yes, Lord”; “Janice,” “Yes, Lord”; “Philip,” “Yes, Lord.” Together, we’re going to heaven. We’re going to be gathered to our people. I mean, friend, that’s what the Bible says.

You see, that’s a wonderful way to die. We don’t lose our loved ones. That’s the reason why it’s so wonderful to have children. People say, “Oh, children, they make a rich man poor.” They make a poor man rich. A rich man can’t take his money to heaven. I can take my children to heaven. I tell you, it’s so wonderful that you can be gathered unto your people. There will be a family reunion in heaven. And here was this man who knew that he was going to see his loved ones.

I think of David—David, who lost his little boy, and he said, “He can’t come to me, but I’ll go to him.” (2 Samuel 12:23) He was saying the same thing that Jacob was saying.

I remember, I think, I told some of you of dear old Dr. Lee, the great noble pastor of this church. Dr. Lee lived to be an old man. There came a time for Dr. Lee to die. Some of us thought maybe he never would. Some of us thought maybe that he was just going to be around till Jesus comes. I think sometimes he thought that. But God made him aware of the fact that it was time for him to die. And back when Billy Graham was here in the city, Billy Graham said to me, “Adrian, will you take me by to see Dr. Lee?” I said, “I will.”

And I called Hildred Phillips, his daughter, and said, “Hildred, Billy would like to come by and see Dr. Lee.” And Dr. Lee was just next door to heaven at that time. And Tommy Lane went with us. And, Tommy, you remember this, one of the most unforgettable things that ever happened to me. And Billy Graham was there, and Cliff Barrows was

there, and Tommy Lane and myself. And Hildred Phillips had gone and gotten some real pretty new pajamas and put them on Dr. Lee, and he was there in that back bedroom. She went in to tell him that Billy Graham was there. And she came out with a startled look, and she said, “I believe he’s dying.” She said, “I cannot rouse him.” And she called the old family doctor, and he came—a little wiry, spry man with a baldpate and white hair going around like a horseshoe haircut. He came in and went in the back bedroom and made some tests. And he came out and he said, “Yes, I believe he’s dying.”

And I thought, “Well, that’s strange that Billy Graham would be here when Dr. Lee dies.” But I said, “Well, let’s not just wait out here. Does he recognize anyone?” “No, he doesn’t.” “Well, let’s go in and pray for him and do something that we ought to do.” I said, “Let’s sing him to heaven.” And everybody thought that would be a good idea. And so Tommy Lane was there, and Cliff Barrows—and I’m glad they were, because Billy Graham doesn’t sing any better than I do. And so Tommy Lane said this. And, Tommy, I don’t know whether you remember it or not. I’m sure you do. But Tommy said, “Dr. Lee’s favorite hymn was ‘Majestic Sweetness Sits Enthroned Upon the Savior’s Brow.’” And we sang that song, and I felt angel wings all over that room, and the presence of the Lord, as we thought about the Lord Jesus. And then Cliff started an old song that I think I’d heard before, but I shall never forget:

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

—JEFFERSON HASCALL

And I didn’t know whether Dr. Lee was going to heaven right then, but I thought certainly it was about that time, because the sense of God’s Spirit was so real. But then suddenly Dr. Lee opened his eyes, those piercing blue eyes—and he had lost his eyesight, most of it, but his eyes were so beautifully clear—and he came out of that coma. And Hildred leaned over to him and said, “Papa, Billy Graham’s here, and he came to see you.” And Dr. Lee reached that old hand up that held that Bible so many times, and that hand that had comforted so many people, and put it around Billy Graham’s neck, and pulled him down, and kissed him, and embraced him. Then he lapsed back into that coma. He didn’t die right then.

Later on, he said to Hildred, “Hildred, I see heaven.” She said, “Tell me about it, Papa.” He said, “It’s beautiful.” He said, “I never did it justice.” You know his great sermon, “The Place Called Heaven”? He said, “I never did it justice.” And then he said,

“And, Hildred, I see my mother. And she’s beautiful—she’s beautiful.”

Jacob was gathered to his people—gathered to his people—a family reunion in heaven, faithful loved ones awaiting him.

Conclusion

No wonder the Bible says, “*Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.*” (Psalms 116:15) By and by, when the morning comes, we’ll be gathered home.

A Box of Bones

By Adrian Rogers

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Main Scripture Text: Genesis 50:22–26

“So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old: and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.”

GENESIS 50:26

Outline

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- II. The Reliability of Joseph’s Faith
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Conclusion

Introduction

Now take your Bibles and turn please to Genesis chapter and we will begin reading in verse 22. The title of our message today, “A Box of Bones.” “And Joseph dwelt in Egypt...” Well, I’m ahead of you. I still hear the flutter of the pages. That’s not fair, is it, for me to look it up and tell you to turn to it, and then start to read? All right. I’ll wait just a moment, because I want to tell you the most beautiful music in the world is the flutter of those pages—people coming to God’s house on God’s day with the Bible and listen to God’s Word. You’ll get thirty, forty, fifty percent more out of a message if you’ll just listen with an open Bible in your hands.

Okay, now. “And Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he, and his father’s house: and Joseph lived an hundred and ten years. And Joseph saw Ephraim’s children of the third generation: the children also of Machir of the son of Manasseh were brought upon Joseph’s knees.” That is, he had his little grandbabies sitting there upon his knees. “And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence. So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old: and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.” Notice the last words of the book of Genesis, “...a coffin in Egypt.”

Now that’s a strange way for a book to end. It begins with a creation; it ends in a

coffin. The devil had said at the beginning of that creation, “Ye shall not surely die; that you can sin with impunity.” But we’ve had one funeral after another. And so the book that ends with, that begins with a blaze of glory ends with a grave. The book that begins with the vastness of eternity ends with the shortness of time. The book that begins in a garden ends in a coffin. And the book that begins with a blaze of brightness ends with a box of bones, the bones of Joseph.

And, you know, it’s very interesting a book, this book of Genesis. And this is the last message. We’ve been preaching through the book of Genesis for almost a year now. Do you realize that? Sunday after Sunday after Sunday after Sunday we have received so many blessings, so many spiritual truths from the book of Genesis.

And we’ve come to Joseph. I believe that Joseph is one of the greatest characters in all of the Bible; one of, perhaps, the most Christlike men, especially when you consider the fact that he was an Old Testament character—one of the most Christlike people that we’ll find in all of the Bible. And when the Holy Spirit through of an episode in the life of Joseph to delineate his faith, believe it or not, the Holy Spirit took these few verses right at the end that deal with Joseph’s bones. And the Holy Spirit chose those to epitomize the faith of Joseph. And in Hebrews 11:22, just listen to me read it to you, “By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel and gave commandment concerning his bones.” Now that’s what it says. And he did that by faith.

Did you know that the bones of Joseph are mentioned not only in the book of Genesis, but the book of Hebrews? And not only in the book of Hebrews, but the book of Exodus? And not only in the book of Exodus, but the book of Joshua? The bones of Joseph, the bones of Joseph.

What’s so exciting about the bones of Joseph? Well, I want to talk to you today about the blessings in a box of bones, and I want you to pay attention, because if the Holy Spirit chose this episode in the life and death of Joseph to illustrate a spiritual truth to us, and took time to put this episode in Hebrews 11:22 as one of the great high mountain peaks of the heroes of faith, then we ought to pay attention to it. So let’s do.

I want to give you four things that blessed me from this box of bones, sort of a skeleton outline. I want you to pay attention now as we look at this box of bones and the blessings that are there in this coffin where Joseph was buried. And he said, “When you leave now, just take my bones with you.” You see, Joseph knew, Joseph knew that they were going to stay there. And let me give you the background, those of you who may not be familiar with this particular passage of Scripture. Canaan, of course, if the Promised Land, not the land of Egypt. But Joseph’s brethren came down to Canaan because there was a famine there. And Joseph, of course, was made the Prime Minister of Egypt after he’d been sold into slavery. You remember most of all of that story. And now he’s the Prime Minister in Egypt and, and all of his brethren have come

there. Now they're in a favored place, a highly honored place. They're in a place of prestige. They're in a place of luxury in the land of Goshen, which was the very best land near to the throne so they could be near Joseph, and so forth. They're just having a wonderful, wonderful time. But Joseph knew that hard times were coming, and Joseph knew that they were going to be oppressed, and Joseph knew that the exodus was going to come and they were going to come out of the land of Egypt and into the Promised Land through the wilderness. He knew all of that. He foresaw all of that. And he said, "Boys, one of these days God's going to visit you and you're going to leave. And when you leave, take my bones with you." Just another way of saying, "I wouldn't be caught dead here. Now I want you, when, when you go, you just take my bones with you. You're going. And when you go, don't forget me. Now I'll, I'll be here in this box. And you take this box of bones with you."

Now four things I want us to see, because the book of the Hebrews tells us that this was an act of faith when he said this. And so, what, what, how does this relate to faith when he says, "You're going out. And when you go, take my bones with you?" All right.

I. The Reason for Joseph's Faith

First of all, I want you to see the reason for Joseph's faith. How did Joseph know that they were going out to begin with? Well, the reason for Joseph's faith was the word of God. You see, God had already spoken. Now we're in Genesis chapter 50. Turn back to Genesis chapter 15 for just a moment. Would you do that? Genesis chapter 15. That's not far away. Just turn left a few chapters and go to Genesis 15. All right. Now look. God is speaking to Abram, who later became Abraham, and God is telling Abram what the future of his descendants will be. And God had prophesied and predicted that Abram's seed or descendants were going to a land that was not theirs. And then, after a while, that He would bring them out of that land. I'm reading here Genesis 15 and verse 13, and listen to it. "And he said unto Abram—that is, God said to Abram—Know of a surety—no ifs, ands, buts, doubts about it—know of a surety that thy seed—that is, your descendants—shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs—that is, they're going to go down to Egypt and they're going to be strangers there. That's not their land—and they shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years."

Now the affliction had not yet started, but God knew that there was going to be an affliction and that the Egyptians were going to enslave the Hebrews, and He prophesied it to Abram so long ago. And then notice in verse 14: "And also that nation, when they shall serve whom they shall serve will I judge; and afterward shall they come out with great substance." You're going to come out. Now, you see, the, the way that Joseph knew so much about the future is he knew so much about the past. He knew the word of God.

Now let me tell you where faith comes from. Let me tell you what faith is not, first of all. Faith is not positive thinking. You know, a lot of times people say, “Try this. Do that.” And I say, “Well, I don’t exactly think I ought to.” “Oh man, have faith.” Why should I? Why should I? Why should I have faith to do something that God hasn’t told me to do or that I ought to do? Faith is not positive thinking. Faith is not following a hunch. Faith is not wishing upon a star. Faith is not hoping for the best. Faith is not self-confidence. Faith is not a feeling of optimism.

Do you want me to tell you what faith is? Faith is believing God. That’s what faith is. You see, the Bible says in Romans 10:17, “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” The only way, dear friend, that you can have faith is to know the word of God. Faith comes by hearing the word of God. The reason that Joseph was a hero of the faith, and the reason that Joseph knew these things that were going to transpire is that he had the word of God. God had spoken. And, therefore, because He hath said, we may boldly say. That’s what the book of Hebrews says.

Now do you want faith? Do you need faith? Of course you need faith. The Bible says, “According to your faith be it unto you.” Not according to your friends be it unto you. Not according to your feelings be it unto you. Not according to your fame be it unto you. Not according to your fortune be it unto you. According to your faith be it unto you.

Now listen. Faith is the measure of accomplishment. Faith is the measure of blessings. Faith is the medium of exchange in the kingdom of heaven. If you want a prayer answered, you’ve got to spend a little faith. *Pray, believe, you’ll receive; pray and doubt, you do without.* It’s just that simple. “What things so ever ye desire, when you pray, believe that you receive them, and ye shall have them.” And where are you going to get this faith? From the word of God.

You see, the reason that Joseph had this faith is that his faith was rooted in the word of God. All faith is, true faith, Bible faith is rooted in the word of God. You know, the Bible says in Hebrews 11:1, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for; faith is the evidence of things not seen.” Faith is substance. Don’t you like that word substance? I believe that the Greek word is closely akin to our English word, sub-stands. That means something beneath that you can stand on. Friend, we’re standing on spiritual steel and concrete when we believe God. We’re not walking around on egg shells and Jello. Faith is substance because it’s rooted in the word of God, not in your feelings.

And then, faith is evidence. Now what is evidence? Evidence is something that tells you there’s a fact over there because you have the evidence over here. You see, dear friend, believing doesn’t make it so. You believe it because it is so. Evidence can only be evidence concerning a fact. You see, believing does not bring things into existence. Things are already into, in existence in the heart and mind and will of God. And the faith that God puts in your heart is the evidence that those things are so.

You know, we have some people today who've gotten it completely backward. They get on the radio and they get on the television, and so forth, and, and they tell people, "Now you want..." Fly, leave me alone. They say that you want something to happen to you, and you want something good to come your way? And so they simply say, "All right. Name it and claim it." Friend, that's just backward. God names it so that you can claim it. You see, God must name it before you can claim it. God must speak. Faith is a response to the Word of God. And the reason that Joseph could be so sure, the reason that Joseph said, "God will surely bring you out," is that God had spoken. God had given His word.

Now are you listening to God? Are you saturating your soul with the, the word of God? You see, even when God speaks through the Holy Spirit, what God says through the Holy Spirit to you as you meet God in a mystical, strange way upon your knees in prayers, even what God says that way will be ramified, substantiated, backed up, underscored and proved by the word of God. And if it doesn't square with this book, it cannot be biblical faith. And the reason that some of you don't have any more faith than you do have is because you've not been like Joseph. You have not been reveling in the promises of the word of God.

II. The Reliability of Joseph's Faith

And so, the reason for his faith, the reason for his faith, point number one, the word of God. Number two: Not only do I want you to see the reason of his faith, but because that was the reason of his faith, I want you to see the reliability of his faith. Go back now to Genesis 50 and you're going to find out in these verses that Joseph said that "...God will surely bring you out." Look in verse 25: And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall—not *might*, but—ye *shall* carry up my bones from hence." Now Joseph was quite certain about it. No equivocation. It's going to happen. You see, because it was rooted in the word of God, it had a reliability to it.

Now, friend, God is never wrong. God doesn't grade Himself on a curve. He's always right. There are a lot of prophets today who claim to be prophets of God who say, 'Well, I, you know, I get it most of the time.' God never fails. All of the promises of God are yea and amen in the Lord Jesus.

And so here's the reliability of Joseph's faith. He said, "It's going to happen, no doubt about it." Now listen. It didn't seem like it was going to happen. I mean, if you had looked at the evidence—there they were in the land of Egypt. Folks, they had it made. They had it made. They were in a favored position. They were loved and honored. After all, they had left Canaan because of a, of a famine. It wasn't so hot down there in Canaan. Now here's Egypt. Egypt is wealthy and they're happy.

Do you know what the average person would have done? They, the average person would have said, "Well now, maybe we'd better reconsidered the word in the light of the present day circumstances." See. You'd better be careful that you don't parade the word of God past the judgment bar of your mind and somehow weigh what God says according to circumstances. Friend, faith is not figuring. Neither is faith feeling. I don't know what Joseph's emotions were when he said, "God's going to bring you out." I don't know how he felt about it. But it really doesn't make any difference how he felt about it. Feelings come and feelings go and feelings are deceiving. The Bible is the word of God and not else is worth believing. You'd better stop feeling certain ways and start believing. You see, it doesn't matter how you feel about it. The devil loves to get you off in the realm of feeling or the realm of figuring. You see, the devil knows how fickle our emotions are.

One of my favorite stories is, is about a young man who went to a revival crusade and heard the preacher preach on John 5:24, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." He believed that word, received that word, was saved, and did pass from death unto life. But later on, as he gave his testimony, he said he walked home from that revival crusade, and the devil attacked him.

Now if you've never met the devil, it's because you and the devil have been going in the same direction, amen. Brother, I'll tell you what. You turn around and start living for God, you'll meet him head on. And this little fellow met the devil. I mean, had a head-on collision with the devil. And the devil started making him doubt and whispered in his ear. He said he felt like the devil was sitting right on his shoulder, whispering in his ear, saying, "You're not a Christian. You don't feel right. And you don't deserve to be saved. And you're too bad a sinner." And this thing and that thing, and was talking to him and talking to him. And he was wavering and, and feeling bad and, and doubt was about to sink him. And he went home. And he sat down on the couch in the living room. He said it seemed to him that the devil was so real and so present that the devil himself was right under that couch. And that little fellow said he just decided he'd read the word of God again for himself. And he got out the Bible and turned to John 5:24 and read it out loud. "Verily, verily..." He said, "That means truly, truly. "...I say unto you..." He said, "Jesus is speaking." "...He that heareth my word..." He said, "I've heard it." "...and believeth on him that sent me..." He said, "I believe." "...hath everlasting life..." He said, "I have everlasting life." "... shall not come into condemnation..." "I will not come into condemnation. "...but is passed from death unto life." "I've passed from death unto life. There, devil, read it for yourself," stuck it under the couch. He said from that time on the doubt left him.

Whether that story roots in fact or fiction, I don't know, but there's a principle there. There is a tremendous principle. Now I'll tell you this, dear friend, that don't you get caught up in this matter of figuring. Don't you get caught up in this matter of feeling. It is a matter of fact. God said they're coming out! Now, you know, some people, and some of the modern scholars would have said, "Well, God said it, but He didn't mean it. What God meant was that's Canaan. That's a figure of heaven or this thing or that thing," and they try to spiritualize away the promises or they try to explain away the promises.

A little girl sitting in a Sunday school class had one of these erudite teachers who was saying, "Now this is what God said, but it isn't what God meant. God said this, but here's what God meant. God said this and here's what God meant." And that little girl said, "Teacher, I don't mean to be impudent and I don't mean to be surly, but I just want to ask you a question. If God didn't mean what He said, why didn't He say what He meant?"

It's a pretty good question, amen? Listen. God means what He says. Now sometimes it has to be interpreted, that is true, but it doesn't need to be explained away. There's a difference. And, and I thank God for an interpretation of the word of God because sometimes there are things here that are hard to be explained. But once you find out what God has said, you'd better believe that God means what He says. There were some people who missed the first coming of the Lord Jesus Christ because they could not believe that He would literally be born in Bethlehem, that He would literally be born of a virgin, that He was going to die upon the cross, and all of these things. They missed it because they failed to take God's word literally.

You know, I'd much rather, when I face the judgment, have God say to me, "Adrian, you believed My word too much," than, "Adrian, you didn't believe it enough and tried to explain it away." And I'm just going to preach it like God wrote it. And, and if God wanted it preached another way, I'd say when I get to face Him, I don't want to be smart-aleck, but "God, You should have written it another way if You wanted it preached another way," amen. I mean, I, really, I'm serious about that. I think our best, our safest ground is just simply to believe the word of God. Joseph read it, and God said to Abram, "You're going to stay there four hundred years. You're going to come out." And so he said, "Look, fellows, it's going to happen, no ifs, ands, and buts about it."

III. The Rest of Joseph's Faith

And so, let's, let's get down to see not only the, the reason for his faith – that's the first blessing in this box of bones. Secondly, the reliability of his faith – it will surely come to pass. Now the third thing, the rest of his faith. In verse 25 he speaks of his bones – not his body, but his bones. He knew there was going to be a long time before they came out. You see, the promise was made three hundred years before he was born to Abram.

And centuries would pass before it would be fulfilled. And Joseph knew that, but he wasn't in a hurry. You see, faith, real faith can wait on God. And Joseph was quite content to lie down and rest there in the grave for quite a while. He knew that in the providence of God that a new king would come. And there were arise a Pharaoh, a king over Egypt, who knew not his brethren. He knew it was going to be that time of that persecution and all of that. But he knew that in God's timing, in God's timing it was going to happen.

The book of Habakkuk is a great book—hard to find, but a good book. Habakkuk 2:3. Don't find it 'cause I won't have you back for the rest of the message, but just let me read it to you. Habakkuk 2:3. Here's what God told Habakkuk. Habakkuk was a little antsy about God answering his word. You know, he was trying to rush God up. He was like that Baptist lady who prayed, "Lord, give me patience right now!" And he wanted God to move and do some things. But here's what God said to Habakkuk in chapter 2:3: "For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come..." And, boy, that's a great verse. Don't get ahead of God.

Now Joseph, it had been 300 years since God had made that promise. It was going to be hundreds of years yet. But old Joe said, "Look, fellows, you are surely going out. And when you go, take my bones with you." Faith can just rest in God. Faith does not try to push providence. Joseph had already learned that. We talked about that a while back.

You know, sometimes it looks like God drags His feet, but God's never late. God's never in a hurry. God has an appointed time. Jesus came in the fullness of time, the Bible says. And He judged the Amorites, but He waited a long time to judge the Amorites because He said the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.

And I remember reading in the Bible in the book of Ezekiel where God said He's going to judge the nation of Tyre, that city-state of Tyre. And in Ezekiel 26:3 here's what God said to Tyre. "Therefore, thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, O Tyre, and will cause many nations to come up against thee, as the sea causeth its water to come up." That is, just like the rising tide, I'm going to bring nations against you, Tyre. And then we'll skip down a few verses, and in Ezekiel 26:12 here's what He said these nations are going to do to Tyre. Listen to this: "And they shall make a spoil of thy riches, and make a prey of thy merchandise: and they shall break down thy walls, and destroy thy pleasant houses: and they shall lay thy stones and thy timber and thy dust in the midst of the water." Now it's very interesting. Now some people would want to explain this away, but he said they're going to break down your walls, they're going to break down your houses, they're going to take the stones and the dust and the timber and they're going to throw them in the water. "And I will cause the noise of thy songs to

cease; and the sound of thy harps shall be no more heard. And I will make thee like the top of a rock”—just like a bald rock—“and thou shalt be a place to spread nets upon; thou shalt be built no more: for I the LORD have spoken it, saith the Lord GOD.”

Now that’s what God said He’s going to do to Tyre. He said, “I’m, first of all, I’m going to bring nations.” The first nation that He brought against Tyre was Nebuchadnezzar, that old Babylonian king. And he came against Tyre and invaded Tyre. And people of Tyre saw Nebuchadnezzar come, and under the, the darkness of night they fled. They abandoned their city. And they went to an island one-half mile off the seacoast. And there they started to live. And Nebuchadnezzar withdrew. He didn’t really destroy the wall, however. He didn’t destroy the houses and the timbers. He plundered a little bit and left. And it looked like perhaps the prophet Ezekiel was wrong, because Ezekiel said, “I’m going to make you like the top of a rock. I’m going to cast your stones, your wall, your timber – all of that’s going to be cast into the sea. It’ll be a place for the spreading of nets.”

Hundreds of years passed. And then Alexander the Great came in 315. Alexander the Great was on a sweeping conquest, and he asked the people of Tyre for some help. Now they had, by that time, had fortified themselves quite a bit out there on their island kingdom, and they had developed one of the most proficient navies in all of the ancient world. Alexander the Great really had no navy, but he had a mighty army. And he asked some help from the people of Tyre, and they just laughed at him. They told him, in effect, “Go sit on a tack.” They weren’t pay, they weren’t afraid of Alexander the Great because they said, “We’re safe and we’re fortified.” Alexander was so infuriated that he gave command to his men. He said, “I want you to build a causeway out to that island.” They said, “Out of what?” He said, “Out of this material.” And they broke down that wall. They broke down those houses. They took those timbers. They took every speck of dust that they could find and dumped it into the sea and made a cause way out there. And when they finished, it was like the top of a rock.

And you can go there today and watch the fishermen spread their nets on those rocks. Exactly, precisely as God said it would come to pass. It took years and centuries, but the word of God was fulfilled down to the minutest detail. It always is. You know, there are some people today who have the idea Jesus is not going to come again. They say, “Well, you know, it’s been 2000 years almost. Where is the promise of His coming?” Second Peter, the third chapter. “For all things continue as they were from the beginning of time.” And Peter said, “The Lord is not lack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness. One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”

Faith can wait on God, friend. I’ll tell you Habakkuk said, “It will surely come.” Joseph knew. He said, “You’re going out.” It may have been three hundred years since God

gave the promise. It may be centuries later before the promise is fulfilled. But there is the rest of faith. You see, when faith is rooted in the word of God, then you know it is reliable, and therefore you can wait. You don't have to panic.

IV. The Reward of Joseph's Faith

But one last thing I want you to see, one last blessing in this box of bones. I want you to see the reward of his faith. Did they come out? Well, the Bible says here in the last verse, in verse 26, that he was put in a coffin in Egypt. But I want you to turn to Exodus now. That's the next book, so just turn right to chapter 13 and let's look. Exodus 13:18: "But God..." Now you don't need that much time for this one. That's close. All right now. "But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red sea: and the children of Israel went"—that's the children of Jacob, same thing—"went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt." Just exactly as God had told Abram way back yonder in the fifteenth chapter of the book of Genesis.

But now notice verse 19: "And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him..." Isn't that neat? "And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him..." Just exactly as old Joseph had believed God for. He's a man of faith. And God had given him this promise in his heart. And here's old Moses taking the bones of, of Joseph across Sinai. There they go. And, and Moses evidently became the custodian of those bones. He just didn't want to get too far from those bones. They meant so much to him. And then what happened? You know, Moses dropped off the scene.

But turn to the book of Joshua and the last chapter in the book of Joshua. I want you to see something here very interesting. Joshua 24. You know, the book of Genesis ends talking about the bones of Joseph. Now look in the book of Joshua 24:32: "And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem..." Isn't that neat? Isn't that wonderful? Here, here he says, "Look, take my bones with you. You're surely going out." And so, Moses takes them out. Joshua takes them in. And old Joseph is lord there in that little grave in Shechem.

Now, you know, I have been to Shechem and I've also been to Cairo, and I've seen the pyramids, and all of that. Did you know that old Joseph could have had a pyramid, most likely? Or he could have had one of those magnificent tombs. Why didn't he build a tomb like that? Why didn't he build a magnificent monumental tomb to himself? He could have spent a, a king's ransom and half a lifetime building him a burial place. I just believe that Joseph didn't want to do that because Joseph's heart was not in Egypt. Joseph's heart was in Canaan.

I believe one of the reasons that God could trust Joseph with so much wealth and so much prestige and so much power and all of the rest of it; God knew his heart. You know, most of us have about all God can trust us with, amen? God knew the heart of

this man Joseph. And God knew that Joseph's heart was with the people of God, the promises of God, not the land of Egypt, which really, actually represents sin and darkness, but with Canaan, which represents the fullness of the believer's life. And Joseph is wanting to be identified not with Egypt; he is wanting to be identified with Canaan.

You know, I'm glad that Joseph didn't build him one magnificent tomb down there in Egypt. I have a sneaking suspicion had he done that, the tomb would have been plundered and Joseph would have been on display in the Cairo Museum. I'm just glad he's not, aren't you? I'm glad that he's not there, some mummy wrapped up in a Cairo museum, everybody coming by gawking at him. He's there buried somewhere in Shechem. God rewarded his faith.

But, wait a minute. We're talking about the reward of his faith. God's not finished with those bones yet, did you know that? I have an idea that as that box of bones were being lowered into the grave at Shechem, if you'd listen real carefully you might have heard a chuckle coming from that box of bones, because they knew, perhaps, and I'm being a little whimsical here, but listen. The Bible teaches there's something else going to happen to the bones of Joseph, and my bones, and your bones. Daniel 12:2: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." And then listen to the words of Jesus in the New Testament talking about our bodies. John 5:28–29. Jesus said, "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice"—that is, the voice of the Son of man—"and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life..."

Did you know one of these days Jesus is going to come with a shout and the voice of the archangel and the trump of God? You know what's going to happen to the bones of Joseph buried at Shechem? Well, I'll tell you that the foot bone is going to be connected to the ankle bone. And the ankle bone is going to be connected to the shin bone. And the shin bone is going to be connected to the knee bone. And the knee bone is going to be connected to the thigh bone. And thigh bone is going to be connected to the hip bone. And the hip bone is going to be connected to the back bone. And the back bone is going to be connected to the neck bone. And the neck bone is going to be connected to the head bone. And Joseph is coming up out of that grave! He is. Them bones are going to walk around. That's right. You say, "That's far fetched." No, it's not far fetched. Listen to me. "Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in which all of that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and shall come forth." Won't that be a time when old Joseph gets up and shakes the dust off his shroud and goes to meet the Savior that he typified and spoke of and loved, even by faith by looking forward to Him so long ago?

Conclusion

I tell you, there's a blessing in a box of bones if you just look for it. There really is. I thank God for this lesson of faith that this man had so long ago, that he knew that he was going to die, but he knew that he could let his body lie down and rest awhile in the grave because there's coming a great "getting up" morning. You know, I really believe that those bones must have been a, a word of encouragement and a monument of encouragement to his contemporaries and to his brethren and to those who followed after.

You know, for a while they were living so good in Egypt. They were living high, wide, and handsome in Egypt. And they might have had a tendency to settle down. But every time they had a tendency to settle down, they could look over there at that box of bones and say, "Fellows, we can't settle down. We're going to be leaving here." And then, again, there were times when it got very hard, when things weren't easy. They were very hard. And they would tend to get discouraged and say, "We can't hold out." But they'd look over there at that box of bones and they'd say, "Look, we can hold out. It won't be long. We'll be leaving here." Now, a lot of encouragement in a box of bones.

But I want to tell you something, friend. I've got something that encourages me far better than a box of bones. It's an empty grave, an empty grave. Jesus rose from the dead. And, dear friend, when I'm tempted to settle down in this world, that empty grave tells me, "It won't be long, Adrian. You'll be leaving here. Don't settle down here." And when things get hard and they get tough, that empty grave tells me, "It's all right, Adrian. Because He lives, you can face tomorrow. It won't be long. We'll be leaving here." Are you saved? Do you know Jesus Christ? Does God's Spirit bear witness with yours that you're a child of God?

Let's pray for a moment. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. Heavenly Father, O, dear God, I just pray that You'll help us to understand today anew and afresh that faith comes by hearing the word of God. And because we've heard it, we can rely upon it. And because we can rely upon it, we can rest in it. And because we rest in it, we will be rewarded by it. O Father, I pray that many will see the reward of faith because they've trusted Your word. In Jesus' name, amen.

God's Presence in the Hour of Death

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: October 1, 2000

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 50:22–26

“And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence.”

GENESIS 50:25

Outline

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Introduction

Take your Bibles. Find Genesis chapter 50. Genesis, as you know, is the first book. Chapter 50 is the last chapter in the first book. And we're coming to the closing verses in the book of Genesis and the life of Joseph, and in a moment we're going to begin reading in verse 22. The title of the message in our thought today: "God's Presence in the Hour of Death."

Man is the only creature who knows he's going to die and he's trying desperately to forget it. I believe that's the reason that some ladies, when they reach a certain age, overdo the cosmetics. I believe that's the reason that some guys get that sports car. And they're trying to hold on to that youth that is slipping away and receding over the horizon.

And, you know, the fear of death keeps people in bondage. Did you know that? Let me give you a verse of Scripture even before we read from Genesis. It's found in Hebrews chapter 2, verses 14 and 15. It speaks of Jesus, who became a human being. And He came to this earth for one purpose, and that is to destroy the works of the devil. And listen to this. The Bible says, *“He also himself likewise took part of the same;”*—that

is, flesh and blood—*“that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”* (Hebrews 2:14–15)

Now, you think about that. He came to deliver those who feared death, who all of their lifetime were in bondage. May I tell you something? *You are not ready to live until you're no longer afraid to die.* You're not ready to live until you're no longer afraid to die. And Jesus came to deliver you from that bondage of fear.

A child of God can smile at death. That's what Joseph did. And I want you to read the scripture here, beginning in verse 22: *“And Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he, and his father's house: and Joseph lived an hundred and ten years.”* (Genesis 50:22) But he still died. One hundred and ten years. But, you know, he was a great man, but he still died. And no matter who you are, and how great you are, you're going to die. I'm going to die. The only exception to that—possible exception—is that if Jesus were to come before death. *“And Joseph saw Ephraim's children of the third generation.”* (Genesis 50:23) And then, skip to verse 24: *“And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die...”*—that's a pretty flat statement, isn't it?—*“I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.”* That is, God is going to take you out of Egypt, and God's going to bring you into Canaan. *“And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel,”*—that is, his brothers—*“saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence.”* (Genesis 50:24–25) That is, “God's going to come. He's going to take you out of Egypt. He's going to bring you to the Promised Land. And when He does, you take my bones with you. I wouldn't be caught dead here. Now, when you go, you take my bones with you.” Now, notice verse 26: *“So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old: and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.”* (Genesis 50:26)

Now, was that important? That little statement, “God's going to visit you. He's going to take you out of Egypt. And when He takes you, you take my bones with you, will you, please? Just carry me out of Egypt into Canaan.” Question: Was that important? You'd better believe it was important. Remember that twenty-five percent of the book of Genesis is given to the life of Joseph. And when the New Testament comments on the life of Joseph, do you know what one thing the New Testament commented on in the life of Joseph? It's an amazing thing. This statement, that, “you carry my bones with you.”

Put in your margin Hebrews 11, verse 22, and listen to what it says—Hebrews 11, verse 22: *“By faith”—by faith—“Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.”* (Hebrews 11:22) Now of all of the things that could have been written about the life of Joseph, by faith, the Bible says, he reminded them that they were clearing out of Egypt, they were going to Canaan, and he made mention of his bones, and he did it by faith.

Now we're going to talk today about the blessing in a box of bones. I'll give you a "skeleton outline," all right? We're going to talk about the blessing that is in that box of bones. Here Joseph is saying, "Look, I'm leaving here. I'm going with you. I'll be dead, but I'm going with you. We're clearing out of here. No longer are we going to be in Egypt. We're going out. And when you go, you take my bones with you." He's still practicing the presence of God. Now he's practicing the presence of God in the time of death.

Would you like to be able to smile at death? When your feet touch those chilly waters of Jordan, when your loved ones are around your bedside, when they're talking in hushed tones, if that's the way you go, would you like to have the assurance that Joseph had so long ago? Three things I lay on your heart that come out of this passage of Scripture if you would practice the presence of God in the time of death.

I. We Need to Remember the Unbreakable Promises of God

The first thought: We need to remember the unbreakable promises of God. Now you're not going to have any peace at the time of death unless you have some promises to stand on. We need to remember. Get it down in your heart now. Let God the Holy Spirit write this on your heart. We need to remember the unbreakable promises of God. Now, how could Joseph do all of this? The Bible says, in Hebrews 11, remember, that he said it was by faith that he made mention of leaving Egypt. It was by faith that he said take my bones with you. You see, Joseph had the Word of God.

Remember what the book of Romans tells us, in Romans 10, verse 17? "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." (Romans 10:17) Well, what had God said? Listen. More than three hundred years before Joseph said what he said, God had made a promise. God made a promise to Abraham. Three centuries before, God said something to Abraham, and Joseph knew it, and that's the reason Joseph said what he said. What did God say to Abraham? Put in your margin Genesis chapter 15, verses 13 and 14: "*And he said unto Abram,*"—that is, God the Father. Abraham's name was Abram at that time—"*Know of a surety*"—that is, you can bank on it—"*that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs,*"—that is, you're going to Egypt—"*and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance.*" (Genesis 15:13-14)

That's what God said: "Abram, I'm going to make a great nation of you, but your descendants are going down to a place, a land that's not theirs. They're going to stay there four hundred years. And after they stay there four hundred years, they are coming out. And when they come out, they're going to come out very wealthy." Now Joseph knew this—Joseph knew this. And that's the reason Joseph said what he said by faith. His faith

was rooted in an unshakable, unbreakable promise of God.

Now, do you want to smile at death? Do you want to practice the presence of God in the time of death? There's no possible way you can do it without faith. And what is faith? Let me tell you again what faith is. Faith is not positive thinking. I love positive thinking, but that's not faith. Faith is not following a hunch. Sometimes our hunches are good, but that's not faith. Faith is not hoping for the best. I hope you hope for the best, but that's not faith. Faith is not a feeling of optimism. I love optimists, but that's not faith. Faith is not self-confidence. Self-confidence is all right, if your confidence is first in the Lord. Faith is not wishing upon a star. What is faith? Faith is getting a word from God and believing it.

In Hebrews 11 and verse 22, that same chapter of Hebrews, it says, "*By faith Joseph...gave commandment concerning his bones.*" (Hebrews 11:22) Hebrews 11, verse 1, tells us what that faith is. It says, "*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*" (Hebrews 11:1) That word *hope*—"faith is the substance of things hoped for"—does not mean, "maybe so, perhaps so." *Hope*, in the Bible, means "rock-ribbed assurance based on the Word of God."

The Second Coming of Jesus is called the blessed what? Hope. That doesn't mean a blessed maybe, a blessed perhaps. It means absolute assurance based on the Word of God. Faith is the substance of the absolute assurance based on the Word of God. God had made a promise to Abram. God cannot lie. Joseph, therefore, in the time of death, could smile at death, because he had the unbreakable promises of God.

Now, what is faith? *Faith, friend, is not naming it and claiming it. You can't claim it until God names it. Faith is standing on the promises of God.* "Well," you say, "how come Joseph had so much faith, and I have so little?" Well, Joseph had soaked his soul in the Word of God.

There was another preacher in another century, but he was as well known as Billy Graham. His name was Dwight L. Moody. Dwight L. Moody was not an educated, seminary-trained man, but Moody, it is said in his biography, took two continents—North America and Europe—and shook them for God. Moody was a man of great faith. He gave this testimony concerning his faith. He said, "I wanted faith." He said, "I prayed for faith. I prayed for faith. I prayed for faith. I prayed for faith. But," he said, "my faith didn't grow. Then," he said, "I read in the book of Romans that faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God," and he said, "I stopped asking God for faith. I got in the Bible. I saturated my soul with the Word of God, and," he said, "my faith began to grow and to grow and to grow."

Now, do you want to be able to smile at death? Do you want to practice the presence of God in the time of death? Then remember the unbreakable promises of God. Notice verse 24. Look at it again: "*And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and*

God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land”—now, watch—“which he swore to Abraham.” (Genesis 50:24) Underscore that: *“he swore to Abraham.”* God took an oath. If one promise in the Word of God fails, God loses His character; God is a liar; God has taken an oath, and He’s broken His word. Friend, God can’t lie. Remember that.

II. We Need to Rest in the Unshakable Power of God

So, what’s the first thing? We need to remember the unbreakable—unbreakable—promises of God. Have you got it? Okay, second thing: We need to rest in the unshakable power of God. You see, the promises without the power mean nothing. Now, notice what He says in verse 24. He says, *“God will surely...bring you out.”* (Genesis 50:24) How could he be so sure? Because God is God. He is the Almighty God.

A. Faith Is Not Shaken by Reasoning

Now, let me tell you something else about faith. We’re talking now about unshakable faith. We talked about the unbreakable word. Now we’re talking about the unshakable power. You see, faith is not shaken by appearances. You think about it. When Joseph quoted this promise that God had made, from all appearances, there was no reason for them to think of ever leaving Egypt. They were ensconced there. Joseph was the prime minister there. They had it good there. They were living a life of ease. They had come from the land of Canaan to Egypt because of a famine. There’s no famine now in Egypt. They’re in a place of privileged position. Don’t you take any promise of God and parade it past the judgment bar of your reason. Don’t say, “Well, we’d better re-examine the Word of God in the light of present-day circumstances.” It was unshaken in the face of human reasoning.

B. Faith Is Not Shaken by Emotion

Also, it was unshakable in the face of human emotion. You know, emotions, don’t really matter when it comes to God’s Word. Now in the passage in front of us, nothing is said about Joseph’s emotions one way or the other. I don’t know what they were, but I want to tell you, they really did not matter that much. Feelings come and feelings go, and feelings are deceiving. The Bible is the Word of God; nothing else is worth believing. Don’t take counsel with your emotions as to whether or not a promise of God is true. I’ve told you before that *your emotions are the shallowest part of your nature. Salvation is the deepest work of God. God doesn’t do the deepest work in the shallowest part.* Forget your emotions. The Bible doesn’t have a whole lot to say about your feelings. Put your confidence in the unshakable power of God—not your reasoning, and not your emotions.

Martin Luther, the great reformer, had an encounter with Satan. It seemed like Satan was just face to face with him. And Satan said to Luther, “Do you feel your sins are forgiven?” Luther said, “It doesn’t matter how I feel; it’s what God says.” I like that.

I read a corresponding story, very different, but almost the same, of a little boy who went to a revival crusade. And in this revival crusade, the preacher preached from John chapter 5, verse 24: *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.”* (John 5:24) The boy believed that message, gave his heart to Christ, and was saved. But he gave this testimony later on as a mature Christian. He said, “That night, when I walked home,” he said, “it seemed as if Satan was perched on my shoulder, whispering in my ear, saying, ‘You’re not saved. You’re not good enough. You’re not strong enough. You didn’t do this. You didn’t do that. You’ll never make it.’” And he said he went home and Satan kept taunting him. And the little fellow said, “I sat on the couch in our living room.” And he said, “It seemed as though Satan was under the couch, he was that real.” And he said, “I got to thinking, ‘Well, maybe I’m not saved. I’d better look at that verse again.’” And he picked it up. *“Verily, verily, I say unto you,”*—he said, “Well, Jesus is speaking”—*“He that heareth my word,”*—he said, “I’ve heard it”—*“and believeth on him that sent me”*—he said, “I believe”—*“hath everlasting life”*—he said, “I have everlasting life. There, devil, read it for yourself,” put his finger on the verse, and put it under the couch. He said from that moment—from that moment—he had the assurance. You see, it is the Word of God, not your feelings, that gives that assurance.

C. Faith Is Not Shaken by Delay

Now I’ll tell you something else. Faith is not shaken by reason. It is not shaken by emotion. It is not shaken by delay. The promise that Joseph was standing on was already three hundred years old, and Joseph now is talking of his bones. It would be centuries yet to come before they go out. Did you know that faith can wait? I love that passage in Habakkuk chapter 2 and verse 3: *“For the vision is for yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come.”* (Habakkuk 2:3) Is that not a great verse? Listen to it again: *“For the vision is yet for an appointed time,”*—God has His appointed time—*“but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it: because it will surely come, it will not tarry.”*

In preparing this message, I thought about how God sometimes delays, and I thought about a prophecy He made concerning ancient Tyre, which was a nation just north of Israel on the seacoast of the Mediterranean. And here’s what God said concerning ancient Tyre. Put this down—Ezekiel 26, verse 3: *“Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, O Tyrus, and will cause many nations to come up against thee, as the sea causeth his waves to come up.”* (Ezekiel 26:3) Now they were

on the seacoast, and they could understand this. And then, in Ezekiel 26, verse 12: *“And they shall make a spoil of thy riches, and make a prey of thy merchandise:”—now, listen to this—“and they shall break down thy walls, and destroy thy pleasant houses: and they shall lay thy stones and thy timber and thy dust in the midst of the water. And I will cause the noise of thy songs to cease; and the sound of thy harps shall be no more heard. And I will make thee”—listen to this—“like the top of a rock: thou shalt be a place to spread nets upon; thou shalt be built no more: for I the LORD have spoken it, saith the Lord GOD.”* (Ezekiel 26:12–14)

Now God says, “Look, Tyre, you’re so high and mighty, so wealthy, so luxurious, I’ll tell you what I’m going to do to you. I’m going to bring a number of nations against you, and what’s going to happen is this. I’m going to take your beautiful houses, your temples, your timbers, all of it; I’m going to take it and wipe it out. I’m going to cast it into the sea, even the dust. The only thing that will be left of you will be a place where fishermen will spread their nets.” About 550 BC, Nebuchadnezzar came, and he came against the island of Tyre, or he came against the nation of Tyre, and when the people saw Nebuchadnezzar coming, they knew they could not defeat this Babylonian monarch. And so there was an island just off the coast, and the people fled to the island, and they left the city. Well, there in ancient Tyre, the walls were still there; the ruins of the buildings were still there; the ancient timbers were still there. It was not like the top of a rock. It looked like Ezekiel’s prophecy really was not going to be fulfilled literally, actually.

But more than two hundred years later, Alexander the Great came. Now the people of Tyre had gone out to this island, and they built the strongest navy in the world, and they had a great navy there. Alexander the Great had no navy, but he had a great army. Alexander the Great asked for help from the people of Tyre. They said, “No, we’re not going to help you. We have it fine out here on our island nation. We’re not going to help you.” That infuriated Alexander the Great. He decided he would do something. He couldn’t sail out there, but he decided he would do something. He said, “I’m going to build a causeway out to you. I’m coming after you.” And he told his soldiers, he said, “We’re building a causeway out to that island. We’re going to march on that island.” “Well, where are we going to get the materials?” He said, “You see these timbers? You see these stones? You see these walls? Take them and build a causeway.” And they built a causeway from the coast of the Mediterranean out to the island where the city of Tyre was. They took all of the stones, all of the rocks, all the timber, all the dirt, all the dust, and when they’d finished, it was as bald as a rock, and the fishermen there would spread their nets on that rock.

Friend, listen. I’m glad that Joseph didn’t try to allegorize the Scripture. I’m glad that he did not try to spiritualize the Scripture. When God says He’s going to do something, He’s going to do it. It may take five hundred years, but He’s going to do it—He’s going

to do it. And He's going to do it literally.

"Do you believe in the literal Second Coming of Jesus Christ, Adrian?" Of course I do! I believe Jesus Christ is coming back to this earth actually, literally, visibly, bodily. Many people missed His first coming, because they tried to explain away the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ the first time. When the Bible said He would be born of a virgin, He was. When the Bible said He'd be born in Bethlehem, He was. And I'll tell you, His Second Coming is going to be just that real. I like what the little girl said: "If God didn't mean what He said, why didn't He say what He meant?"

No, delay means nothing. People are saying, "Well, pastor, you believe Jesus is coming again? Why hasn't He come?" Well, the Bible speaks of people who say things like that. And Peter says many shall say, "*Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were.*" (2 Peter 3:4) But Peter said "the day of the Lord will surely come." (2 Peter 3:10) And, "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." (2 Peter 3:8)

III. We Need to Receive the Unmistakable Peace of God

Now, let's move to the third and final thing if you would learn to smile at death. Now, listen. First of all, what do you do? You remember the unbreakable promises of God. And you rest in the unshakable power of God. What God says He will do, He will do. I hope you believe that. You see, God will surely bring you out. That's what Joseph said. All right, His unshakable power. And then receive the unmistakable peace of God—the unmistakable peace of God. That's the third thing.

You see, was Joseph's faith rewarded? Put these scriptures down in your margin. Exodus chapter 13, beginning in verse 19: "*And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him.*" (Exodus 13:19) When Moses was getting ready to go, he said, "All right, go get that coffin. Get old Joe. Load him up on that wagon." And they said, "We're clearing out. Heigh ho! Let's go! Take his bones." And there's old Joseph's coffin riding along.

Well, Moses didn't get to go all the way into Canaan. Who was it that led them into Canaan? It was Joshua. And you read in the book of Joshua chapter 24, verse 32: "*And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem.*" (Joshua 24:32) And so they're taking the bones of Joseph. And Moses brought them across the burning sands of the Sinai, and Joshua carried them across Jordan into Shechem, and the bones are buried there in Shechem. Just as Joseph had faith to believe, it was done—it was done. It always happens as God promises that it will happen.

Well, why did Joseph say, "Take my bones with you?" I mean, why is that so important? I mean, after all, he was dead. Well, you see, Joseph wanted to be a part of what God was doing. Have you ever seen the tombs in Egypt? I've been to Egypt on a

number of occasions to see some of those tombs. I've been inside the Great Pyramid. Incredible! Have you seen all of the accoutrements that belonged to the king, old King Tut? If you go to London, go to the British Museum and see all of those sarcophagi and see those mummies there in the British Museum. It's something to see. Boy, I'm glad you can't find one of Joseph in there. I mean, Joseph was not a materialist. He had all of this wealth. He could have built a monument, a colossal monument. He built a better monument, a monument of faith. Now he had wealth, but God could trust him with it.

I heard about a lawyer who got himself a BMW. He'd always wanted one. He was so proud of it. Just when he opened the door to get out, a car came along and sideswiped him—tore the door off while he was opening the door. He said, "Oh, no! Oh, no! My Beemer! Oh, no!" A policeman said, "Man, are you crazy? You're worrying about that door. Look, it ripped your left arm off." "Oh," he said, "oh, no! My Rolex!"

We've got a lot like that. They're living for this world—this world only. Joseph, he was wanting to be a part of what God was doing. You know, all of the success of Egypt meant nothing to him. He wanted to leave a monument of faith. You know, he knew—I believe that he knew—that God was not finished with his bones.

Let me give you a couple of scriptures—Daniel 12, verse 2: "*And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake...*"—talking about Joseph now—"many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." (Daniel 12:2) There's a "great getting up morning," isn't there? What did Jesus say? John chapter 5, verses 28 and 29: "*Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.*" (John 5:28–29) There's a "getting up morning."

I think when they lowered that coffin into the ground there at Shechem, if you listened, you could have heard a little laughter coming from those bones: maybe a chuckle from a knuckle, and a little glee from a knee, and a grin from a shin, as they put those bones into the ground. Joseph knew that one of these days the voice of the Son of God is going to speak, and "*the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up...with them...to meet the Lord in the air.*" (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17)

You see, folks, if you know the Lord, and you know the unbreakable promises of God, the unshakable power of God, you will experience that undeniable peace of God when it comes time to die. What did Joseph leave to his brothers? You know, every time those people saw those bones, there was that coffin. Every time they saw it, they were reminded of the brevity of life, the length of eternity. And if they were living in prosperity, those bones reminded them that one of these days they had to leave it all. And if they

were living in adversity, those bones reminded them that there is a better day coming.

Conclusion

There was a preacher in Texas, Joe Henry Hankins. Joe Henry Hankins preached, and the wife of a very successful businessman came to faith in Christ. Hankins thought he would go and visit the businessman. So he went by, and said, “Your wife has been saved. She’s going to be baptized Sunday night. I’d like to baptize the two of you together. I want you to give your heart to Christ.” The businessman put him off a little bit. But the preacher began to press, and say, “No, sir, you need to be saved.”

After, there was this encounter that many times soul winners have. The businessman said, “Preacher, I’ll tell you what. It’s Saturday. Tomorrow morning I’ll come to church. You give the invitation. I’ll be the first one down that aisle. I will accept Christ as my personal Savior. And that night, when my wife is baptized, I’ll be baptized with her.” The preacher said, “Great! Wonderful!” and he started out, put his hand on the doorknob, and said, “No. Wait a minute. Something’s wrong here—something’s wrong.” He turned around and he went back to that man, whose name was Pat, and he said, “Pat, listen. If you’re going to do it tomorrow morning, why not now? Why don’t you just pray now and give your heart to Jesus, and come and make it public tomorrow morning?” The businessman said, “Look, preacher. I’m a man of my word. If I say I’m going to do it tomorrow, I’m going to do it tomorrow morning. You can bank on it.” The preacher said, “Well, all right.”

He started again the second time, got his hand on the doorknob, and he knew something was not right. He took out his New Testament and opened it up to the scripture that said, “*Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.*” (2 Corinthians 6:2) He said, “Pat, this is what God said. The devil says tomorrow; God says today. Has a man anywhere ever done wrong by doing what God says? And has a man ever anywhere done right by doing what Satan says?” The man was taken back a little bit. He said, “Preacher.” The preacher put the Scripture in his hand and said, “You read it: ‘*Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.*’” The man slammed his hand into his fist, and he said, “Preacher, you’re right. The devil has never done anything good for me, only lie to me. This is what God says. I’m going to do it now.” And they slipped down on their knees, and Pat prayed and gave his heart to Jesus Christ.

Hankins left that house. When he was having breakfast in the morning, the phone rang. It was Pat’s nephew. He said, “Preacher, I need to call you. They wanted me to call. Pat wanted me to call you. He’s had a heart attack. He says he’s not coming to church this morning, but he wanted you to know that he’s not failing to keep his word. He had a little heart attack. We think he’ll be better.” They had the service that morning.

When Hankins was having lunch that Sunday, the phone rang again. This time it was a sister-in-law. She said, “Preacher, you need to know that he’s had another heart attack, this one very serious.” Then before Hankins could get up and go to the hospital to visit, the phone rang the third time. They said, “You don’t need to come right away. He’s gone. He’s dead. But, preacher, Pat said to be sure to tell you that he was so glad you encouraged him to give his heart to Jesus Christ last night—so glad.”

Friend, the Bible says, “*Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.*” (Proverbs 27:1) And every box that you see, every casket that you see, and every funeral that you see, reminds you, today is the day of salvation. Give your heart to Jesus, and you can smile at death.

Waiting for the Promise

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: August 27, 1985

Main Scripture Text: Genesis 50:22–26

“And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you.”

GENESIS 50:24

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Unbreakable Reason for Joseph’s Faith
 - II. The Unshakeable Rest of Joseph’s Faith
 - III. The Unmistakable Reward of Joseph’s Faith
- Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take the Book of Genesis, please, which is the first book. Find the last chapter in the first book, would you, please. That will be chapter 50. Sometimes it seems like we pray, and God seems so slow to answer our prayer, and we wonder, “Will He ever get around to answering our prayer, if He heard it?” or, “Did He hear it at all?” The title of the message today is, “Waiting for the Promise,” or we just might say, “The Blessing in a Box of Bones.”

I want you to listen to this scripture here in Genesis chapter 50, and I begin reading in verse 22: *“And Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he, and his father’s house: and Joseph lived an hundred and ten years. And Joseph saw Ephraim’s children of the third generation: the children also of Machir the son of Manasseh were brought up upon Joseph’s knees. And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence. So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old: and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt”* (Genesis 50:22–26). Now the Book of Genesis begins with creation. It ends with a coffin. Isn’t that incredible? It begins with glory: *“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth”* (Genesis 1:1). And it ends with a grave—begins with the vastness of eternity, and it ends with the shortness of time.

Here’s a man being buried—his name: Joseph. One of the greatest men beyond any

doubt or peradventure that ever lived, Joseph the patriarch. But he also died. And Genesis, that begins in a blaze of brightness, ends up in a box of bones.

Well, what's all this box of bones about, anyway? They buried Joseph. They put him in a coffin. But Joseph said to his contemporaries, "Boys, I'm not going to be here. I don't want to stay here. God's going to visit you. God is going to take you out of the land of Egypt where we live now, and God's going to take you all the way to a Promised Land, the land of Canaan. And when God visits you, and when God takes you out of Egypt, and when God brings you into Canaan, I want you to solemnly promise me that you'll take my bones with you. You're going to Canaan. Take my bones with you. I wouldn't be caught dead here. I want you to get me out of this place. And when you go, and you will surely go, I want you to take me with you."

You say, "Pastor Rogers, is that significant?" You'd better believe it's significant. Did you know, in the Book of Hebrews, when God is listing in the Book of Hebrews all of the wonderful things that all of the saints did by faith, and God came to Joseph's life to list the things that Joseph did by faith, of all the wonderful things that Joseph did, this one episode is mentioned? Put in your margin Hebrews 11, verse 22. Listen to it now. This is the New Testament commentary on what happened here so long ago, and it says this: "*By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones*" (Hebrews 11:22). By faith, Joseph said, "When you go, take my bones with you."

So we're going to learn an incredible lesson on faith today, and I hope you'll listen very carefully, and especially if it seems like the answer to your prayer is a long time coming.

I. The Unbreakable Reason for Joseph's Faith

Now, here's the first thing I want you to see. I want you to see what I'm going to call the unbreakable reason for Joseph's faith. Joseph had faith. What was the reason for his faith? Well, look, if you will, in verse 24: "*And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you,*"—well, how could Joseph be so sure?—"and bring you out of this land unto the land which he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob" (Genesis 50:24).

Now, why was Joseph so sure that this was going to happen? Because God had already said it would happen. God told Abraham it would happen. God told Isaac it would happen. God told Jacob it would happen. And God swore by Himself, and He could swear by no other. And so, by the immutable, infallible Word of God, Joseph had this faith.

Now, learn a lesson about faith. The Bible tells us, in Romans chapter 10, verse 17, that, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Romans 10:17). You

will never have faith until you hear God. Listen. That was a good place for an *amen*. You will never have faith until you hear from God. What is faith? Faith is believing what God has said. That's what faith is. Faith is not positive thinking. Now, if you're a positive thinker, I congratulate you. I want to be around you. I know some folks who can brighten up a room just by leaving it. I like to be around positive people. But faith is not positive thinking. Faith is not following a hunch. You might have women's intuition, or whatever, but that's not faith. Faith is not hoping for the best. You ought to hope for the best, but that's not faith. Faith is not a feeling of optimism.

What is faith? Faith is not self-confidence. Faith is not wishing upon a star. Faith is hearing what God has said and believing it. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." And what was the unbreakable reason of Joseph's faith? He said, "God has sworn. God will keep His Word." Faith is evidence and faith is substance based on the Word of God. Hebrews 11 and verse 1: "*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for...*"—and the word *hope* there means, "rock-ribbed assurance based on the Word of God—"*faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*" (Hebrews 11:1). You don't have to see it if you've got faith in your heart, because the evidence is there that God will keep His Word.

Now, have you ever heard this expression: "Believing will make it so?" Believing doesn't make it so. You don't just name it and claim it. You can't claim it until God names it. So therefore, listen. Are you having trouble believing God? Do you want more faith? Get into the Word of God. The Bible is the one book of all books that will inculcate faith in your life.

Billy Graham is the best-known evangelist of our day. In another day, there was another man who left his mark upon this world. His name was Dwight L. Moody. And today, if you're familiar with the wonderful Moody Bible Institute, you know that that institute is there as a memorial and a tribute to the great ministry of the evangelist Dwight L. Moody. Dwight L. Moody said, "I wanted faith. I wanted faith. I wanted more faith. I kept praying to God and saying, 'God, I need faith. Oh, God, give me faith. God, give me faith. God, give me faith.'" And he said, "I just didn't seem to be getting any more faith, in spite of the fact that I prayed over and over again and asked God for faith." And then he said, "One day I read Romans 10, verse 17, and it says this: that '*faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*' (Romans 10:17), and I stopped asking God to give me faith, and I started studying the Word of God, and faith burst ablaze in my heart as I began to read the Word of God." Get into the Word of God. The Bible will inculcate faith.

Why did Joseph say, "God will surely do this"? How could he be so certain? He had saturated his soul in the Word of God. He knew the promises that God had made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. So the first point: the unbreakable reason for his faith.

Jesus said, *“The scripture cannot be broken”* (John 10:35)—the unbreakable reason for his faith.

II. The Unshakeable Rest of Joseph’s Faith

Now, here’s the second thing: the unshakeable rest of his faith. Because the promise is unbreakable, Joseph’s faith was unshakeable, and he could just rest in that faith. Now he says, in verse 24, *“God will surely visit you”* (Genesis 50:24). Now it didn’t seem that way. I mean, if you looked around, it didn’t seem that they would ever be leaving Egypt. I mean, they were at home in Egypt. Joseph is the Prime Minister of Egypt. They have position. They have power. They have prestige. The Jews are there in a very privileged position. But Joseph said, *“We’re going to leave here, and it doesn’t matter what appearances look like right now.”*

Now, let me say this to you: True faith can rest in God and does not depend upon appearance, and it is not shaken by appearances. Don’t look around and say, *“Could this be? It doesn’t look this way.”* It doesn’t make any difference. Real faith is not shaken by reason or appearances. It is not shaken by emotion. I don’t know how Joseph felt when he felt this. But, really, how he felt really didn’t make any difference. Don’t consult with your reason. Don’t consult with your emotion. Consult with the Word of God and believe it, no matter what things seem like, and no matter how you feel about it.

Emotions are funny things. They’ll play tricks on you. I was on an airplane this week, and I was sitting by a young man, a big, brawny guy. And he had on a black hat. And he turned the back end of that hat toward me. It was one of these duckbill hats, and it had two big tiger eyes staring out from it. And those eyes were looking at me that whole flight. And on the front of this guy’s cap it said, *“No Fear”*—two big, ferocious eyes looking at me. He was a big old guy, tough. Boy, we hit an air pocket and dropped—*shooooom*, like that. He put his head between his knees. That guy was scared to death. And I said, *“Boy, it takes more than a hat, doesn’t it, to take away fear.”* He said, *“No fear.”* He almost died. You say, *“What about you, pastor?”* I’m not going to tell you about me, but I’m going... I wasn’t wearing a hat, anyway.

What I want to say is, folks, hey, look. Your emotions come, and your emotions go. But faith is not consulting with appearances. It’s not consulting with emotions. Faith, in spite of delay, in spite of your reasoning, in spite of your emotions, in spite sometime of the passing of time, you just trust God.

Now, look, if you will, in verse 25. He says, *“God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my”*—what?—*“my bones”* (Genesis 50:25). He didn’t say, *“You’re going to take my cadaver.”* He didn’t say, *“You’re going to take my body.”* *“You’re going to take my bones.”* He knew that the skin on his flesh would have disintegrated when all of this

came to pass. Did you know that when God gave the promise that they were going to leave Egypt the promise was already 300 years old? It was 300 years old when God made the promise that, “I’m going to bring you out of Egypt.” And did you know it was about 200 more years coming before they ever left?

You know, a lot of times we’d like to hurry God up, wouldn’t we? We like to say, “Now, God, get with it! I mean, do it, and do it now!” But God just seems to move in majestic stillness and quietness and calmness. Jesus came in *“the fullness of time”* (Galatians 4:4). And, folks, He’s coming back again in the fullness of time (Ephesians 1:10). You need to wait for the promise. Here’s a good verse for you to put in your margin right here, and it’s Habakkuk chapter 2 and verse 3. And I’m talking to you about how to wait for the promise. Habakkuk chapter 2, verse 3: *“For the vision”—that is, the revelation—“is yet for an appointed time,”—now, underscore, as I have done, the word “appointed time”—“but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry”* (Habakkuk 2:3). That is, it will not ultimately tarry.

Now, if it seems like that God is so slow, so laboriously slow, “Oh, God, why do you wait so long. Lord, when are you going to come? When are you going to fulfill your promise to me?” Habakkuk said, “It is for the appointed time.”

Joseph said, “You’re going to carry my bones out of Egypt.” It was 200 more years before that ever happened, and the promise had been made 300 years before that. *God is never in a hurry, and God is never late.*

I was studying this week about a prophecy concerning ancient Tyre. You know, if you read the news today up in Lebanon, there’s a lot of activity around what used to be Tyre, the city of Tyre, one of the greatest, mightiest cities in the Old Testament. But God made this prophecy concerning Tyre, and this was the prophecy in Ezekiel chapter 26 and verse 3. Here’s what the Lord said to Tyre—it was a wicked, ungodly city: *“Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, O Tyrus, and will cause many nations to come up against thee, as the sea causeth its waves to come up”* (Ezekiel 26:3). And then God made this prophecy in Ezekiel 26, verses 12 through 14: *“And they shall make a spoil of thy riches, and make a prey of thy merchandise: and they shall break down thy walls, and destroy thy pleasant houses: and they shall lay thy stones and thy timber and thy dust in the midst of the water. And I will cause the noise of thy songs to cease; and the sound of thy harps shall be no more heard. And I will make thee like the top of a rock: thou shalt be a place to spread nets upon; thou shalt be built no more: for I the LORD have spoken it, saith the Lord GOD”* (Ezekiel 26:12–14).

Now God said to Tyre, “Listen. I’m going to destroy you. I am going to pull down your houses. I’m going to make you like the top of a bald rock. I’m going to take all of the

stones and the timbers and the dust of this city, and I'm going to cast it into the sea, and you will never ever be rebuilt." Now that's what God said to Tyre. Now this is one of the earth's mightiest cities. Well, a long time after God made this prophecy, Nebuchadnezzar came along, and in 550 BC Nebuchadnezzar laid war against Tyre, and he destroyed the houses, and he destroyed the city, but he didn't destroy the people. The people slipped away under darkness. And they were sort of a naval people right there on the seacoast, and so they went to an island about a half-mile off the shore to get away from Nebuchadnezzar. And Nebuchadnezzar just went on about his business. And he left the houses and so forth standing there on the seashore.

Well, that was one nation that came up against Tyre. But God said that the very stones, the very timber, the very dust, would be cast into the sea. Now they went out on this island, and they said, "We'd better not go back to the mainland. It's too dangerous there." So they built a new place to live and dwell out there on this island about a half-mile off the seacoast there in the Mediterranean. And they built one of the strongest navies of ancient times.

Now the years came and the years went. But Ezekiel had said by divine inspiration that the very stones, the very timbers, the very dust, of that city would be cast into the sea, and it wasn't done. However, in 315 BC, a young man came whose name was Alexander, Alexander the Great. And Alexander was on his great sweep across all the known kingdoms of the world to conquer them. And when he came to that place where the people of Tyre were, Alexander didn't have a navy; he just had an army. So he asked some favors of the people of Tyre out there on their little island kingdom offshore about a half-mile. They said, "We're not going to do anything for you, Alexander. And furthermore, we don't have to. You have an army, but you can't get to us. We have a navy, and we're quite secure."

Well, you don't say a thing like that to a man like Alexander the Great. Alexander the Great was infuriated. So he said to his men, "We're going to build a causeway out to that island." They said, "What are we going to build it with?" He said, "Well, there are plenty of building materials here. Take these stones. Take these timbers. Take this dirt and build a causeway out to that island." And that's exactly what they did. They scooped the top of what used to be ancient Tyre up and made a causeway out to subjugate the people of Tyre to decimate and destroy them. And when Alexander the great was finished, where ancient Tyre used to be it was as bald as the top of rock. And today fishermen spread their nets there just as exactly as God said it would be. It was centuries in coming, but it came. Somebody said, "The mills of God grind slowly, but they grind exceeding fine."

Now what I'm trying to say is this: that some people today are saying, "Well, I don't believe Jesus Christ is coming again." Well, why don't you believe that Jesus Christ is

coming? “Oh, well, preachers have always been preaching about Christ coming again. He hasn’t come yet.” I think the people of Tyre must have said, “All this business about Tyre being cast into the sea, that’s not going to happen.” Listen to this scripture, folks. And what a blessing it would be if we would remember it—2 Peter chapter 3 and verses 3 and 4. The Bible says, in verse 3, “In the last days scoffers shall come, saying, where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation” (2 Peter 3:3–4). That is, people say, “Aw, Pastor Rogers, forget all this about Jesus coming and the end of the world. Why, everything’s going on just like it always has.” But Peter says, in 2 Peter chapter 3 and verse 8, “*But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day*” (2 Peter 3:8). Listen. Learn to wait for the promise. Jesus is coming.

Peter goes on to say, “*But the day of the Lord will come*” (2 Peter 3:10). You don’t think Jesus Christ is coming again because it’s been so long? Why, those people said, “We’re not going to leave Egypt, maybe. Why, it’s been 200 years since Joseph said, ‘Take my bones out of here.’” But, you see, when there is the unbreakable reason for his faith, there is the unshakable rest of his faith. Just rest in the Word of God.

III. The Unmistakable Reward of Joseph’s Faith

Now, here’s the third and final thing I want you to see. First of all, the unbreakable reason for faith: the Word of God. Secondly, the unshakable rest of his faith: because God said it, wait for it. “Though it delay, it is for the appointed time” (Habakkuk 2:3). You can be absolutely certain God will keep His Word. Here’s the third thing—and I finish: the unmistakable reward of his faith.

Now, was his faith rewarded? Were his bones taken out of Egypt? Were his bones carried to Canaan? Well, you’re in Genesis. Turn to Exodus chapter 13, if you will. Just fast-forward for a moment, and look, if you will, in verse 18: “*But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red sea: and the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt. And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him: for he had straightly sworn the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you*” (Exodus 13:18). So when they left, Moses said, “Hey, one more thing. When you’re loading up that wagon, get that box of bones. Put it on that wagon, because we promised old Joe we’d take his bones with us.” And so across the sands of the Sinai they’re hauling that box full of bones.

Now I want you to go on to Joshua chapter 24, if you will, with me. Just keep on going in your Bible. And when you come to Joshua 24, look, if you will, in verse 32. Listen to it: “*And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of*

Hamor" (Joshua 24:32). By the way, I have visited Joseph's tomb there in this land, and in Shechem there. At least, I've been there in Shechem. I've not been right to the very tomb itself. But here it is. Look. Moses got that box of bones and he carried it all the way across the Sinai. And when Moses couldn't go into the Promised Land, Joshua took that box of bones and took them all the way to Shechem, and there they buried that box of bones—now, the unmistakable reward of his faith.

"Well," you say, "Pastor Rogers, that's all well and good, but tell me, Pastor Rogers, what difference does it make whether he was buried in Egypt or whether he was buried in Canaan? I mean, really, what difference does it make? When you're dead, you're dead. Does it make any difference where you're buried?" Well, you need to understand what this is all about. You see, when Joseph said, "I want you to take my bones on to Canaan," what he was saying is, "I want to be a part of what God is up to." Now God is going to bring the Jews into the land of Canaan. He's going to keep His promise to Abraham. "And I, just as a token of faith, I want to be a part of that."

Now you think about this. Joseph was the most influential man in all of Egypt. Have you visited Egypt? I've been to Egypt and seen the tombs of those pharaohs—
incredible!—those pyramids and other tombs. I've been to the Cairo Museum and seen the coffins and things that these men were buried in—all that gold, all that lavishness. Joseph could have been buried like that. Joseph could have had a monument in Egypt. But you know what's happened to all those tombs? They've all been plundered. I mean, they've all been plundered, as many as we can find. And part of them are in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. I've seen that. And part of them are in the British Museum in London. You ought to visit that museum and see all of those mummies all wrapped up. They're all in glass cases. There they are! And had Joseph been like so many people, he would have said, "Well, I'll build me a monument," and we may have had a chance to see old Joe wrapped up in linen right there in the British Museum. "There he is right there!"

Well, I want to tell you something. Joseph left far more than that. He left a monument to faith—a monument to faith. Joseph said, "Hey, don't, don't, don't bury me here. Don't build any monument to me here." Joseph said, "Listen. I want to be a part of what God is doing. I want to be part of what God is up to." And Joseph is looking forward to a resurrection. And I believe he wanted to be resurrected in Canaan's fair and happy land, because, you see, God was not finished with Joseph's bones yet. They were laid to rest in Shechem.

But let me tell what Daniel said about Joseph's bones and your bones—Daniel 12, verse 2: "*And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt*" (Daniel 12:2). And listen to what Jesus said, in John chapter 5, verses 28 and 29: "*The hour is coming, in the*

which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:28–29)—“all that are in the graves.” So God’s not finished with Joseph’s bones yet.

Don’t you think as they lowered that box of bones in that grave there at Shechem that if you listened real good you might have heard a little laugh coming out of that box of bones, maybe a little chuckle from a knuckle, a little grin from a shin, a little glee from a knee, as they said, “Hey, you’re putting us down here, but we’re not going to stay here—we’re not going to stay here”? All that are in the grave shall hear the voice of the Son of God. *Them* bones are going to walk around. God is going to bring Joseph up out of the grave. Joseph said to his people way back in the land of Egypt, “*God will surely visit you, and bring you out*” (Genesis 50:24).

And I want to say to every one of us that go to the grave, God will surely visit you and bring you out. He will. He will. Listen, friend. God’s not going to leave us down here in the Egypt of this old world. He’s not finished with us yet. And just as God visited the children of Israel and brought them out of Egypt, one day God will raise up the very bones of Joseph, and one day God will surely, surely visit each one of us and raise us up.

Now, what does all of this mean to us, one more time? If it just seems like a long time coming when God makes a promise, remember that one day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day (2 Peter 3:8). The most valuable thing old Joseph could leave to his brothers, to his children, to his progeny, was a box of bones. And do you know what that box of bones told them? Well, number one, if it gets real tough down here, remember that God’s going to bring you out. And if it gets real easy down here, don’t settle down. This world is not our home.

Conclusion

I want to say one last thing. You know something? Do you know what really encouraged their faith? I think every time they looked at that box of bones, you know what encouraged their faith? I’ll tell you what encouraged their faith. Every time they looked at that box of bones, they said, “You know what? We’re not going to stay here, because Joseph said God’s going to surely visit us. And when we go, we’re supposed to take his bones with us.” That was an encouragement to their faith: a box of bones.

I’ll tell you what we have that’s a greater encouragement to our faith. Do you want me to tell you what it is? An empty grave! An empty grave! Jesus Christ came out of that grave. And because of that empty grave, His bones were not left there. They’re up in the glory already. He’s gone to prepare a place for us. And what an encouragement that ought to be to our faith!

There is—listen—the unbreakable reason for faith: the Word of God. There's the unshakable rest of faith: *"Though it tarry, wait for it"* (Habakkuk 2:3). There is the unmistakable reward of faith. *"It will surely come"* (Habakkuk 2:3). Trust in God. He cannot fail. He must prevail. One of these days, we're going to leave this place and go on home to glory.